

Michigan rocker finds new spirit

By Larry O'Connor  
staff writer

Michigan to Hollywood. Rock'n'roll performer turned artist Michael Anderson made the star trip. Except the glittery ride tripped him up. "Just about everything you can imagine doing in Hollywood I have done at one time or another," said Anderson, who grew up in Grand Rapids. "I was into drugs. I was into running around. I was into the scene."

Until, that is, when Anderson decided he had enough. He left the music business for three years to find out about life, to find out about himself.

Anderson says he knows where he's headed now. "Sound Alarm" (A&M), his latest album, is the road map.

The album, produced by Terry Manning (Joe Walsh, ZZ Top), is rich with acoustic rhythm and blues numbers. "Sound Alarm" is selling well. A modern Robert Johnson album is what Anderson and Manning wanted to make. Judging by early results, "Sound Alarm" is doing quite well. A tour is in the works for the fall.

THINGS ARE going well for Michael Anderson. Yet the talented singer/songwriter seems at a loss for words to describe his transformation from the jetset to his current mindset.

"That part is very difficult for me to talk about," said Anderson, who was in Farmington Hills recently on a promotional tour. "Words tend to confuse it."

"One day I just had enough. I said, 'If there is a God, I want to know. If there isn't a God, I want to know. You show me. I'll do whatever you say from now on. It's a real spiritual thing. I don't know how to describe it because it's something I'm still going through.'"

That spirit is what Anderson want-

ed to capture in the studio. All of the vocals on the album were done in one take, making for a raw feel.

"Sound Alarm" was recorded in Memphis, Tenn., because "we didn't have any record company people hanging around." The studio where Anderson worked was in the producer's living room.

Anderson found the surroundings quite inspirational, listening to the endless stream of blues, black gospel and rock and roll on the radio. The back-to-basics sessions made him realize why he got into the rock and roll business to begin with.

Grand Rapids was not exactly a haven for rock music. Anderson tuned into the Detroit music of Bob Seger, MC-5 and Mitch Ryder. He came to Detroit for a while before departing for Los Angeles.

IN L.A., he played in some rather nondescript bands — The Strangers, The Edge and King Street Dukes. He joined drummer/vocalist Phil Seymour for awhile. Then he left the business.

He drove a truck to support himself. He read books and spent a lot of time alone.

He began writing again (John Fogerty and Juice Newton are two of those whose covered his songs). He opened up for Maria McKee and Lone Justice at the Palomino.

Anderson played the interest of an A&R man of Patrick Clifford, who signed him to A&M.

Anderson and Manning were given free reign on the type of album they wanted to record. The stark energy of bluesman Robert Johnson is what they wanted.

"It wasn't necessarily an all blues album," Anderson said, "but instead a modern record that will stand 30 years from now and still raise the hair on your neck."

"I had a lot of songs when we went in the studio. I had 10 songs that I wanted on the record. I didn't say that to the producer or the company. And they came up with the same 10



After a three-year absence from the music business, Grand Rapids native Michael Anderson returns with the highly charged "Sound Alarm." (A&M).

songs. I believe those 10 songs say the most about me right now."

One song, "Memphis," was written in 20 minutes during one of the recording sessions. "Soveto" takes a different look at the situation in South Africa.

"I THINK rather than people bashing in South Africa a much better approach is to say, 'Look, you're missing out on something,'" Anderson said. "Listen to the music that's coming out of there, listen to the cul-

ture that is in there."

Although he speaks of a spiritual awakening in his own life, there's not a proselytizing message in his music. He doesn't want his music labeled Christian or anything else for that matter.

"If people interpret my music as Christian, I'd say fine," he said. "But if they're going to label it, then I'd say be careful and make sure you've listened to it."

"I'm like everyone else. I'm just trying to find my way."

Song to yield help for state farmers

By Larry O'Connor  
staff writer

Jonathan Skyhawk doesn't wear coveralls. He has never plowed a field or planted a seed of corn. But the plight of today's farmer is an issue that hits home to the country and western singer. Skyhawk recently released a single about those who try to make a living from farming.

Part of the proceeds from the single, "A Farmer's Life," will be donated to the Michigan Farm Unity Coalition.

"I don't know anything about farming," said Skyhawk, a Blackfoot Indian. "But I know what it is like to come from a poor family. We had 12 in our family, so I know what it is like to have to stretch things."



Jonathan Skyhawk helps farmers

The tune is not standard kneeshlapping country and western fare. The song is more of the easy-listening variety.

Already "A Farmer's Life" is on the playlists at country and western stations WWW-FM and WCXI-AM. Jacqueline Kozara, Skyhawk's manager, has approached WOMC-FM about playing the song as well.

THE CROSSOVER potential is obviously there. Whether one wears cowboy boots, motorcycle boots or designer dress shoes, the message is clear. Simply put in one of the lyrics: "I'd do it all over, we don't eat."

With this summer's drought in the state, the song even has more of an impact. Skyhawk, though, wrote the song three years ago.

The rough life of a farmer is one of a few consciousness-raising numbers he has written during the last few years. AIDS and child abuse are other things he's touched on in song. They're not exactly typical country and western song topics.

But then again, Skyhawk is not exactly the typical country and western singer. His Indian heritage makes him unique as does his songwriting and performing style.

"I do have your typical, 'crying-in-your-beer' songs," he said. "I also write happy songs about nature. When I see something that gets my looking at it... To me it's about Americans helping Americans."

BUT TRYING to get airplay for the single will be more difficult than selling sweatshirts. Skyhawk and his manager are confident they can accomplish that.

Also, getting a record company to pick up the single for distribution is not out of the question either. The single is already at Harmony House outlets.

All of which will give a boost to Skyhawk's fledgling music career.

"I'm not trying to fool anybody," he said. "When you put a record out like this, you expect to get something. All the way, though, we just want to help out the farmers. When people buy the record, they're helping the farmers. When a radio station plays it, they're helping the farmers."

"How much is in it for them? People are always going to say that."

By listening to the song, people will have little doubts about his sincerity. His manager, Kozara, left her bank job to devote her energy into making the record a success.

THE GAME PLAN includes marketing "A Farmer's Life" statewide. Then going to another farming state in the Midwest. The end result of the state-by-state approach would have the single receiving national attention.

Skyhawk is committed by more than just recording a single. He and his manager raised the money for the project on their own.

Skyhawk also a graphic artist, designed sweatshirts with teddy bears on them that he and his manager sold. The money from the sweatshirt sales went into the record.

For more information on helping the farmers, people can contact Mary Kraus, president, Michigan Farm Unity, Coalition 322, Ottawa, Lansing 48933.

IN CONCERT

● CARUSO  
Caruso will perform Tuesday through Saturday, Aug. 2-6, at Jagers, 3481 Elizabeth Lake Road, Pontiac. For more information, call 681-1708.

● ONLY CHILD  
Rampage recording artists Only Child will perform a special free concert on Wednesday, Aug. 3, at The Ritz, Gratiot Avenue, near Nine Mile Road, Roseville. The hard rock band is touring nationally to promote the single, "A Place in Your Heart." All artist royalties and net profits due Rampage Records will be donated to Childhelp U.S.A., a non-profit organization fighting child abuse through prevention, research and treatment. The organization is trying to raise \$750,000 to help operate a national child abuse hotline. The organization needs to raise the money by Sept. 1. A booth will be set up at The Ritz to offer information and to accept donations.

● FRANK ALLISON & THE ODD SOX  
Frank Allison & The Odd Sox will perform Thursday, Aug. 4, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For more information, call 998-8555.



Ranking Roger, of English Beat and General Public fame, will appear Friday at Saint Andrew's Hall in Detroit.

● RANKING ROGER  
Ranking Roger will perform Friday, Aug. 5, at Saint Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. For more information, call 981-NEUT.

● STATIC ALPHABET  
Static Alphabet will perform Friday, Aug. 5, at Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, off I-75. For more information, call 355-9780.

● MARIO AND BOY SMILING  
Mario and Boy Smiling will perform at 10 p.m. Friday, Aug. 5, at Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, Dearborn. Admission is \$4. For more information, call 846-5377.

● CHICAGO  
Chicago will perform with special guest, Henry Lee Sninner, on Friday, Aug. 5, at the Pine Knob, tickets at 423-6666.

Theater in Clarkston. To order tickets by phone, call 423-6666.

● THE TEMPTATIONS  
The Temptations will perform Saturday, Aug. 6, at the Pine Knob Music Theater in Clarkston. To order tickets by phone, call 423-6666.

● TREMOR REVIEW  
Shouting Club, Cinecye and 3-D Invisibles will perform Saturday, Aug. 6, at Paycheck's Lounge, 2932 Caniff, Hamtramck. For more information, call 538-5560.

● SOFT WAR  
Soft War, along with special guests The Stand, will perform Saturday, Aug. 6, at the Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, off I-75. For more information, call 355-9780.

● JAMES TAYLOR  
James Taylor will perform Monday, Aug. 8, at the Pine Knob Music Theater in Clarkston. To order tickets by phone, call 423-6666.

● REO SPEEDWAGON  
Reo Speedwagon will perform with special guests Honeycomb Suite, on Monday, Aug. 8, at Meadow Brook Music Festival in Rochester. Tickets are \$20 for pavilion and \$15 for lawn.

COLLEGE COUNTRY

Here are the top 10 songs receiving airplay on WORB-FM, the radio station of Oakland Community College, Orchard Ridge campus in Farmington Hills.

1. "Cold Metal," Iggy Pop.
2. "Cold Sweat," Sagarcubus.
3. "The Queen of U.R.," Wire.
4. "Some Time to Return," Soul Asylum.
5. "Surfin' U.S.A.," Jesus and Mary Chain.
6. "Brand New Lover," Dead or Alive.
7. "Silvio," Bob Dylan.
8. "Dance On," Prince.
9. "Wishing I Was Lucky," Wet Wet Wet.
10. "Somewhere South," Railway Children.

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

1. "Set 'Em Up Joe," Vern Gosdin.
2. "Don't We All Have the Right," Ricky Van Shelton.
3. "If You Change Your Mind," Rosanne Cash.
4. "What She Is (Is a Woman in Love)," Earl Thomas Conley.
5. "If It Don't Come Easy," Tanya Tucker.
6. "Baby Blue," George Strait.
7. "Out of Sight And on My Mind," Billy Joe Royal.
8. "Talkin' to the Wrong Man," Michael Martin Murphy with Ryan Murphy.
9. "Another Place, Another Face," Don Williams.
10. "Givers and Takers," Schuyler, Knobloch & Blackhardt.

REVIEWS

CATCH THE WIND — Donovan

There's a lot more to '60s folk-rocker Donovan than his cule and catchy hits "Mellow Yellow" and "Sunshine Superman."

The just-released CD compilation, "Catch The Wind," makes this case, as it features the best recordings from Donovan's rambling folk-song days, which predated his psychedelic '60s years of pop stardom.

The songs are taken from his first two British albums, recorded in 1965. The young Donovan is again revealed as a tasteful, expressive singer-songwriter and solid guitarist.

His best early songs are here, including "Colors," "Catch the Wind," "Sunny Goodge Street" and "To Sing for You." Also included are some written by British folkie Bert Jansch, which suit Donovan's voice and guitar.

Oddly, there is only one other Donovan title out on CD, his greatest hits on Columbia. Just two CDs it's a number that pales in comparison to the number of CD releases by other '60s legends.

But Donovan deserves his due. And while he may not get it from music critics, Donovan was called back for several encores at a recent



solid-out show at the Royal Oak Music Theater.

As he played his 1988 hit "Hurdy Gurdy Man" in Royal Oak, Donovan recalled writing it while hanging out in India with the Beatles. Telling the audience that George Harrison had written a verse, he asked, "Would you like to hear George's words?"

The lyric was vintage peace-love Harrison. After singing it, Donovan said, "Well spoken, George." It was a thrilling moment, as people responded with enthusiastic applause.

One George Harrison has still got it, and so does Donovan. And on the CD compilation "Catch the Wind," one can sample the best early material of a singer who's offered more than many give him credit for.

— Kevin Brown

EDEN ALLEY — Timbuk 3

Some musical acts are so easy to label. Sometimes they just beg for labels, trying to catch the ride with the next big thing.

For every R.E.M., U2, The Smiths and Replacements, there are 10 clones.

In Timbuk 3, however, we have a group that escapes labels like the Roadrunner doghouse Wyle E. Coyote. We have a group here that is refreshingly original. And better yet, enjoyable.

"EDEN ALLEY" (I.R.S.) is an album that somehow manages to be so soothing, infectious and yet challenging. Satire is the forte of this two-person Austin, Texas, based group.

The husband-wife team of Pat McDonald and Barbara K. have a way of laughing at sex, religion and politics, using a rather eclectic, slow, melodic sound.

There's blues to be heard in "Hey, Reckless Driver." There's a bit of reggae in "A Sinful Life" and ska in "Too Much Sex, Not Enough Affection."

BUT the song subjects are seriously amusing. In the slice-of-life-in-the-backwoods-of-America ditty "Sample the Dog," Timbuk 3 jokes a bit of fun at the education system:



"Johnny can't read, Sally can't write/the board of education runs/buses in the night."

The yuppie-come-down-to-earth tune, "Welcome to the Human Race," smacks with sarcasm. Of course, test we forget the enjoyable, bluesy "The Jack and his Roamin' Cadillac Church." A sense of humor is not a lacking commodity here.

Neither is teamwork. Pat McDonald and Barbara K. not only have quite a knack for writing quirky songs, but they really click well as a singing duo. Some of the many highlights on this album are the numbers where they sing in harmony.

"Easy" really showcases Barbara K.'s vocal ability as "Sample the Dog" does for McDonald. In fact, after sampling "Eden Alley," Timbuk 3 is very easy to like.

— Larry O'Connor

AWAKEN AT TWILIGHT

— It's Raining

One member of the eclectic musical group, The Volbeats, is doing quite well, thank you. Matthew Smith is making his own music in fine style as "Awakened at Twilight" (Certain Records) would attest.

And unlike the raw, backwoods beat of the Volbeats, Smith is going to town with a more uptempo contemporary sound. He hits full throttle with guitar jang Americanas and hits the brakes with pastoral piano pieces. Kinda like R.E.M. meets Bruce Hornsby.

Many of the songs here have an appeal and hooks are plentiful. The writing is fresh, another credit to Smith.

Some of the songs deal with the often maligned topic of lost love. Except, Smith uses strong metaphors to highlight the anguish of it all. In "Upstairs," there are lines like these: "The sheets are strangling me again/Stretching in every direction/ Dragging me into this nightmare/I can feel her pressing up above."

It packs more of an emotional wallop than say, "Betty Jean left me for some dude with a Corvette."



"Christine Is Not Herself Today" uses an upbeat melody to tell the story of a tortured soul. "She said I shouldn't laugh at her/I felt bad/I felt ashamed/She didn't have the courage to take a stand/I watched happiness slip through her hands." Again, Smith uses imagery well.

But while "Awakened at Twilight" is quite an ambitious project lyrically, there really doesn't seem to be any new ground broken here musically. The shades of piano are a nice touch. So is the trumpet in the song, "In Empty Harbors."

The guitar riffs, too, are well done, but they sound too familiar. And guitar is what we hear through-out this album.

Many of the songs on "Awakened at Twilight" score well. What this album needs, however, is a knockout punch.

— Larry O'Connor