

STREET BEATS

Presley, Stones influence sound of the Volebeats

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

Well doggles, what is that sound from them there hills?

Why it's the Volebeats, of course. But don't let the standup bass, banjo and washboard throw you.

Actually, these innovative individuals are from the woods — Huntington Woods that is. And they can rock and roll with the best of them.

So sorry, Jed Clampett, these fellows aren't kin folk. They're just mightily appreciative of folk music, mind you. Hank Williams and Elvis Presley are their influences along with the Rolling Stones.

At first glance, it's easy to see the Volebeats are not your average rock and roll band. Nor should they be confused with the basic drugstore cow punk outfit either.

The group has solidified a sound that can only be described as their own. They're able to fuse elements of folk and rock to their advantage.

"They're original, and they have great songs," said Gary Reichel, who's worked with the Volebeats on the soon-to-be-released Tremor compilation album. "The have a stand up bass and they have just one snare. Then there's that one attack they hold ... It's just basic percussion."

The Volebeats take a back-to-basics approach to their music in more ways than one.

"THEY'RE JUST as much at home playing folk instruments on the street corner as they are plugged in at a pub. The group recently gave a performance in front of Noir Leather in Royal Oak, much to the delight of the skinheads in the vicinity."

"If we tone it down a little, we can play for anybody," said Jeff Oakes, a member of the group. "We played

for a convalescent home. These people really dug it."

Along with being eclectic, the Volebeats can be eclectic.

"We can rock and roll with anybody," said band member Matthew Smith.

The Volebeats just try to keep fresh, often switching instruments like a bunch of utility infielders. Brian Oakes plays guitar and bass. Terry Rohm shares drums and guitar (along with singing while Smith handles guitar, harmonica and the ever-present upright bass).

Some will say the Volebeats' real strength lies in the poor soul who has to tug that heavy bass around. Smith is the lucky fellow.

"I found it in my grandma's attic," Smith said. "I just restrung it and learned how to play it."

"We used to have a van, but it broke down. It happens to fit inside the hatchback of our Honda Civic."

THE REAL source of strength, band members said, is in the songs. Rohm handles a majority of the songwriting duties.

Rohm said he writes about anything that inspires him. The influences run from the gamut from folk to rock and roll. Rohm doesn't even try to attach a label to what he does.

"I'm fond of dance rock and roll," Rohm said. "It's kind of like good-time music."

"What we share is a common passion for music. That's the band. It's not like we've went out and said we were going to be a cow punk band. Why label something you've been relating to passionately throughout your life?"

The Volebeats have been passionately working on their first album, which could be out by the summer.



S. KAY YOUNG

The Volebeats have mixed folk and rock and roll sounds to come up with their own unique style.

IN CONCERT

ORANGE ROUGHIES

The Orange Roughies will appear Wednesday, March 23, at Bookies, 870 W. McNichols, Detroit. For more information, call 862-0877.

LIVINGSTON TAYLOR

Livingston Taylor will perform at 9:30 p.m. and 11:30 p.m. Thursday, March 24, at the Blind Pig, 208 First St., Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$9. For more information, call 996-8555.

SEE DICK RUN

See Dick Run will perform Friday, March 25, at Reruns, Warren Road, east of Schaefer, Dearborn.

R.H. FACTOR

R.H. Factor will perform Wednesday through Saturday, March 23-26, at Jaggers, 3481 Elizabeth Lake Road, Pontiac. For more information, call 681-1700.

GODFATHERS

The Godfathers will perform at 10 p.m. Friday, March 25, at St. Andrew's Hall in Detroit. For more information, call 99-MUSIC.

DAVE MASON

Dave Mason will perform Friday, March 25, at Harpos, 14238 Harper, Detroit. Tickets are \$7 in advance and \$9 at the door. For more information, call 823-6400.

TRACY LEE AND THE LEONARDS

Tracy Lee and the Leonards will perform Friday and Saturday, March 25-26, at the Blind Pig, 208 First, Ann Arbor. For more information, call 996-8555.

JOHNNY ALLEN

Johnny Allen will perform with Rock Zone Saturday, March 26, at the Hamtramck Pub, Caniff, off I-75.

TERENCE TRENT DABY

Terence Trent Daby will perform at 7 p.m. Sunday, March 27, at Royal Oak Music Theatre. Tickets are \$16.50. For more information, call 546-7610.

JUGGLERS AND THIEVES

Jugglers and Thieves will perform Saturday, April 9, at Third Avenue, Third and Main, Royal Oak.

EMERSON, BERRY AND PALMER

Keith Emerson, Carl Palmer and Robert Berry will perform Saturday, April 23, at Harpos, 14238 Harper, Detroit. For more information, call 823-6400. Tickets are \$13 in advance and \$15 at the door.

MUSICAL NOTES

Tremor show leaves Paycheck's shaking

No estimates from the Richter Scale were available, but the recent Tremor show at Paycheck's in Hamtramck left the place shaking.

All told, the two-night event featured 12 of the area's top-notch original rock acts. On the second night, Inside Out, Static Alphabet, I-Faw, Volebeats, Shooting Club, Cinecye, Hysteric Narcotics, and the pusherman of love himself, Livonia's Bootsey X, all performed high-energized sets.

The highlights of the evening were many.

Cinecye, led by singer Gary Reichel, played like they were plugged into Fern II. The band's driving set had most of packed house at Paycheck's on their feet enjoying the music.

Shooting Club's mere presence literally blew a fuse. A power-outage left the place dark as the group was about to launch into their set.

When the lights came back on, Reichel invoked the crowd: "Paycheck finally paid his light bill."

Undaunted, Shooting Club proceeded to play with their usual zest. The band showcased some new numbers. "I Haven't Heard From John" and "Call," while anchoring the set down with favorites like "Someday You'll Laugh."

The Volebeats, with their rather eclectic collection of instruments (banjo, upright bass and washboard), dazzled the masses with their unique, acoustic-laced set (These guys even do Hank Williams covers). After a rollicking set by Bootsey

X, which included the ever-popular coach potato anthem, "I Wanna Watch TV," came a jam session featuring a host of area musicians.

Mike Murphy of the Hysteric Narcotics (drums), Brian Simon of Shooting Club (bass), Cormac Wright of Shooting Club (guitar), Gary Reichel of Cinecye (vocals), Jim Cortez of Shooting Club (vocals), Don Jones of Bootsey X and the Lovemasters (saxophone) and Mark Niemanski of Hysteric Narcotics (guitar) all joined together for a rousing version of "Downtown."

It sort of sounded like Petula Clark with static cling, but it was a nice touch to the evening's festivities nonetheless.

Hats are certainly doffed to Reichel, who organized the event. Everything came off without a hitch. There weren't any long delays between sets and the music was excellent along with being diverse.

The Westland hard-rock band,

Rock, have released a new single, "The World's My Home." Made the Choice" (Available at Sam's Jams in Ferndale and Desirable Discs in Garden City).

The four-member outfit recently won the weekly portion of WRIF-FM's "Local Hits" show and were featured on the cable television show, "Faces of Westland."

Another Westlander, Johnny Allen, has released a new album, "Desperate Years." Allen will appear Saturday, March 26, at the Hamtramck Pub.

Livonia's Hippodrome recently played in New York's Greenwich Village. Group lead singer and guitarist, Chris Richards, said they have been asked to return and perform at some of the colleges in the New York area.

Tentative plans have Hippodrome, Shooting Club and a yet-to-be-determined band (possibly the Volebeats) recording a disc together.

Let us know what is happening with your band, drop us a line:

Street Beats, Observer & Eccentric, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

COLLEGE

Here are the top-10 songs being played on WAYN-AM 1180, the campus radio station at Wayne State University.

1. "Beds Are Burning," Midnight Oil.
2. "Finest Worksong," R.E.M.
3. "Streets of Laredo," Orange Roughies.
4. "Hot, Hot, Hot," The Cars.
5. "No New Tale to Tell," Love and Rockets.
6. "Looking for Fun," Junk Monkeys.
7. "It's a Wonderful Life," Fishbone.
8. "People Are Strange," Echo & the Bunnymen.
9. "Never Do Know," Hysteric Narcotics.
10. "Dance Little Sister," Terence Trent D'Arby.

BLUES

Here are the top-10 blues albums being played on "Motor City Blues Project," which can be heard 10 p.m. to midnight Sundays on WCSX-FM.

1. "Pat McLaughlin," Pat McLaughlin.
2. "Law of the Fish," The Radiators.
3. "Edge of the City," Kinsey Report.
4. "Get Rhythm," Ry Cooder.
5. "Detroit Blues Factory, Vol. 1," various artists.
6. "Born to Be Bad," George Thorogood.
7. "Shining the Pearls," Mr. B.
8. "I Like It When It Rains," Ronnie Earl.
9. "I'm No Angel," Greg Allman.
10. "An Audience," CoCo Taylor.

REVIEWS

HEAVEN ON EARTH

— Belinda Carlisle



This Go-Go gone solo has made a comeback that Gary Hart can only be envious of.

"Heaven on Earth" is the second pop album by the former lead singer of the all-girl Go-Gos. This is such a contrast from those days that it makes one wonder if it's the same person.

Carlisle has gone from a squealing and screaming sister of allures to a serious singer with a very stylistic approach. Carlisle has grown up, and it definitely shows in her latest album.

This stuff is much more slick than anything Carlisle ever did with the Go-Gos. But that doesn't make it bad. Quite the contrary.

"Heaven on Earth" is pop in its purest form. The books are plentiful.

"Heaven Is a Place on Earth" is in this well-produced album with Carlisle taking her vocal ability to the limits, breaking into an occasional scream now and then.

What marks this album from others of its ilk, though, is that it is solid

throughout. Aside from the hits "Heaven Is a Place on Earth" and "I Get Weak," there's plenty of material here to keep you interested.

Carlisle doesn't write any of the songs, but that's not her credit. Who ever it was did a nice job.

"Circles in the Sand" follows a slow rhythm, giving the number a western feel. "Feel Free" is an upbeat ditty that has a nice blend of piano and electric guitars. It ends with Carlisle whispering, "I Feel Free."

"Should I Let You In" starts out like a folkie and breaks into a hard rock sound with Carlisle stamping her trademark on the number with her rough-edged vocals.

It's just one of many highlights on a very good album.

—Larry O'Connor

SLOW TRAIN THROUGH GEORGIA

— Norman Blake



Most casual record buyers haven't heard of Norman Blake.

But in guitar shops, where acoustic six-string models line the walls, and at folk and bluegrass festivals, he's a legend of sorts.

Blake — who played on Bob Dylan's "Nashville Skyline" album — is best known for his rapid-fire flatpicking guitar style, which he adapts to traditional fiddle tunes, folk, bluegrass and country songs.

While some singers or play guitar cleaner, Norman Blake has a way with the traditional and original songs he's recorded for the labels, Rounder and Takoma records.

And lately, several Blake compilations have been released on compact disc. "Slow Train From Georgia" on Rounder is the best of the bunch.

The collection is culled from two of his best albums, "Down Home in Sulphur Springs," his first record, and "Whiskey Before Breakfast," also from the early '70s. Also included are songs from one of his '70s albums, "Nashville Blues."

At his best, Blake captures the dirt-road beauty of the acoustic guitar sound in traditional music. Some examples are the flatpicked instrumental "Daddy of the Town" and "Cattle in the Cane," included here.

"Ginseng Sullivan" is the compelling story of an aging drifter who laments, "I'm too old to ride the rails or thumb the road alone. Guess I'll never make it to my home." Blake sings it in a thin but compelling low tenor, backed by a lonesome dobro. You can almost see the road dust rise beneath the hot southern sun.

Other strong songs are "Down Home Summertime Blues," "Macon Road" and "Church Street Blues." Still, the album is flawed by a ragged version of "Nashville Blues" and an instrumental snore, featuring his wife Nancy on cello.

But because the single CD is 70 minutes long, a few clunker tracks really don't detract from a basically good collection.

—Kevin Brown

PAST MASTERS VOLS. 1-2

— The Beatles



With release of these two sets, EMI-Capitol clears its closet of Beatles material — and some of the bad vibes surrounding earlier Beatle CD releases.

Every song issued for public consumption during the group's 1963-70 heyday is now available on compact disc. But unlike the first four Beatles CD's, controversially released in mono, EMI chose stereo, wherever possible, for these discs. While the difference isn't great, especially on older tracks, it's still noticeable.

Inclusion of recording data — including dates, places and number of takes used for each song — also is welcome.

As for sound quality, volume one, drawn from pre-1966 hits, flip sides and other non-album tracks, is generally solid. Surface noise is kept to a bare minimum, especially considering the age of the master tapes. But while songs like "She Loves You," "I Want to Hold Your Hand" and "From Me to You" sound rea-

sonably clean, there's little that jumps out at the listener.

That isn't the case with volume two, where "Day Tripper," "We Can Work It Out" and "Hey Jude," among others, come to invigorating new life.

Of the two sets, volume two is more hit-laden, also including "Lady Madonna," "Get Back" and "Let It Be." But the music on volume one, including "This Boy," "She's a Woman" and "I'm Down" is hardly inferior.

Rarities also are present. Volume one includes German-language versions of "She Loves You" and "I Want to Hold Your Hand." Volume two includes "You Know My Name (Look Up the Number)," the Monty Python-styled flip to "Let It Be."

Rarities aside, most of this music is indispensable, not just for rock fans, but for anyone seriously interested in popular music of the 20th century. And Michael Jackson gets most of the money.

—Wayne Peal