



Frank Funaro (left), Eric Ambel, Manny Calati and Scott Kempner of the Del-Lords will bring their hard rocking sound to Saint Andrew's Hall on Thursday.

The Del-Lords won't compromise

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

Sure, there are plenty of up-and-coming bands with high ideals and integrity.

But wave a beer sponsorship deal in front of their noses so they get a whiff of megabucks, and integrity goes faster than hot air out of a balloon.

The Del-Lords had their chance at Miller Time. They turned it down.

Del-Lords is a band on a mission. The New York-based group brings their slice-of-life, American pie brand of rock 'n' roll into town Thursday at Saint Andrew's Hall.

The band is touring in support of its latest album, "Based On A True Story" (Enigma), which has drawn rave reviews from critics.

The Del-Lords were founded by Scott Kempner and Manny Calati in 1981. The group released two albums before their latest offering, "Frontier Days" (Enigma/EMI America) and "Johnny Comes Marching Home" (Enigma/EMI America).

Recently, Kempner talked about the group's recent success, why it turned down a beer sponsorship and the late '60s music scene.

"Based on a True Story" has received a lot of rave reviews. Yet you really haven't been able to crack commercial radio. How frustrating is that?

"We got on 150 more stations with 'Judas Kiss' than we did on the other two albums combined. For me, it's just kind of starting. We're not yet at the point of frustration."

How do you think growing up in New York influenced your music?

"I really think I'm one of those guys . . . no matter where I'm at, I know I'm from New York. I think that's in the music. Even though I might not be writing directly about New York, I think there's a specific amount of energy of growing up in the music, a high-level of intensity if you will. It's a thing you bring with you growing up in New York."

REVIEWS

STAY ON THESE ROADS

— a-ha



This is Pop music with a capital 'P' from a band, a-ha, that otherwise avoids capital letters.

"Stay on these roads" (Warner Brothers) is the third album from a-ha, which you may recall, scored big with the single "Take On Me" in 1985. If you do remember that upbeat tune you get a pretty good idea of this latest offering.

The band's press release tells us that one in four households in a-ha's native Norway has a copy of the album "Hunting High and Low" from whence "Take On Me" came. That's exposure. Pat Washburn, Mays, and Morten Harket make catchy, melodic music and even have cover-boy good looks.

A press release says that a-ha is "a group that's already defined what pop music for the 1990s is all about."

That statement is — shall we say — generous. Very generous.

"Stay on these roads" isn't defining much of anything. It's tin on sauce and leaves you wanting.

The a-ha sound is heavy on synthesizer riffs and heavy on falsetto vocals, both of which can get annoying. It's like The Archies meet techno-pop.

The songs here are nice songs. They follow formula and are easy to hum. But the lyrics are sappy — clichés and adolescent love affairs. Only one tune is absolutely rotten however. That's "touchy." It contains this lyric: "Me I'm touchy/Touchy, touchy you/Me I'm touchy and you know what to do."

The other songs are less annoying. "This Alone Is Love," and "The Blood That Moves the Body" are good enough.

This is what we used to call bubblegum music back in the '60s and '70s. If a-ha represents the '90s, you might want to run for cover.

— Brian Lysaght

IN MY TRIBE —10,000 Maniacs



Maybe the record company should consider sending a few copies of this album to the public library.

"In My Tribe" (Elektra) is more a collection of stories than songs. And very well written stories at that.

The narrator is the school marshall Natalie Merchant, a stunning singer who makes it sound so effortless. Merchant also handles a majority of the 10,000 Maniacs songwriting duties.

Some numbers are merely slice-of-life episodes that could have easily been taken from a diary. Yet the way they are written and performed, each tale comes to life.

For example, "My Sister Rose" is simply about a sibling's wedding. Yet with Merchant at the helm, this song becomes a vivid piece of music.

Social problems are dealt with in a subtle, yet poignant way. "Cherry Tree," a guitar-sparked number, is about the loneliness that comes with being illiterate. Child abuse ("What's The Matter Here?") and alcoholism ("Don't Talk") also take turns in the spotlight.

The group perhaps might be guilty of sermonizing at times, like Merchant does in "Gun Shy." The anti-

making fair, representational music of an era."

How do you survive in this business and still keep your idealism?

"What we consider survival, others consider starving. We're not eating steak every day, but now we can afford a pizza every day. We don't have a boss. We're doing what we want to do. Every day when we go to work, we work on our own dream. We're 10 times more optimistic than a guy waking up to a job where he is trapped."

"For some people, it's matter of greed. Like the problem with radio. Several new music stations popped in New York, and they were doing well. But they weren't doing as well as stations playing the classic rock thing. The end result, guys who own those (new music) stations instead of being satisfied with making \$1 million, because the guy down the street is making \$1.8 million, they want to make that \$1.8 million too."

Do you think that type of conviction is lacking in bands today?

"I think the music sounds like scared music. Too many bands are looking to follow an already successful formula. I think rock and roll, even at its worst, will always reflect what's going on around us. I think right now music is a microcosm of today's society. With the stock market crash . . . and the national debt, things are on shaky bottom. I think the music reflects that."

"The surest formula for success in the '60s was originality. You don't have radio stations clamoring over one another to play something new. Instead they're clamoring over one another to play Jethro Tull for the second decade in a row. Who needed it the first time?"

"I finally realized I'm not a part of this society. I want to be a part of it, but only on my terms. And a band like the Del-Lords doesn't fit in. We are our own private enterprise, our own little family."

war tune, which is about a brother in the military, comes off a bit preachy.

While it's easy to get carried away with the lyrics, musicianship certainly isn't lacking. The deft guitar work of Robert Buck lays the foundation for many of the songs. From the sparse piano number, "Verdi Cries," to the mandolin-rich "City of Angels," 10,000 Maniacs cook.

And the group certainly knows how to entertain as the quirky, yet very enjoyable "Like the Weather" would attest. No heavy social issue here, just a well-performed pop number. Hey, and they even throw in a cover of Cat Stevens' "Peace Train."

What more could one ask for?

— Larry O'Connor

IN CONCERT

● AVANT GARDNERS

Avant Gardners will perform Monday, June 27, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church St., Ann Arbor. For more information, call 996-2747.

● DEL-RAYS

The Del-Rays will perform Monday, June 27, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.

● ROBERT NOLL AND THE BLUES MISSION

Robert Noll and the Blues Mission will perform Tuesday and Wednesday, June 28-29, at the Plymouthrock, 8825 General Drive, Plymouth. For more information, call 455-9800.

● RON THOMPSON AND THE RESISTORS

Ron Thompson and The Resistors will perform Tuesday, June 28, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For more information, call 996-2747.

● GREG STRYKER BAND

Greg Stryker Band will perform Wednesday, June 29, at Rumor, Merriman Road, south of Ford, Westland. For more information, call 728-6407.

● CARUSO

Caruso will perform Wednesday through Saturday, June 29 to July 2, at Jagers, 2481 Elizabeth Lake Road, Pontiac. For more information, call 681-1700.

● FOLK MINERS

The Folk Miners will perform Wednesday, June 29, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For more information, call 996-2747.

● PANTERA

Pantera will perform Thursday, June 30, at New York New York, 24300 Hoover, Warren. For more information, call 756-6140.

● FRANK ALLISON & THE ODD SOX

Frank Allison & the Odd Sox will perform Thursday, June 30, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.

● BLACK OAK ARKANSAS

Black Oak Arkansas will perform Friday, July 1, at the Premier Center, 33970 Van Dyke, Sterling Heights. For more information, call 978-3450.

● ICEHOUSE

Icehouse will perform at 8 p.m. Friday, July 1, at the Royal Music Theater, 318 W. Fourth, Royal Oak. Tickets are \$16.50. For more information, call 99-MUSIC.

● ORANGE ROUGHIES

The Orange Roughies will perform Friday, July 1, at Lili's 21, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck. For more information, call 875-6555.

● IRON MAIDEN

Iron Maiden will perform with special guests, Ace Frehley's Comet, Saturday, July 2, at Joe Louis Arena in Detroit. Tickets are \$17.50. For more information, call 567-6000.

● DETROIT ENERGY ASYLUM

Detroit Energy Asylum will perform Saturday, July 2, at Lili's 21, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck. For more information, call 875-6555.

● CHEVELLES

The Chevelles will perform Sunday, July 3, at Lili's 21, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck. For more information, call 875-6555.

LOCAL

Here are 10 songs receiving airplay on "Detroit Music Scene," 4-5 p.m. Sundays and 5:30-6:30 p.m. Tuesdays on WDTR-FM.

1. "One More Good Night," Cody Jaret.
2. "Barefoot in the Snow," Johnny Allen and The Appeal.
3. "Watch Me Fly," Beer on the Peninsula.
4. "31 Days," Spouting Club.
5. "Take 495," Funhouse.
6. "I Hate Love," Karen Monster.
7. "Hearts Don't Bounce," Happy Death Men.
8. "Justice," Hysterical Narcotics.
9. "The Glory," Second Self.
10. "Burnin' Desire," Artie Wolf and The Pack.

COUNTRY

Here are the top-10 songs receiving airplay on WYNN-FM, a country station in Detroit.

1. "I Told You So," Randy Travis.
2. "The Best I Know How," Statler Brothers.
3. "Always Late (With Your Kisses)," Dwight Yoakam.
4. "Another Place, Another Time," Don Williams.
5. "Wildflowers," The Trio.
6. "If I Don't Come Easy," Tanya Tucker.
7. "Satisfy You," Sweethearts of the Rodeo.
8. "Fallin' Again," Alabama.
9. "Love of a Lifetime," Love

CHRISTIAN

Here are the top-10 songs receiving airplay on WJZZ-FM, a Christian format radio station in Detroit.

1. "I Call It Love," Billy Sprague.
2. "Saved By Love," Amy Grant.
3. "Take It To All the World," 2nd Chapter of Acts.
4. "Sometimes I'm Samson," Larry Bryant.
5. "Part of the Heart," Steve Archer.
6. "All For You," Billy Crockett.
7. "Jesus Love the Church," Stella Walsh.
8. "That's What Faith Must Be," Michael Cord.
9. "Isn't It Amazing," Mark Farmer.
10. "I Will Be There For You," Paul Smith.

THEATRE OF THE NIGHT — Detroit Energy Asylum



Will somebody check to see who that is banging? Maybe somebody is suffocating in there.

There has to be some explanation for the incessant drumming which opens the first number, "Giftwrapped in Cool," on Detroit Energy Asylum's "Theatre of the Night" (Jukebox Records) cassette.

But the long-term beat of the drums offers only a hint of what lies ahead.

This seven-song tape is rich with instrumentalization and rousing vocals.

The Detroit Energy Asylum specializes in a nightclub rock'n'roll. Which means there are blasts of bass guitar here, a rousing dose of saxophone there and keyboard wizardry here and there.

The amazing thing here is DEA manages to pull it all together in one neat package. Like the name suggests, there's enough energy here to send Jacko Into Oy, Oy heaven. This band is definitely one to see live.

DEA incorporate sort of a B-52s speed beat in some of their numbers like "Where Did She Go?" and "Stay There." The keyboard and singing of Carolyn Stribo really make these standouts.

Stribo's vocals border on a shrill, high pitch on some of the tunes. But she still comes across clearly, which is a considerable feat amid all the instruments she has to contend with.

Some aspects of DEA's music, though, get lost in the shuffle. It would certainly be nice to hear a little more electric guitar and maybe a few less sax solos.

But then again, the sax probably goes over real well in live settings. On recordings such as this, there are some limitations.

If the question should arise: Is it live? Or is it Memorex? In DEA's case, we know the answer.

— Larry O'Connor