



Jimmie Bones and the Grave Robbers include Dominic LaMarra (left), Jimmie Bones, Tommy Cicola, Louie Simon and Randy Michaels.

Grave Robbers dig bare bones beat

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

Throw in the raw guitar sound like the MC-5 or the Rolling Stones. Add some diverse lyrics in the spirit of Jim Carroll or Patti Smith.

Maybe include a dash of irony, a la the Ramones, for a bit of spice.

Of course, trying this in the kitchen will cause a considerable mess. On stage, though, you'll have the straight-ahead rock'n'roll thunder of Jimmie Bones and the Grave Robbers.

But Art Lyzak of Lili's 21 had no idea of what he was getting a few weeks back when he booked the five-member group into the Hamtramck club. Another band had canceled at the last minute, leaving the former member of the Motor City Mutants scurrying for another group.

All Lyzak had was a video of Jimmie Bones and the Grave Robbers. He gave the little-heard-of group a call.

Much to his surprise, the place was packed and Bones and his Grave Robbers shook the house with a no-holds-barred approach to rock'n'roll.

"They just play good, straight-ahead rock'n'roll," Lyzak said.

It's a straight-ahead sound that was honed in only nine months time. The band formed out of a series of jam sessions with lead singer Jimmie

Bones and Dominic LaMarra.

THE BARE-BONES approach is certainly not new in rock'n'roll circles. Both Bones and LaMarra are well aware of that.

Both are confident that they're own trademarks of vivid writing and hard-driving style will make them known.

"As far as writing goes, I try to write from a personal perspective," said Bones, whose singing style is marked by a low, resonant voice. "Or I'll take a story that someone has told me and write a song about that."

Jimmie Bones and the Grave Robbers, more than anything, are a sum total of what's transpired in music for the past 20 years. Rhythm and blues, shades of punk and heavy metal can all be found here.

LaMarra sees the meshing of different musical genres, between the hard rock influences of the '70s and the new music crowd of the 1980s. Guns N' Roses and the Smithereens are some of the examples to be cited.

"That's something you hear in the newer bands coming out now... more of that grinding guitar sound," LaMarra said. "The bands are coming back to the middle of the mainstream."

LaMarra honed his skills in The Reputations, a highly regarded Detroit band. He learned the importance of breaking the mode of standard hard rock drum rhythms, instead taking a more upbeat approach.

JIMMIE BONES played in a number of local rock'n'roll outfits, including the commercial heavy metal sounding Jack Black and Miller's Killers (obviously, Bones has developed a knack for being in well-named bands).

From those experiences, the game plan is clear for Jimmie Bones and the Grave Robbers. The want to play a selective number of dates locally, avoiding saturation. Also, they would like to make regular rounds on the outside college circuit.

"We want to keep writing," Dominic said. "It all boils down to your writing."

Already, the group has shown some depth with socially relevant "All In the Cards," which deals with contrasts between the daily life of the rich and the homeless. Yet the band also produces the punchy tunes, "Tough Girl," that leave people running to the dance floor.

The name of the band itself will more than likely please the interest of the non-local rock variety. "It was probably a combination of too much beer and watching the Three Stooges," Jimmie Bones said.

Sunday radio show has new 'dimension'

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

When tuning into WDET-FM 102 from 10 p.m. to midnight, the question is whether this is a radio show or merely a conversation between two friends during lunch.

With Martin Bandyke and Ralph Valdez, the answer tends to be the latter.

An informal air surrounds their show, "Dimension." The casual nature of this two-hour program is what, perhaps, sets "Dimension" apart from other new music shows on Sunday night.

"We approach it like we're having friends over to the house, and we're playing music for them," said Bandyke, who has hosted "Dimension" with Valdez for nearly six years.

Chances are you won't know what to make of "Dimension" at first. A steady stream of new music from up-and-coming bands, like the Pixies, Throwing Muses and Wire, is featured without the standard heavy rap.

Instead, Bandyke and Valdez fill idle air time by talking about the latest film at the Michigan Theater in Ann Arbor or the new exhibit at the Detroit Institute of Arts. Sometimes they engage in a Siskel-Ebert debate over the merits of a record just played.

Surprisingly, they manage to pull it off without coming off as a pair of holier-than-thou intellectual cosmopolites.

"I DON'T like to be seen as elitist or just playing strange music," Bandyke said. "I feel we're playing music that's enjoyable and challenging at times. We're not trying to alienate listeners or be weird. Or to be obscure for the sake of being obscure."

I think our friendship comes across," Valdez added. "We joke and stuff without going over the top. There's a sincerity there."

Apparently, their growing audience agrees. Requests come in from all around the metropolitan Detroit area, Bandyke said.

The show has a lot of other factors going for it, such as no commercials and an 80,000-watt signal.

"Dimension" will be moved to the 8-10 p.m. time slot on Sundays starting in October, putting it up against Steve Koston's new music



S. KAY YOUNG

Martin Bandyke and Ralph Valdez play alternative music with a twist from 10 p.m. to midnight Sundays on WDET-FM 102.

show, "Sonic Rendezvous," on neighboring WHIP-FM.

Bandyke and Valdez are up for the challenge. The earlier broadcast time will allow more people to listen to the show.

Bandyke said "Dimension" has another edge. He works as an import buyer for Dearborn Music, thus keeping up-to-date on new releases. He also knows what people are buying.

"There's other avenues where people are finding out about alternative music," Bandyke said. "Radio has been lagging far behind. The audience is there. Just by working in a record store, I can see it is there."

"PEOPLE ARE a lot bigger than radio or newspapers give them credit for."

Radio was a natural interest for Bandyke, who graduated from the University of Michigan in 1976 with a degree in TV, radio and film. Bandyke and Valdez played in a new wave band, Retro, together.

A friend who hosted "Dimension" at the time invited the duo down to play some music. The show, which has been on the air for 12 years, was devoted strictly to literature at the time.

Eventually, they took over as hosts. They still focus on the arts, but mix it with a liberal dose of alternative music.

IN CONCERT

• THE LYRES

The Lyres, who are from Boston, will perform Tuesday, Sept. 6, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For more information, call 936-8555.

• ROMANCE

Romance will perform Wednesday through Saturday, Sept. 7-10, at Jagers, 3481 Elizabeth Lake Road, Pontiac. For more information, call 681-1700.

• WALK THE DOGMA

Walk the Dogma will perform, along with Figure 4, on Thursday, Sept. 9, at Paycheck's Lounge, 2932 Caniff, Hamtramck. For more information, call 872-8934.

• TERENCE SIMIEN

Terrence Simien & The Mallet Playboys, who are from New Orleans, will perform at 10 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 8, at The Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$7 and available only at the door.

• POLISH MUSLIMS

The Polish Muslims will perform 8:30-10:30 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 8, in the New Center area, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$7 and available only at the door.

• THE SHY

The Shy will perform on Friday, Sept. 9, at Lili's 21, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck. For more information, call 875-6555.

• N SOMETIMES Y

N Sometimes Y will perform, along with Souled Out, on Friday, Sept. 9, at the Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, off I-75. For more information, call 355-9760.

• FUNHOUSE

Funhouse will perform on Saturday, Sept. 10, at Lili's 21, 2930 Caniff, Hamtramck. For more information, call 872-8934.

• SEE DICK RUN

See Dick Run will perform on Saturday, Sept. 10, at Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, off I-75. For more information, call 355-9760.

• JUGGLERS AND THIEVES

Jugglers and Thieves will perform along with Anti-Fashion and Ash Can VanGogh on Saturday, Sept. 10, at Paycheck's Lounge, 2932 Caniff, Hamtramck. For more information, call 939-MUSIC.

• J.J. CALE

J.J. Cale will perform at 7:30 p.m. and 10 p.m. Monday, Sept. 12, at The Ark, 637 S. Main, Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$12.50 in advance. For more information, call 99-MUSIC.

• B.B. KING

B.B. King will perform at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Oct. 7, at the Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$16.50 and \$12.50. For more information, call 99-MUSIC.

COLLEGE

Here are the top 10 albums receiving airplay on WHFR-FM, the campus station for Henry Ford Community College.

1. "Go Bangs," Shriekback.
2. "Tighten Up the Volume '88," Big Audio Dynamite.
3. "Short, Sharp, Shocked," Michelle Shocked.
4. "Creation," House of Love.
5. "Instinct," Iggy Pop.
6. "People," Hot House Flowers.
7. "Fate," Hunters and Collectors.
8. "Common Ground," Rhythm Corps.
9. "Dream of Life," Patti Smith.
10. "Lovely," Primitives.

COUNTRY

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

1. "Talkin' to the Wrong Man," Michael Martin Murphy.
2. "Givers and Takers," Schuyler, Knobloch and Bickhardt.
3. "The Wanderer," Eddie Rabitt.
4. "Don't Close Your Eyes," Keith Whitley.
5. "I'm Gonna Love Her on the Radio," Charley Pride.
6. "Give a Little Love," The Judds.
7. "If You Change Your Mind," Rosanne Cash.
8. "The Gift," The McCarters.
9. "A Little Bit in Love," Patty Loveless.
10. "I'm Down to My Last Cigarette," R.D. Lang.

REVIEWS

USED GUITARS — Marti Jones

OK. Here's one for all you hip pickers: Who is Marti Jones? Don't know? How about a clue: Don Dixon. Any better?

If you still don't know, I'm afraid it's the back of credibility class for you. Pay attention now, Marti Jones is currently being touted as one of the up and coming big stars, along with K.d. lang.

This album, "Used Guitars," is her third solo project for A&M. It's here that she's starting to introduce herself through her own songs, albeit a brief introduction as there are only three originals out of 11 songs presented.

The album ties a diverse range of songs together using a central theme of a conversation between two women... "a discussion of where love goes, what it leads to and what happens."

Jones chooses her songs from a selection of some of the strongest songwriters around, ranging from Graham Parker through John Hiatt to Janis Ian (who, with her songwriting partner Kye Fleming, is amusingly credited on the LP as Ian Fleming).

Although she has a very strong, sweet and clear voice, it is this aspect



KAREN MONSTER

— Karen Monster

Karen Monster is a lean, mean, rock'n'roll machine.

And Karen Monster goes to great lengths to tell us just that on this self-titled, five-song EP on Keene Records. This is scratch-your-eyes-out hard rock that almost borders on heavy metal at times.

We get heavy doses of chain-saw guitar riffs right from the get-go with "I Got a Right" and "Get Off My Train," thus validating that Monster's rock'n'roll is as nasty as the best of them.

There is a natural tendency to lump Monster in the same sneering lyrical female subdivision with Chrissie Hynde. Yet Monster has a knack for putting her feelings across in a rather blunt way that certainly rivals Miss Hynde (or Mrs. Kerr, if you prefer).

Take, for instance, these lines from the love-turned-sour song "I Hate Love": "Everytime I see you on the street, I want to spit/You make me sick/I want to kick your head in black and blue because you're such a

Well, you get the idea. At least it saves us the trouble of playing this record backwards in search of any deep, dark hidden messages.

But amid the black leather, skull and crossbones image (check out the rings on her fingers) Monster clings to, there is a very talented performer/songwriter here. One can certainly see that in the introspective "Second Thoughts." Monster lets her guard down here and the results are rather enjoyable.

Another entry into the well-written, well-performed department is "Digging My Own Grave." There's a snake-like rhythm here that easily draws one into the fray. Even the crude "I Hate Love" has a certain hook that's not easy to ignore.

Yet, if Monster is going to continue to make waves, there will be a need to reconcile the issue of image and song content. She is certainly capable of delivering the goods without all the muscle-flexing.



— LARRY O'CONNOR

GREATEST HITS — The Judds

— The Judds

The Judds, mom Naomi and daughter Wynona, need no introduction to their millions of country fans. With release of their greatest hits (RCA), however, the duo makes its case for consideration as one of the nation's top musical acts of any kind — and makes it pretty well.

If K.d. lang isn't country music's best young female voice, then Wynona Judd certainly is. Her sultry, powerful vocals recall the legion of country females who have preceded her, but they establish her as an equal, not an imitator.

Unlike lang, who seems content to chase after the ghost of Patsy Cline, Wynona Judd appears to want nothing so much as "female Elvis" status. "Rockin' With the Rhythm of the Rain" included here, is as fine a piece of modern day rockabilly as anyone has recorded.

Other hits, such as "Why Not Me," "Mama He's Crazy" and "Love Is Alive," are more country, less rockabilly, but just as satisfying.

Besides obvious good looks, mom Naomi also adds gorgeous harmony vocals. With "Change of Heart," she



— WAYNE PEAL

also tries her hand at songwriting, although the duo's hit-making status also allows them to pick and choose from the cream of Nashville's songwriting crop.

If the duo has a weakness, it's that they occasionally record material that's a trifle too clever, or cloying, for their own good.

Despite being a massive country hit, "Grandpa Tell Me About the Good Old Days" might just as well be a Ronald Reagan speech set to music. And only Wynona Judd's sassy delivery saves "Give a Little Love" from the scrap heap of banality.

That problem isn't the Judds alone, however. But at its best, however, country music delivers lyrics that ring true, music that draws from America's rich heritage and singers that bring absolute conviction to their task.

When it comes down to that, the Judds deliver as well as anybody.

— WAYNE PEAL