

STREET BEATS

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

The Vertical Pillows aren't into flashy jewelry, pouty lips, miniskirted legs and matching hairdos.

Naw. The main intent of this all-woman outfit is producing a spirited, gritty blend of rock music.

Unlike some other all-female bands (Go's Go's, the Bangles), the Vertical Pillows want to be known more for their music than their on-stage appearance. The band's lead singer and guitarist obviously subscribes to a such a belief.

Clad in jeans and work boots ("They're comfortable," Paula Boufford is waiting before the band's show at the 3rd Avenue Cafe in Royal Oak. Her only jewelry is a modest pair of earrings and a Mickey Mouse watch.

"I DON'T LIKE to be flashy," said Boufford, who lives in Warren. "We could all get our ears pierced 12 times, but no one would care."

Of course, concentrating more on the music than image is all fine and dandy. The pressing question of the day is whether this band has the musical talent to compete with the best.

On stage, the Vertical Pillows can answer that with an unequivocal yes with a searing guitar riff to boot.

It would be hard to explain why else former MC5 front man Rob Tyner has taken the band under his tutelage. Tyner would seem to have better things to do with his time then working with a band that is nothing more than a novelty.

"It's a rock 'n' roll band that happens to be female," Tyner said.

Tyner produced the group's four-song tape, "The Vertical Pillows." His influence, and that of the MC5, is evident in their sound. The Pillows have often been called "The MC5's." Their numbers have "Detroit" written all over them, bringing reminiscences of '60s rockers, the Detroit Wheels and the MC5.

ONE OF THE highlights on the tape is "Take Back the Night," which Tyner wrote for the group.

In an odd set of circumstances, it was the group that sought out Tyner. They met him at "Guitar Army," a benefit for Vietnam veterans at St. Andrew's Hall.

"We saw him and said, 'There's Rob Tyner,'" Boufford said. "He told him, 'We do MC5 stuff better than you do.' He said, 'Well, at least you're fiery.'"

That bravado certainly comes across on stage. Boufford doesn't merely sing a song; she attacks it.

More than pillow talk Solid rock is this band's fashion



STEVE SHAW/Photo

The Vertical Pillows, Terry Stimac, bass, Mary Monroe, guitar, Monica Reynolds, drums, and Paula Boufford, vocals and guitar, will perform Saturday at the Vanity Ballroom in Detroit.

It comes as little surprise that she was selected "Best Female Vocalist" and "Best Guitarist" in the 1986 MetroTimes Music Awards. Vertical Pillows drummer Monica Reynolds of Detroit was selected "Best Drummer" in the same awards.

THE GROUP HAS toured the East Coast and Canada, playing in such places as New York, Boston, Montreal and Toronto. Its single, "Jump Back" and "R.U.N.," sold out. The Vertical Pillows have also received air play on WRIF-FM's "Sonic Rendezvous" program hosted by Steve Kostan.

They readily admit being an all-female band has helped them establish a following. Yet, it has its disadvantages. For one, members say, they're more open for critical analysis.

"It makes it harder when we play for people... They expect us to be (bad)," Boufford said.

"(There's a) girls can't rock' attitude," said Terry Stimac of Troy and bass player for the group. "Actually, the people who come and see us wouldn't say that. Guys in other bands might say it though."

ALSO, THERE'S the question of how far they have to go in proving they're serious and not all show.

"It's confusing," said Mary Monroe of Detroit. Monroe is guitarist for the group. "I don't want to be like the Bangles. But I like being a girl."

"I like wearing skirts... There's nothing wrong with a girl looking good."

But the Vertical Pillows have been able to work around those potential problems.

The band formed, strangely enough, through want ads. Boufford played in a band called the Roommates, which featured four women and one man. Stimac and a girlfriend were trying to form their own band when she latched on to the Vertical Pillows after reading a want ad.

Monroe also was starting her own band when she found the Pillows. The only remaining piece to find was a drummer.

"Getting a girl drummer was like hell," said Monroe, who was born in Costa Rica.

But someone passed along Reynolds' name, and the rest is, as they say, history. And it's been a ton of fun since.

"You know what it's like to get together with all the boys and have a night out... It's a different attitude," Monroe said.

CONCERTS

● **SAVATAGE** will perform Thursday, Dec. 10, at Harpo, 14238 Harper, off I-94, Detroit. Tickets are \$3. For more information, call 823-6400.

● **DETROIT BLUES BAND** will perform Friday, Dec. 11, at Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, between Michigan Avenue and Ford Road, Dearborn. For more information, call 846-5377.

● **ROBB ROY** will perform Friday, Dec. 11, at Lili's 21, Jacob at Joseph Campeon, Hamtramck. For more information, call 875-8555.

● **JUGGLERS AND THIEVES** will perform Saturday, Dec. 12, at Reruns

Lounge, 13027 W. Warren, Dearborn. For more information, call 582-8825.

● **BOYHOOD** with special guests Red September, will perform Saturday, Dec. 12, at the Hamtramck Pub, Canfield, near I-75. For more information, call 365-9769.

● **THE CARs** will perform with the Brando Saturday, Dec. 12, at Cobo Arena in Detroit. Tickets are \$17.50 and can be purchased at TicketMaster Outlets. To charge tickets by phone, call 423-8666.

● **BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION** Vertical Pillows, Hysteria Narcotics and Orange Roughies will all perform at a special birthday celebration from 9 p.m. to 2 a.m. Saturday,

Dec. 12, at the Vanity Ballroom, 14201 E. Jefferson, Detroit. Rob Tyner, formerly of the MC5, will be the master of ceremonies. For more information, call 822-3253.

● **SECOND SELF** Second Self will perform Thursday, Dec. 31, at St. Andrew's Hall in Detroit. For more information, call 287-9090.

● **TED NUGENT** Ted Nugent will perform Thursday, Dec. 31, at Cobo Arena in Detroit.

● **ECHO & BUNNYMEN** Echo & the Bunnymen will perform Friday, Jan. 29, at Hill Auditorium in Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$16.50 and \$15 and available at TicketMaster Outlets. To charge tickets by phone call 423-8666.

COLLEGE

Here are the top-10 songs being played on WHFR-FM 89.3, the campus radio station of Henry Ford Community College in Dearborn.

1. "Instant Club Hit," Dead Milkmen.
2. "Rain in the Summertime," The Alarm.
3. "Need You Tonight," INXS.
4. "Can't Stop the Spring," Flaming Lips.
5. "Seattle," Public Image Limited.
6. "Rules and Regulations," Public Image Limited.
7. "Deep and Wide and Tall," Aztec Camera.
8. "Motion of Love," Gene Loves Jexiel.
9. "Stop Me if You Think You Have Heard This Before," The Smiths.
10. "Framed," Top Jimmy and the Rhythm Pigs.

JAZZ

Here are the top-10 albums being played on WJZZ-FM 105.9, a jazz radio station in Detroit.

1. "Streamlines," Tom Scott.
2. "Gift of Time," Jean Lee Ponty.
3. "Still Life Talking," Pat Metheny.
4. "Time and Tide," Esias.
5. "Just Between Us," Gerald Albright.
6. "Heat of Heat," Kevin Eubanks.
7. "Picture This," Billy Cobham.
8. "Love is a Rush," Wilton Fender.
9. "Characters," Stevie Wonder.
10. "Brazil," Manhattan Transfer.

CDs

Here are the top-10 selling compact discs at Harmony House in Rochester.

1. "WCSX Classics. Volume One," Compilations CD.
2. "Nothing Like the Sun," Sting.
3. "Momentary Lapse of Reason," Pink Floyd.
4. "Cloud Nine," George Harrison.
5. "Live in Australia," Elton John.
6. "Big Generator," Yes.
7. "Live Bullet," Bob Seger.
8. "Kick," INXS.
9. "Tango in the Night," Fleetwood Mac.
10. "Faith," George Michael.

REVIEWS

WHERE THE STREETS HAVE NO NAME — U2

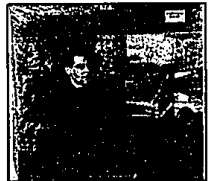
What a great idea. Take a hit single from your platinum-selling album, throw in a few numbers that were lying around in the closet and sell it for five bucks.

Let it not be said that U2 are a bunch of fiscal knuckleheads.

"Where the Streets Have No Name" is the third 12-inch single released by the Irish group from its hot-selling "The Joshua Tree" album. And, yes, the group will be putting out a fourth, "In God's Country," any day now as well.

Cynics could make a strong case that U2 is out to cash in big by releasing such singles. After all, \$5 is a lot to be paying for three songs (four songs in "With or Without You"). But U2 fans clamoring for anything by the band are more than happy to buy such releases. Indeed, the strongest part of these singles are the songs accompanying them.

Any one of these artistically diverse numbers could've been on "The Joshua Tree."



"Sweetest Thing" is a rather nice piano-laden love number with Bono showing his versatility as a singer. "Race Against Time" is another gem as well, featuring the deft guitar work of The Edge.

Of the three 12-inch singles, "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For," has the strongest previously unreleased material. "Spanish Eyes" should have been on "The Joshua Tree." This number is rich with Edge's piercing guitar and Bono's raucous vocals.

"Deep in the Heart" is a very atmospheric, moody number, and very reminiscent of the material on "The Unforgettable Fire" album.

Two out of three isn't bad, though, as "Where the Streets Have No Name" and "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For" are 12-inch singles well worth listening to.

That is if you can afford them.

— Larry O'Connor

STRANGeways, HERE WE COME — The Smiths

Will somebody please take Jimmy Morrissey and Johnny Marr out to lunch or something and get them back together.

Really, fellas, this is not the time to part ways. Especially, in the wake of the release of "Strangeways, Here We Come." Perhaps, the saddest news in music world this summer was when word came The Smiths had disbanded.

"Strangeways, Here We Come" is their swan song. And the album, released on Sire, is the best The Smiths have put out to date.

Johnny Marr's work coupled with Morrissey's sardonic lyrics are woven together in a nice, neat compact package of diversified pop.

OK, so Morrissey still loves to bathe in self-pity as "Last Night I Dreamt Someone Loved Me," a number on the album, brings to light. He is still the best stick-in-the-mud lyricist around.

So typical of Morrissey's dislodged outlook on life is in another number, "Unhappy Birthday," in this rather upbeat ditty, Morrissey moans "I come to wish an unhappy birthday because you're evil and you lie/And if you should die, I may feel slightly sad (But I won't cry)."

With the lines like that, Morrissey



would definitely be the life of any party.

Insincerity rings in "Girlfriend in a Coma." Opines Morrissey: "Girlfriend in a coma, I know, I know it's really serious/There were times I wish I could've murdered her (But you know I would hate to have anything happen to her)/No I don't want to see her."

But the music, Marr in particular, is what makes The Smiths click. His acoustic guitar really sets the mood for many of Morrissey's moody tunes. Otherwise, they would all be self-obsessed blather.

For example, in "Girlfriend in a Coma," his upbeat melodic guitar smacks against the depressing lyrics of the song which makes them stand out even more. It would be hard to imagine what the number would sound like without Marr.

Then again, it's even harder to imagine being without The Smiths.

— Larry O'Connor

SAY NO TO THE DEVIL — Rev. Gary Davis

One notable thing about the rise of CDs is the subsequent remastering and reissue of some great older recordings.

And the trend isn't just benefitting those of us with CD players. For example, Fantasy Records has been rereleasing the early '60s Prestige-Bluesville catalogue on LP.

As a result, a semipro guitar player nearly yelled in delight last week when he saw a fresh, new copy of Rev. Gary Davis' 1961 album "Say No to the Devil," just rereleased on Fantasy.

For years, he bemoaned loaning his battered original copy to a "friend" who never returned the masterpiece. He guessed the probability he'd see another copy was comparable to the Detroit Lions' Super Bowl chances.

Because while Gary Davis is revered in acoustic guitarists' circles, folk-blues fan's exactly mainstream '80s music.

And when you put the moniker "Rev." in front of a performer's name, it doesn't exactly suggest soulful background music fitting for an '80s-style get-down party, the kind Bruce Willis or Spuds MacKenzie might attend.



What else can you say about: A flash fingerpicker who in his younger years created the definitive guitar versions of "Cocaine," "Candyman," and "Hesitation Blues," folk-blues standards?

• A man who later sang heartfelt songs of Jesus, but loaded them with rollicking imagery?

• A street singer who has been called in all seriousness "the Segovia of the acoustic, steel-string guitar?"

"Say No to the Devil" captures Rev. Davis' deft melody runs played against that snappy alternating bass, his gravelly voice that sometimes rises to a shout as the guitar answers, and even some spooky, moving harmonics playing.

If you like some of the artists who've done his stuff — Dylan, Hot Tuna, and Jackson Browne among them — you might give a listen to the singing reversion.

— Kevin Brown