

STREET BEATS

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

Second Self is itself. But trying to convince others of that at times has been as difficult as getting people to believe Imelda Staunton goes barefoot.

The five-member group produces a raw, high-energized brand of rock'n'roll that has been said to sound too much like U2 and/or INXS. And, frankly, such critiques have band members really honked off.

Second Self has had to live down or live up to such labels. Part of the problem has been early reviews.

"You would write serious lyrics, you'd get compared to U2 and Bono," said an exasperated Mike Nehra, lead singer of Second Self. "If you play dance music and lower your voice, you would get compared to INXS."

"One reviewer said our song, 'The Glory,' sounded like something we got from INXS. We wrote that song a

'We're not aiming songs to be hits. We're writing songs for ourselves.'

— Mike Nehra,
lead singer

year and half ago. That cracks me up."

THE ONLY THING Second Self really wants to crack, though, is the national spotlight. Already, the band has staked a claim in regional circles.

"Second Self," a four-song EP, has received considerable airplay on college radio throughout Michigan, Ohio and Ontario. The group has played several venues in those areas as well.

Closer to home, Second Self has played before packed houses at St. Andrew's Hall in Detroit and has been a regular around the Hamtramck scene.

Second Self has further enhanced its reputation as one of the finest up-and-coming groups around, having opened up for (ironically) INXS, Thrashing Doves, Crowded House and Lords of the New Church.

Second Self's high-energized rock'n'roll produces success



Second Self, which produces a high-energy brand of rock'n'roll, features Jeff Fowlkes, Andrew Nehra, Mike Nehra, Greg Giampa and Dan Hess.

Yet group members feel stuck in neutral.

On the one hand, they're antsy to move on to bigger things. But Second Self doesn't want to leave Detroit.

"Why move?" said Dan Hess, keyboardist for the group. "Why go to Boston, New York or L.A.? You'll just get lost."

IT WASN'T until the addition of Mike and Andy Nehra two years ago, though, that Second Self really found itself. Greg Giampa, Jeff Fowlkes and Hess formed the nucleus of the group. The pre-Nehra period is one they rather pretend didn't exist.

It was Fowlkes, the drummer of the group, who convinced Mike Nehra to join. The two used to write songs together over the phone while Nehra was living in New York.

Nehra at the time was in a band called SkyTalk, which was signed to Columbia Records. He felt SkyTalk was becoming "too poppy" and it was time to come home.

"The direction is right here," Nehra said about Second Self. "It's natural. We're not aiming our songs to be hits. We're writing songs for ourselves."

SONG WRITING IS done by committee. The group already has about "three or four albums' worth of numbers."

Most of the songs center on frustration and how those feelings can be overcome.

The band has its own 16-track recording studio, which allows members to record at least two or three songs a month.

Lately, the numbers are taking a different vein. Disillusioned with the new music scene, Second Self is getting back to basics.

"New music sounds like there's one songwriter out there writing for everybody," Fowlkes said. "We're going back to our roots. I'm listening to stuff now that I listened to when I was 5, like Hank Williams, CCR and Sly Stone. Now that stuff was original."

Fowlkes said the group doesn't aim its music for one particular audience.

"My ideal situation would be for some guy in a mohawk to come up after a show and say, 'Hey, that was cool.' Next to him would be a guy in a preppy golf shirt saying, 'Wow, you're cool. Maybe you can play one of our frat parties sometime.'"

IN CONCERT

JUNK MONKEYS

The Junk Monkeys will perform Friday, Feb. 19, at the Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, off I-75. For more information, call 365-9760.

HIPPODROME

Hippodrome will perform with Crossed Wire on Friday, Feb. 19, at Lil's 21 in Hamtramck.

FRANK DUMONT & HIS BAND

Blues artists Frank Dumont & His Band, which opened up for Bo Diddley and Ron Wood recently at Harpos, will perform Fridays through February, at Four Greenfields, Woodward and 13 Mile. Little Junior Kennedy will be the special guest.

THE DEAD MILKMEN

The Dead Milkmen will perform at 10 p.m. Friday, Feb. 19, at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. Tickets are \$8.50 and available at all TicketMaster Outlets.

GEORGE THOROGOOD

George Thorogood and the De-

stroyers will perform at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Feb. 19, at Hill Auditorium in Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$17.50.

STING

Sting will perform Friday and Saturday, Feb. 19-20, at the Masonic Temple Theater in Detroit. Tickets are available at all TicketMaster

FIGURE 4

Figure 4 will perform Saturday, Feb. 20, at the Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, near I-75. For more information, call 365-9760.



The Leather Nun's "Gimme, Gimme, Gimme" was third on the charts this week at Oakland University's WOUX-AM radio station.

Outlets. To charge tickets by phone, call 423-6666.

DIO

Dio, with special guests Megadeth and Savatage, will perform at 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 21, at Cobo Arena. Tickets are \$17.50. For more information, call 567-6000.

EARTH, WIND & FIRE

"An Evening With Earth, Wind &

Fire" will take place at 8 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 21, at Joe Louis Arena. Tickets are \$17.50. For more information, call 567-6000.

WARLOCK

Warlock will perform Wednesday, Feb. 24, at Harpos Lounge, 14238 Harper, Detroit. Tickets are \$6 in

advance, \$8 at the door. For information, call 823-6400.

FRANK ZAPPA

Frank Zappa will perform Friday through Sunday, Feb. 26-28, at the Royal Music Theater. Tickets are \$17.50. For more information, call 546-7610.

COLLEGE

Here are the top-10 songs being played on WOUX-AM 640, the campus station of Oakland University.

1. "A Rush and a Push . . ." The Smiths.
2. "Postcards From Paradise." Flesh For Lulu.
3. "Gimme, Gimme, Gimme." Leather Nun.
4. "Victims." Communards.
5. "I Wanna Live." Ramones.
6. "Sex, Money, Freaks." Cabaret Voltaire.
7. "Anytime." Thelonus Monster.
8. "Bumble Bee." Ventures.
9. "Louie, Louie." Black Flag.
10. "You Are Soul." Alien Sex Fiend.

COUNTRY

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

1. "Do You Believe Me Now." Vern Gosdin.
2. "Tennessee Flat Top Box." Rosanne Cash.
3. "Tequila, Twinkle, Lucky Star." Merle Haggard.
4. "Somewhere Tonight." Highway 101.
5. "One Friend." Dan Seals.
6. "That's My Job." Conway Twitty.
7. "Just Lovin' You." The O'Jays.
8. "Goin' Home." Kathy Mattea.
9. "Face To Face." Alabama.
10. "Too Gone Too Long." Randy Travis.

CD

Here are the top-10 selling compact discs at Musicland in the Livonia Mall.

1. "Dirty Dancing." Various artists.
2. "Live in Australia." Elton John.
3. "Faith." George Michael.
4. "Momentary Lapse of Reason." Pink Floyd.
5. "Whitesnake." Whitesnake.
6. "Whitney." Whitney Houston.
7. "Skyscraper." David Lee Roth.
8. "December." George Winston.
9. "Tiffany." Tiffany.
10. "Best of the Doors." The Doors.

REVIEWS

GOOD MORNING VIETNAM
SOUNDTRACK

— various artists

By all accounts, this one should be big. The film was a smash hit right out of the box and its soundtrack should follow suit. But this oldest-and-comedy set only works half the time.

The fault isn't with the music. Director Barry Levinson supposedly hand-picked the songs and, if so, he did a fine job.

The goal here is to re-create rock 'n' roll radio, circa 1965. As with Levinson's earlier "Diner" soundtrack, however, the emphasis is upon the obscure, overlooked and unfamiliar.

Martha and the Vandellas' forlorn "Nowhere to Run" is a more imaginative choice than "Heat Wave" or "Dancing in the Streets." The Beach Boys' "Warmth of the Sun" (a very minor hit) reveals group leader Brian Wilson's romantic side. The Searchers' glittery "Sugar, Sugar," meanwhile, is a certified rarity that anticipates the birth of folk rock.

It's hard to quibble with the few obvious choices, either. Wayne Pon-tano and the Mindbenders' throbbing "Game of Love" recalls the heyday



of the British Invasion. James Brown's "I Got You (I Feel Good)" hasn't lost any of its funk power over the years.

Where the set falls down, however, is with inclusion of snatches of Robin Williams' antic comedy between the songs.

It's not that Williams isn't funny, he is. But Williams' footloose, immediate style works best as a once-only occurrence. In a movie theater, or over broadcast radio, the bits hit with the force of heavyweight champ Mike Tyson. Heard repeatedly, they lose their punch.

And the imaginative music choices make this an album that demands to be heard over and over again.

—Wayne Peal

"THE BEST OF
RY COODER

— Ry Cooder

The import Ry Cooder collection showing up in some record stores is a welcome surprise.

But they could have done a better job of choosing songs for "Why Don't You Try Me Tonight?" — The Best of Ry Cooder."

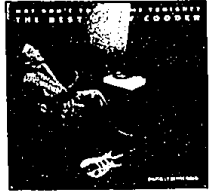
It opens with the Depression-era lament, "How Can A Poor Man Stand Such Times And Live?" and the instrumental "Available Space." Both are vital, as they're taken from Cooder's excellent first album, now out of print.

They also belong because they show Cooder at his best, creating catchy string band arrangements of great but little-known country blues songs.

Next comes Cooder's bouncy, blues mandolin-tinged version of "Money Honey" from his second album.

The country blues "Tamp'Em Up Solid" from the "Paradise And Lunch" album would have been a better choice than "The Tattler," included here. But whoever assembled this collection opted for Cooder's up-tempo-sounding numbers.

Next comes "He'll Have To Go,"



one of the best songs from Cooder's Tex-Mex period, and "Smack Dab In The Middle."

"Dark End Of The Street," a moody slide guitar instrumental also included here, is one of Cooder's classics. But after that, the collection leans heavily on Cooder's bland R & B period.

On these songs, the slide guitar is muted and the blues mandolin is gone. They're replaced by slick versions of songs that Cooder's primitive voice can't handle: "Little Sister" and Wilson Pickett's "634-5789."

Still, his instrumental version of "I Think It's Gonna Work Out Fine" from this period is moving, as is the title song, "Why Don't You Try Me." Overall, it's a halfway decent collection, at best. They should have included the slide guitar piece "Paradise" and more Cooder country blues, not the slick stuff.

—Kevin Brown

NOVELTY

— Hippodrome

Passes, pass it on: Hippodrome is happening.

The initial reaction when listening to this four-song cassette is to heap unlimited amounts of praise on these enthusiastic music men: Chris Richards, Kyle Richards and Doyle Dean. But what good would that do?

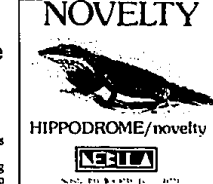
The rest of the world might find out about these guys and some fat record company man in a pinstripe suit might sign them and whisk them away in a big black Cadillac. Then what would we be left with?

So let's just say for the time being that Hippodrome shows a lot of promise.

Highlighted on this first effort by the Livonia-based group are songs filled with bouncy guitar lines and breezy lyrics. Hippodrome doesn't sound like anybody else, which is definitely to its credit.

Too many groups in and around the Detroit area seem to churn out rehearsed R.E.M., U2 or Replacement fodder. Blah.

Hippodrome rebels against that mentality, instead channeling its



creative energy into patenting a good, clean sound.

"Autumn Colors," a number saturated with excellent harmonies and spirited guitar work, reeks with potential. This is deserved of regular radio air time on any FM station.

Chris Richards, the band's lead singer and lead guitarist, single-handedly turns what might otherwise be an ordinary pop product into a stylistic utopian number.

"Josephine," a tune penned about an imaginary girlfriend, is a rather friendly song with plenty of promise as well.

Anyone looking for a message or the meaning of life in Hippodrome's lyrics might be disappointed, though. Frankly, some of the written lines don't make a bean's worth of sense.

Abstract as they may be, they're still fun to listen to. (For more information on the tape, write: Hippodrome, 2804 Whitecomb, Livonia 48154. Or call 525-7512.)

—Larry O'Connor