

STREET BEATS

Figure 4 gives its fans different point of view

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

Figure 4's Jeff Shoemaker is a philosopher, a teetotaler, a patriot and an atheist.

All of which Shoemaker, a devout Objectivist, isn't afraid to sing about. He says he just wants to present an alternative view.

Want opinions? Figure 4 lead singer and rhythm guitarist fires them off in machine gun fashion, both on and off the music stage.

Where do you want to start? How about the '60s revival of late?

"If you notice, everybody's into being a hippie again," said Shoemaker, 27, blowing the smoke from his Marlboro in disgust. "It's ridiculous. That was a totally wasted decade. Even the music was crap, except for the Beatles and maybe the Yardbirds. Even Elvis went country."

WHY HE'S an atheist: "To me if

you can't prove it, then it doesn't exist... But I like Jerry Falwell. I think he is a very intelligent individual."

About being a flag toter: "I consider myself a patriot. I love America with a passion I can't explain. I couldn't live in the Soviet Union."

All right. So now it's known from what side of the street Figure 4 stands on.

In the era of the socially conscious musician, such as U2, John Cougar Mellencamp and Bruce Springsteen, Figure 4 has the sidewalk to itself.

The group's very conservative views are on the water of what's being proclaimed by today's peace-and-love-and-let's-relive-the-'60s again musicians. But like today's groups, Figure 4 can articulate its message in a clear and high-volume fashion.

"It's not fashionable for us to do this," admitted Shoemaker, who lives in Troy. "Listen to the radio and you can see that. Bands who

weren't political when they started out all of a sudden are."

FIGURE 4 was political from day one. The band was formed a year ago as a vehicle for Shoemaker to express his views.

No stranger to the Detroit music scene, Shoemaker was lead singer in a punk band, The Plugs, in the late 1970s. The nucleus of the band that, Rich Lovin, Greg Apra and Mike Halloran, went on to form Rhythm Corps.

And it was at Rhythm Corps show a year ago where Shoemaker ran into Fred Schaller. They decided to start up Figure 4.

The inspiration for the band's lyrical content came by turning the radio dial.

While driving one day, Shoemaker happened to listen to Mark Scott's call-in radio show.

"At first, I thought he was a jerk," Shoemaker said, "because he was saying something which went totally against what I was led to believe was true."

THE CONTROVERSIAL radio show host often referred to the literary works of Ayn Rand and her Objectivist philosophy.

Objectivism, in a nutshell, espouses the virtues of capitalism and "rational selfishness" in order to achieve one's goals.

On a whim, Shoemaker picked up one of Rand's novels, "Atlas Shrugged," and read it.

"When I put it down, I was never the same again," Shoemaker said. "John Galt (the main character in 'Atlas Shrugged') is my hero."

Shoemaker even penned a tribute to the fictional fellow, "This is John Galt Speaking." The number is on a three-song demo tape. Also on the same tape is "Man in the Mirror," which will be on the soon-to-be-released "Digital Detroit" compilation compact disc.

IN THE CREATIVE department, Shoemaker writes the lyrics and lead guitarist Fred Schaller handles the music. According to the band's leader, there's little disagreement.

"The band is like a bus ride," Shoemaker said. "Everybody's invited along, but I drive. And (the other band members) know that."

In the quest of putting forth a message, Figure 4 has found it has a hot sounding band as well. The hard rocking melodies plus even more of an edge in what Shoemaker has to say.

"I feel we have to take a hard stance nowadays," said Schaller, who lives in Royal Oak. "There are so many passive bands out there. And the ones who do have something to say, we don't agree with."

Band members know there are plenty of people who don't agree with them — the group is staunchly anti-drug and anti-drink. Shoemaker just shrugs.

"I'm not trying to be a preacher," he said. "I hate that. I'm just telling my side. If they don't like it, they can buy a hot dog or something."



Game Theory features Gil Ray (from left), Shelly LaFreniere, Scott Miller, Guillaume Cassuan and Donnette Thayer.

IN CONCERT

● FUNHOUSE

Funhouse will perform Friday, Jan. 22, at Lil's 21 in Hamtramck.

● GAME THEORY

Game Theory will perform Friday, Jan. 22, at The Blind Pig, 208 South First St., Ann Arbor. For more information, call 998-8555.

● SEE DICK RUN

See Dick Run will perform Friday, Jan. 22, at Reruns, 13027 W. Warren, Dearborn.

● ECHO & BUNNYMEN

Echo & the Bunnymen will per-

form 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 423-6656.

● HELIX

Helix will perform Friday, Jan. 29, at Harpos, 14238 Harper, off I-94, Detroit. For more information, call 823-6400.

● BLUE OYSTER CULT

Blue Oyster Cult will perform Saturday, Jan. 30, at Harpos, 14238 Harper, off I-94, Detroit. For more

information, call 823-6400.

● WHITESNAKE

Whitesnake will perform Saturday, Feb. 13, at the Joe Louis Arena in Detroit. Tickets are \$17.50 and available at TicketMaster Outlets. To charge tickets by phone, call 423-6656.

● STING

Sting will perform Friday and Saturday, Feb. 19-20, at the Masonic Temple Theater in Detroit. Tickets are available at all TicketMaster Outlets. To charge tickets by phone, call 423-6656.

MUSICAL NOTES

The Detroit rock'n'roll community was out in full force recently for a benefit concert at St. Andrew's Hall in Detroit.

The show raised nearly \$3,000 for the family of an infant who has a rare blood disease. The money will be used for transportation costs involved with taking the child to and from St. Jude Hospital in Memphis, Tenn., for medical treatment.

More than 600 people attended the benefit show that featured Before Or After, Scott Campbell, Funhouse, Jugglers & Thieves, Junk Monkeys, New Barbituates, Tanjant Image, Polish Mustangs and Hippodrome. Greg St. James of WRIF-FM was the emcee.

Hippodrome, minus regular drummer Doyle Dean, was a last-minute replacement for The Colors. The group's lead singer, Charlie Manion, was out with the flu.

SO WITH Scott Campbell on drums, Hippodrome opened the festivities with a few rousing numbers. "They (Hippodrome) said, 'What the heck, let's be brave,'" said Campbell, who coordinated the event.

Hippodrome lead singer and guitarist, Chris Richards of Livonia, set the tone for the night as he wandered from the stage and onto the dance floor to incite the crowd during one number.

Then, Last Cavalry put the party mood into full gear as it blasted its way through a few tumbleweed thrash numbers. Lead singer Terry Burns, as he is known to do, wandered from the stage and onto the dance floor to incite the crowd during one number.

And speaking of Last Cavalry, the group will ride no more.

According to Burns, Last Cavalry will perform its last show Friday, Jan. 22, at Psycheek's in Ham-

tramck. Burns said he and some other members felt the band had grown stagnant playing the same country-fortified rock'n'roll.

"WE WERE blowing opportunities left and right," Burns added, "because nobody wanted to work hard enough to do what was necessary to take advantage of what was coming our way."

One missed opportunity, in particular, was the band's winning of the Snickers New Music Contest last fall at St. Andrew's Hall. As a result, the group was supposed to send an audition tape to Epic Records.

However, they couldn't get into the studio because of an outstanding debt, so an inferior demo tape was sent. The Smithereens were signed to a record deal after winning a similar contest a year ago.

"That was my breaking point," Burns said. "I told everybody last spring that I wanted to be signed by a record company by Christmas or it was time to get out."

Funhouse has decided to get out and record some tracks at Creative Audio Group in Rochester Hills. Steve "Skeek" Lueders said the album should be out in the spring.

"There's going to be a lot of variety," Lueders said. "It starts off with some slower, top 40 numbers and ends up heavy."

Heavy is a good way to describe the Orange Roughies reception recently in Grand Rapids. The group performed with Under Water Rain to a rather large and appreciative crowd at the Nubet Club.

Tell us what's happening with your band. Write to: Larry O'Connor, Street Beats, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

COUNTRY

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

1. "Pump Up the Volume," M/A/R/R/S.
2. "Caravan of Love," The Housemartins.
3. "Gimmie Gimmie," Leather Nun.
4. "Mirror People," Love & Rockets.
5. "No New Tale To Tell," Love & Rockets.
6. "People Who Grinned Themselves To Death," The Housemartins.
7. "I Wanna Be a Flinstone," Screaming Blue Messiahs.
8. "Mandinka," Sinead O'Connor.
9. "The Real Sheila," Game Theory.
10. "Bikini Red," Screaming Blue Messiahs.

COUNTRY

Here are the top-10 songs being played on WWW-FM 106.7, a country and western station in Detroit.

1. "I Can't Get Close Enough," Exile
2. "Lyndie," Steve Wariner.
3. "Somebody Else," Ricky Van Shelton.
4. "You Haven't Heard the Last of Me," Moe Bandy.
5. "Those Memories of You," The Trio.
6. "Do You Believe Me Now," Vern Gosdin.
7. "Goin' Gone Mystery," Kathy Mattea.
8. "Somewhere Tonight," Highway 101.
9. "One For the Money," T.G. Sheppard.
10. "Only When I Love," Holly Dunn



Members of Figure 4 include Mark Trupkovich (back row, from left), Fred Schaller, Mike Edmond (front row, from left) and Jeff Shoemaker.

REVIEWS

HOLD ON . . . — Beer on the Penguin

Beer on the Penguin serves up a frosty mug of atmospheric guitar rock numbers with enough hooks in them to land all the perch in Lake Erie.

For the most part, the four-member Detroit group succeeds. There is a lot of promise on Beer on the Penguin's "Hold On . . ."

"Pictures" is one such song which has the makings of a pop rock hit. Featured are nice guitar lines and Patrick Aberley's crystal clear vocals.

Ditto can be said for the title track "Hold On."

Yet, at times, one gets the feeling this band is too preoccupied in search of the big hit. As a result, some of the lyrical content tends to border on the trite at times. There are references to holding on to one's dreams in more than one song, all subjects well-covered by millions of other bands.

"Hold On" and "Always Seems the



Same" almost repeats in lyrical subject matter.

One doesn't really see the extent of musical talent of this band until the final number, "She." This is a gem almost worth buying the album alone.

Cary Marsh, whose echoing guitar is one of the hallmarks of Beer on the Penguin's sound, lets loose and experiments on "She." The results are excellent.

Aberley takes a harder stance vocally, at times passionately screaming the lyrics. You really get a feeling here that the band is collectively letting it's hair down and showing the real Beer on the Penguin.

It would be interesting to see what this band could do with some more in-depth material.

In other words, Beer on the Penguin might want to concern itself with being more filling to go along with an already great taste.

— Larry O'Connor

INSIDE INFORMATION — Foreigner

And just when you thought it was safe to turn on the radio again . . .

Like Jason in the "Friday the 13th" movie series, this band will not go away. Understand, Foreigner is not a bad band, mind you, not at all. In fact, one could grow to like Lou Gramm's well-honed vocals and the hard rocking sound the group has been producing since the 1970s.

But therein lies the problem. This latest stuff suffers from an acute case of sameness. Foreigner sounds like it did in 1970s. Which, come to think of it, wasn't really all that hot either.

Innovative? The peanut butter sandwich is more innovative than the music in this album.

Adventurous? Walking to the corner store is more adventurous than this album.



Original? Muzak would be considered more original than this album.

Sure there are some bright spots on "Inside Information." Listen to Gramm croon on the slow moving, "I Don't Want To Live Without You," and you just know he's destined to make a solo career of doing love songs for high schoolers to neck to.

"Say You Will," which has received a fair amount of air play, isn't a half-bad number either.

But complementing a few of the songs on this predictable album is tantamount to admiring the brass bells on the Titanic when it was sinking.

Again, for the person who enjoys Lou Gramm's singing and Mick Jones hard driving guitar, this album is a keeper.

— Larry O'Connor

LOLITA NATION — Game Theory

Like plenty of pop rock? "Lolita Nation" is the album for you.

This is one of the best samplings of pop rock to come around in awhile. The double-album offering features plenty of original material from a band which stretches the boundaries of pop rock music like they were cheap elastic.

Game Theory experiments like a bunch of chemists gone mad on "Lolita Nation." The results are diverse and favorable.

Game Theory is a relatively unknown band. Yet, it still shows enough moxie to put out a double-album. And this, by no means, is a waste of vinyl.

Oh sure, there are some really weird tunes in here that miss the mark a little. The first side of the album has a few of them.

"Lolita Nation" could be the album of the year just on song titles alone. Included is "All Clockwork And No Bodily Fluids Makes Hal A Dull Metal Humbert" and "In Heav-



en Every Elephant Baby Wants To Be So Full of Sling."

The numbers with shorter titles are notch above the standard fare from most pop rock outfits. "The Real Sheila" and "Chardonnay" are excellent offerings.

Also included on the album is menagerie of song bits and sound effects. One goes so far as having a vacuum cleaner running at full blast.

The best sound effects, though, are the ones provided by Game Theory itself. First, Donnette Thayer's vocal ability gives Belinda Carlisle and others of her ilk a run for their money. Scott Miller, who is the songwriter for the band, shares the vocal responsibility with equal talent.

If all the flashes of brilliance were captured and put on one disc, no telling what the results would be.

— Larry O'Connor