

With Joe 'King' Carrasco

# Party Fever Prevails at Tiger's

By GREG HAYMES

CLIFTON PARK — "It's a party weekend," howled Joe "King" Carrasco during his opening blast at Tiger's, obviously oblivious to the fact that it was only Wednesday

night. But in his case, he was right, and the calendar was wrong. Every night is a party weekend when the irrepressible Joe "King" Carrasco is in charge of the festivities. There's no question about it — he's still one wild and crazy guy.

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## Review

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Ten years ago, Carrasco seemed on the verge of breaking onto the record charts by putting a Tex-Mex spin on the pop music of the day in much the same way that Doug Sahm of the Sir Douglas Quintet did in the mid-'60s with "She's About a Mover" and "Mendocino." Carrasco dubbed his musical hybrid "neuvo wavo," and landed a major-label record deal with plenty of accompanying airplay on the hipper radio stations.

It's been a full decade since the madcap monarch of Tex-Mex last paid a visit to the Capital Region, but judging by his two-hour romp at Tiger's, the years certainly haven't slowed him down any. The crowd was a bit too small for him to launch into one of his trademarked stage dives, but what they lacked in size, they certainly made up for in enthusiasm.

By the time Carrasco and his band slammed the garage-rock chestnut "96 Tears" into gear — only the third song of the night — he had already broken free of the confines of the stage. Sporting his fabled, bejeweled crown at a recklessly rakish angle, he pogoed off the bandstand and out onto

the dance floor, churning up a thunder storm with both his guitar and his feet. Two songs later, he was pummeling out some Mexicali metal, bouncing up and down on the tables and ripping through a snarl-in' guitar solo as spiky as a cactus.

Carrasco's T-shirt bore the warning, "Don't Mess with Tex-Mex," but it was clear from the start that Carrasco wasn't just messing around. Sure, he's one of the original party animals, but he's also got a scorchin' band that backs up his on-and-off-stage antics with a bold authority. Although the recent departure of accordionist Marcello Guana was initially disappointing, his replacement pumped out buoyant but gritty Farfisa-like fills on his keyboards, and soon all was forgiven. Drummer Javier Zenteno and bassist Robert Ramos were a particularly deadly rhythm section, rock solid but surprisingly supple.

Soon everyone was sucked into the pervasive party spirit. During the outrageously contagious reggae rhythms of "No Problema," Tiger's employees abandoned themselves (and the bar) to the music, leading the audience in a conga line that snaked through the nightclub. By the end of the night, a dozen folks had jumped up on the bar itself, shimmying, boogying with sheer, tequila-fueled delight as the sweat-soaked Carrasco whipped through the snake-bite boogie of "Having a Ball." Just ask anyone who was there — Joe Carrasco is still the "King" of the party.

