



The Akwa Batz — Jill Zimba (left), Mike McLyea, Chrissie McCall, Paul Corte, Maria McKane and Al Skinner.

# Rocking with their own kind of music

By Larry O'Connor  
Staff writer

Sorry, but don't expect the Akwa Batz to regurgitate the seven millionth version of "Louie, Louie."

Doing covers isn't the six-member new music contingent's style. They'll do their own music, thank you.

And the Akwa Batz play to their own tune, despite knowing things could be better doing otherwise.

"I could make more money playing acoustic guitar at (a restaurant)," said lead guitarist Paul Corte, 27, of Livonia.

There aren't a whole lot of places for a band with its own music to play. Only Hamtramck, with Paychecks, Lili's and the Hamtramck Pub, stirs with a multitude of new music bands.

Some clubs, like the Token Lounge in Westland, have started "new music nights." But usually groups with a new sound have to pound the ground for places to play.

**ORIGINALITY**, it seems, has its price. The Akwa Batz play what Corte

calls "the starvation circuit." The group will play a club for use of its public address system and the take at the door.

Which means the band can net anywhere from \$50 to \$150 for a night's work. Needless to say, the Akwa Batz don't reside in Grace-land.

But the alternative would be to make more money playing Top 40 hits. The Batz aren't biting.

"It's the easy way out," said Corte, at the Token Lounge where the band was playing recently with Elvis Hitter and the Orange Roughies.

"You're out there playing covers, and there's no creativity at all. And if you go out there and get creative with a Huey Lewis song by putting a guitar solo in, everyone will say, 'This band is terrible. That doesn't sound anything like the cover song.' 'You're a joke box if you are a cover band.'"

**THE AKWA BATZ** have to hustle up appearances and pass out flyers to promote them. The idea is to build a following.

"You have to be out there all the

## AKWA BATZ

time," Corte said. "You have to be on your toes. After a while, people start knowing who you are and start requesting your songs."

The group also has to find time to write material and rehearse. Most of the members are either employed full time or are students.

Corte is a psychology major and works full time as a counselor for

the developmentally disabled ("I don't look like this when I work. The hair comes down.").

The group members' long hair — and all the hair spray it takes to keep it in place — gave the band its name.

"We were going to call ourselves the Aqua Nuts because my brother said we were a hairspray band ...

but we didn't want to get our equipment sued away."

**THE SOUND** the band works on is what they call energetic rock. People have compared the Batz to X out of Los Angeles, Missing Persons and the B-52s.

"Some people have called us an '80s Doors,'" said bass player Jill Zimba, 19, of Dearborn Heights.

The group's strong point, according to Corte, is its variance of age.

Corte and Al Skinner, 26, of Livonia grew up in the late '60s and early '70s psychedelic era of Jimmy Hendrix. The group's younger members, Chrissie McCall, 19, of Detroit, Maria McCall, 21, of Detroit, Mike McLyea, 23, of Ypsilanti and Zimba are more influenced by the '70s and '80s punk and new music movement.

The Akwa Batz hope to take their eclectic brand of music into the recording studio by the summer. Tentative plans are to produce a four-song EP.

Cost for such a venture, estimates Corte, run about \$1,300. The band has been saving its earnings from the shows.

"That's where the sacrifice comes in, playing with a band," Corte said. "I'll probably end up paying for it."

**THOUGH JUST** eight months old, the band already has made some record strides. The Akwa Batz recently opened for a national group, Chesterfield Kings, at Paychecks.

They also made a cable television appearance on MetroVision in Livonia. Corte knows he can't sit back and wait for things to happen.

"A lot of bands are under the illusion they're going to be playing in a club one night, and a record producers going to walk in and say, 'Oh wow, you guys are going to be stars,'" he said. "That's never going to happen."

The Akwa Batz will be appearing Friday, April 17, at Lili's, Hamtramck, 875-6555; Saturday, April 25, at Hamtramck Pub, Hamtramck, 265-9760; and Thursday, April 30, at the Token Lounge, Joy Road, east of Middlebelt, Westland.

## Shape up your own exercise regimen

Having owned aerobic studios since the onslaught of fitness consciousness, I have observed an ever-growing, if somewhat guilty, desire to shape up among young adults. Unsolicited people will apologize to me at parties, restaurants or on the street for their lack of resolve in commencing or sticking to an exercise program. Yet coupled with these desires are confusion and timidity as to how best to begin.

Easing yourself into an exercise regimen that works for you may seem insurmountable. How do you find the time in your already overloaded week? How do you decide among the numerous health clubs, spas and studios? And, most crucial, what type of exercise is best suited to your needs?

I think the key is to personalize the program to your needs and tastes. What works for Jane Fonda or John, your office manager, might leave you bored, uncomfortable or unfilled. So let's think about designing a program that meets your needs.

**IF YOU WISH** to strengthen your heart and raise your metabolic rate, an aerobic sport is for you. Aerobic sports include jogging, aerobic dance, swimming, biking and walking. Playing sports such as baseball, tennis or golf certainly is useful to overall health and well-being, but they are not activities that specifically condition you.

If building muscle, body-contouring and strength are your primary goals, then weightlifting should be considered. Coordination, flexibility and tone come from such activities as calisthenics, ballet, gymnastics and karate.

You choose. This is your first and

most important step in enjoying and maintaining an exercise schedule. Don't select what's in if deep down it doesn't meet your goals or temperament. For example, swimming is considered to be an excellent and safe conditioning sport by all the experts. But if you hate getting wet, getting in cold water or drying dripping hair, then you know it's not for you, and you wouldn't maintain it.

Next you must decide where to exercise. If you choose an exercise facility, consider its location, hours and atmosphere. If you are fitting in exercise between home and work, then think through your travel route. Going cross town during rush hour could discourage the staunchest exerciser — and right now that's not you. Go with a facility that's reasonably nearby or attainable during your working day.

**ALSO, STUDY** the hours the facility is open. Is lunch time your sole opportunity to exercise? Then check out the midday schedule. Are you an



getting fit  
**Laura Roberts**

evening and weekend exerciser? Then make sure there is a variety of classes offered for you at these times. Think through your typical day and slot in your desired workout times. And stick to them.

Note the overall atmosphere of the club too. Would you prefer a quiet, restful environment or a bustling, "with it" place? Again, the choice is yours.

It is extremely important to look at the safety features of the facilities as well. For instance, if it is an aerobic studio, it should have a resilient floor for exercising such as "floating wood" or sprung floor. The quality of

the staff also should be examined. Listen to what they say. Talk to other customers. Observe how conscientiously they perform their duties.

Next you must select a program within the facility. Let's say you have decided on aerobic dance as your activity. A safe, well-rounded studio usually has graded classes, beginner level through advanced. From a physical and psychological point of view, it's advisable to start a little on the easy side and work your way up.

And lastly, but certainly of major significance, set goals for yourself. So often I have seen people get discouraged and quit because they had not realistically defined their goals or too narrowly defined them. If a 22-inch waist is your one and only goal, you may well fail.

But if feeling better physically and emotionally also are goals, you may soon realize results. Establish realistic habits for attaining these goals and stick to them. Remember — consistency is your best fitness friend.

Laura Roberts is the co-owner of BODY Inc. in West Bloomfield, where she is a physical exercise instructor. Address questions to Laura Roberts, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

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