

Great week for Reform, a great Limerick group

Friday
night's
film on TV

THIS HAS been a great week for Limerick pop group, Reform. On Sunday last they acted as support to the great Rory Gallagher in Macroom and two days later heard that their latest single, Keep Music Live, had entered the Irish Top 20 charts.

If Reform ever split up there would be a huge gap in the Irish music business. Over the past nine years there has been no other group in the country quite like them. They have never made an album, they have never tried to make it overseas and yet have been one of the most consistently popular bands around.

In fact, drummer Don O'Connor is prepared to go further than that. He reckons that Reform are up there alongside Thin Lizzy, Horslips and Skid Row as one of the most successful Irish groups ever. "We have been consistently voted into the top three groups for the last five years," he says.

Dark horses

Reform have always been very much the dark horses of the Irish music scene. When other groups were busy building up an image, Don and the boys were slogging away in halls all over the country. The result is that they now have their own particular following where they go.

They have always been a live band. In nine years of playing they have released only three singles. Their latest is doing very well in the shops and is getting a lot of air play on RTE. The song carries a very distinct message in a very strange way. "It's a knock against the discos with a disco beat," Don explains.

"The song is a bit of a joke really. We're knocking the discos even though we've got nothing against them ourselves. It's just something to talk about if you like."

But if there is an element of joking about the record, there is a certain amount of seriousness in it also. Because Don sees the disco in a position to do very serious long-term damage to the music scene.

"The people who will suffer in the long run are the young musicians who have no place to start off," he says.



Limerick pop group, Reform.

Don recalled for Showscene the early days of Reform in Limerick when the band were playing four gigs a week in local hotels, school halls and clubs. "The problem nowadays is that if somebody wants to have a dance, they put on a disco rather than getting a band or small group. They do this because it is easier and handier. But it leaves the young musicians with no place to play."

He believes that the new punk craze could be a good thing because it is getting the kids back to live music. But he adds a cautious note. "Along with having the heart and the feel, you have to possess a certain amount of technique as well."

Things were a lot different when Reform first got together in Limerick in 1968. The band began as a four-piece with

Willie Brown on lead guitar, Joe Mulcahy on rhythm, Noel Casey on bass, and Don O'Connor on drums. Three years later Noel left and Joe moved over to bass. And the band has stayed with the same line-up since.

Those were the days of the "beat boom" when groups headed for London almost as soon as they were formed. But Reform elected to stay at home and tackle the showband scene. Nine years later they have no regrets.

In the early years they ran into a few problems. For not only did they find it difficult to land gigs in the dance halls, but they found that it was very hard to get even relief jobs. The main problem was that the Musicians Federation rule stated that all relief bands must have at least five members.

But Reform got around the problem fairly easily. They simply employed an extra man to stand on stage while they played. "He just had to stand there, so we could say that officially we had five people on stage," said Don.

Dublin

At that time the band were heavily into the music of Love, Moby Grape and Jefferson Airplane. So they headed to where they reckoned that they would be most appreciated, the "Dublin scene".

Unfortunately things did not work out as planned. There were only forty people at their

first gig, and the "scene" wasn't really what they had expected.

Things soon improved, however, and the Limerick group made their first television appearance on "Like Now." Then came a bizarre episode when they were asked to appeal on an Irish programme.

"We were told that we would have to sing in Irish," says Don, "so I said that there was no problem." They ended up going on the air with a home-made translation of Fairport Convention's "Walk A While" and they played it immediately after the Chieftains had finished their spot on the show.

But in 1972, Reform got their first big break. They entered for a song-writing competition on RTE's Spin Off, and they won it with a number called "I'm Gonna Get You." Later they went off for a five-week sojourn in New York—a city with "three huge locks and a peep hole in every door." They got the trip through an American promoter who wanted to bring Irish bands across. "We wanted to see what America was like, so we persuaded him that we were ideal for whatever he was looking for."

Living proof

Keeping a three-piece group on the road in Ireland can be a viable proposition. And Reform are living proof of the fact, says Don O'Connor. "They say that it's virtually impossible to just play around Ireland and make money. But we have proven it can be done," he says. Don is convinced that a three-piece band can be a success if they are good enough, and if they play the right material.

According to him, the market for rock music is opening up in this country. He feels that more young groups could make an impact in the ballroom circuit.

But he is still not blind to the dangers of the ballroom scene. "It's a strange situation in which most of the audience couldn't give a damn about the band. And then there's the old problem of strange double-standards which are applied to showbands and groups."

He added that he could remember a time when a group would get the backside cut off them if they were not of a certain standard, whereas nobody would ever slate a showband. "There is no standard for showbands, and this is one of these things which is very hard to take. Reform have to be good every night, but an audience will take it from a showband if they are bad."

The situation, though, is not all gloomy. Don feels that it has actually egged Reform along to better things. He feels that they have survived for nine years because the members have always been level-headed about things.

Isn't it nice to know that a Limerick-based group has made the top against all the odds? Their services are very much in demand throughout the country and no doubt will continue to be for many years to come.

Seventh Sin, a film on the novel, The Painted Veil by Somerset Maugham, is RTE's choice for Late Night Cinema on Friday, July 1, at 11.00 p.m. and it stars Bill Travers, Eleanor Parker and George Sanders.

The film tells of Dr. Walter Carter (Bill Travers), a young bacteriologist, who unexpectedly returns to his home in Hong Kong and finds his wife, Carol (Eleanor Parker), with a lover. Under threat of discrediting the lover, a married man, Walter compels Carol to accompany him to a remote settlement in China to fight a cholera epidemic. Here, with the sympathetic aid of Tim Waddington (George Sanders), a cynical trader living in the village, and the Mother Superior of the local convent, Carol begins to find a new measure of self-respect, but she does not win her husband's forgiveness until he is on his death-bed, stricken by the disease he has been selflessly fighting.

Seisiun is back

Seisiun is back with us again and from this weekend can be seen in various centres in the region, including Abbeyfeale, Adare, Ennis, Kilmacnevin, King John's Castle, Murro and Emly, Co. Tipperary.

Seisiun is lively, gay and colourful. It depicts the real Ireland with all its merriment, spontaneity and a tinge of sadness.

The music, song and dance are of the people—the song of love, rollicking jigs and reels and the uninhibited ceilidancing in which all the family may participate.

Seisiun in many ways resembles the old house ceil. The neighbours will again gather in for their recreations break. The setting may be different, but the same friendliness and involvement will be obvious and the music, song and dances will be as the were in Ireland long ago.

The experiment will run from July 4 to August 26, an should be of particular interest to tourists.

Mr. J. D. Mulhall of the Golden Thatch in Emly is looking forward to staging Seisiun on Tuesdays.



David Hamilton, top D.J.

CINEMASCENE

THE AWARD-LADEN and star-studded Network, which presents a stunning expose of American television network's rat race, is the next big movie at the Central Studio and is sure to prove a big attraction with local audiences.

Network tells of the vicious in-fighting for top ratings and the sacrifice of any individual for the corporation gain. It is frighteningly realistic in its view of a ruthless industry where survival requires the suppression of all normal human emotions for the big business interests backing the network.

All performances are brilliant—Peter Finch is excellent as the newscaster cracking up as his ratings go down,

because of their alleged left-wing sympathies.

The fact that it stars the great Woody Allen and Zero Mostel should be sufficient to make this movie a hit.

Allen is in serious vein as a bar cashier catapulted to fame and success as a "front" for the black-listed writers. Eventually he discovers that he has a political conscience, after all, and wants to be something other than a mouth-piece for other writers. Running time: 95 minutes.

Carlton

ECHOES OF a Summer is proving very popular at this house. It will be replaced next Monday by Cash and The

SHOWSCENE