

It was a hot time in the Old Town with the *King*

By JACK JACKSON

“Hey! He’s on the bar!”
Sure enough, the man was on the bar. Not just standing, but playing guitar. And not just playing, but churning out what sounded like a mix between jalapenos and surf boards. The living room-sized dance floor boiled with about 45 people.

The king of Tex-Mex blues, Joe “King” Carrasco, sold out a Wednesday night show at Lindens, promoting the release of his new album, *Royal, Loyal and Live* and bringing some Southwestern mestizo-rock to Fort Collins.

I wore a turtleneck and wished I hadn’t. Carrasco’s music was so murderously infectious, it had the whole place dancing — even the cocktail waitress who shook the Zeus out of a tamborine. And sweating. Humid and smoky — not the best turtleneck weather.

“Uno! Dos! One, two, three, four!” (Any tune that begins with one of those usually gets folks moving.) Carrasco covered several tunes from his 10-year career, including “Party Weekend” and “Let’s Get Pretty.” One of the best was called something like “Ba-na-na,” a calypso tune with cheesy organ in place of steel drums.

With his shoulder-length, dark blond hair and squinty eyes, Carrasco spoke between tunes quickly — and usually incomprehensively: “No money? No problema,” he said, laughing. At one point he donned his blue-velvet, gem-studded crown. (Of course, the *Collegian* photographer was at the back of the bar, and when he finally got to the front to snap a photo, Carrasco took off the crown and set it on an amplifier.)

I missed his version of “96 Tears,” the first single off his new album. I remember hearing it two years ago at South Padre

Island in Texas — apparently one of the shows recorded for the album. Carrasco climbed about 15 feet up the scaffolding and dove into the surprised — and inebriated — crowd. (He survived — much unlike the dope-head at the Red Hot Chili Peppers show in December.)

“Like, people get off on that kind of stuff,” Carrasco said after the show. “If you’re going to see a show, you want to get entertained. Half of rock ‘n’ roll is visuals.”

Almost every tune Wednesday was a different style — from “Mexican reggae” to revved-up punk.

“I get bored if I play one style of music all through the night,” he said. “But people can still dance to all of the styles.”

Carrasco (whose real name is Joe Tevtsch), made it to Lindens just in time after a long, solo drive from Telluride.

“I sat there thinking, ‘I’m driving 13 hours to play some bar in Fort Collins,’” he said. “But I got up on stage and pulled everything I had, and it went great.”

The band is pretty used to touring; they’ve been out 270 nights a year since 1980, everywhere from the States to Europe to Colombia.

Time in South America brought an accordion to the forefront of his music. (The Wednesday show missed this, due to the accordionist needing some time off for his family.)

Carrasco said the latest album (his 10th) “really burns,” and at 77 minutes, it is the “longest playing CD in history.” ■

