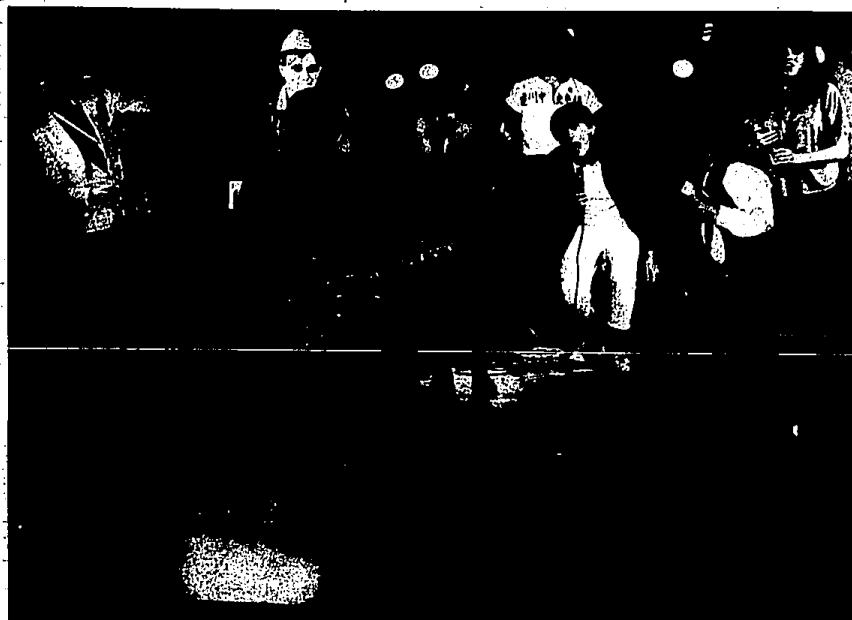




Members of the zany Polish Muslims include Robert Blajda (left), David Derecyzk, Ken Kondrat, Crystal Gaynor, Mike Miller, Dave Uchalik, Al Phife and Mary Beth Growe.

Polish Muslims polka bit of fun

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

The task sounded simple. Seek and find the Polish Muslims and interview them.

Sure, we know where they hide. Drive along I-75, get a whiff of kielbasa and cabbage cooking and follow your nose. That leads you to the streets of Joe Campau and Caniff in Hamtramck.

But, ah, these Polish Muslims are a tricky lot. They stay undercover during the day, only a sip-pick of beer and an offer of a few free games of bowling can lure them out.

No, this would take some ingenuity. In order to capture and interview the Polish Muslims, you must think like the Polish Muslims, you must dress like a Polish Muslim and you must eat like a Polish Muslim.

This calls for a couple of Stroh's, a plate full of pierogis and a fresh pair of white socks. On this day, the Polish Muslims are scheduled to perform at the Hamtramck Festival.

Even parking the car on Caniff has to be done carefully. The youth who is collecting \$2 in the lot looks like an operative.

Especially after the Hamtramck police made the kid empty his pockets and find he's been pocketing money on the sly. This, more than likely, is one of many fund-raising activities the Polish Muslims incorporate, perhaps to pay for bleach used to keep their white socks bright.

AFTER WALKING down tree-lined Sobieski Street, we come upon the Polish Muslims' hideout — a two-story home with the door open. We're soon face to face with Dave Uchalik, a well-known, card-carrying Polish Muslim.

"Hi. Come on in," Uchalik said. "Can I get you a beer?"

With that out of the way, the information comes fast and furious. The Polish Muslims are a parody rock 'n' roll band. They have been performing

locally for more than six years.

The band formed out of the nucleus of two since-departed rock 'n' roll outfits, Reruns and the Cheaters. It seems the Reruns equipment was stolen and members of both groups banded together for a benefit show in order to buy some new gear.

One night, Uchalik was sitting at Lili's 21 with some of his fellow band mates. It was then they decided to join forces and call themselves the Polish Muslims.

"Maybe we had too much beer," said Uchalik, recalling the moment.

The mode of operation would be simple: Play a mixed bag of covers and parodies, poke a little fun at their Polish heritage, and have a good time. And, by no means, was it to be taken seriously.

With that, the band has been a success.

A string of local parody hits have followed like "Love Polka No. 9," "Bowling U.S.A.," and "Dance to the Polka." Their single, "Love Polka No. 9," "Bowling U.S.A.," sold extremely well.

NOW THERE'S a shot at national attention. The Polish Muslims will be featured on the Restless Records compilation, "Polka is Now," due out in October.

"Who knows?" Uchalik said. "Maybe the pipe dream of ours of making it nationally might happen."

With that would come all the doubt about artistic integrity, whether or not to cut or guss up leave Hamtramck. Geez, would they be called upon to write original material? Would they have to tour for Amnesty International? Vexing questions indeed.

"That's what I'm worried about," Uchalik said, "taking it too seriously."

Concerns, though, are put aside as the band gets ready to perform at the Hamtramck Festival. This is the homecoming. This is akin to Springsteen playing at the Meadowslands in New Jersey or U2 playing the R.D.S. in Dublin.

And like the aforementioned performers, the Polish Muslims speak to the people about their problems, their concerns. Which is why the opening chords of the Rolling Stones number "I Can't Get No Satisfaction" are met with Uchalik singing "I Can't Get No Trash Collection." There is a reported work slow down by the city's sanitation workers, so people in Hamtramck are knee deep in garbage.

Heartfelt, the number gets people out of the Las Vegas tents and clapping rhythmically. Uchalik sings the numbers dressed in a beige workshirt with a U.A.W. patch on the sleeve, brown pants, bowling shoes and, yes, white socks.

THE FESTIVAL atmosphere is further enhanced by stinging renditions of "Love Polka No. 9" and "Dance to the Polka." So enthused is the crowd that a man no less than 70 jumps on stage and dances with Polish Muslim lead singer Crystal Gaynor.

Seriously, though, the hour-long show is a triumph for many reasons. The Polish Muslims are able to keep their performances fresh, which is a herculean task for a band that plays mainly parodies and covers.

One reason is that they are able to throw so many diverse elements. One song could be sung in the sweet, soulful voice of Crystal Gaynor, followed by another by the raw-edged vocals of Uchalik. All told, the Polish Muslims have four different people singing lead during a show.

Another factor in the band's success stems simply from not overdoing it.

"We change the repertoire a lot," said Al Phife of Birmingham, who plays bass. "Maybe not getting together often helps keep us fresh."

The Polish Muslims will give a free concert from 5-8 p.m. Friday, Sept. 16, at Fairlane Town Center in Dearborn. Also, the band will perform on Saturday, Sept. 17, at Paycheck's Lounge in Hamtramck.

IN CONCERT

● J.J. CALE

J.J. Cale will perform at 7:30 and 10 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 12, at The Art, 635 S. Main, Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$12.50 in advance. For more information, call 99-MUSIC.

● TAV FALCO

Tav Falco's Panther Burns will perform Tuesday, Sept. 13, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For more information, call 996-8555.

● ROMANCE

Romance will perform Wednesday through Saturday, Sept. 14-17, at Jagers, 3481 Elizabeth Lake Road, Pontiac. For more information, call 681-1700.

● ROBERT NOLL

Robert Noll will perform Wednesday, Sept. 14, at the Good Co., 23845 W. Warren, Dearborn Heights. For more information, call 274-4848.

● TAIL GATORS

The Tail Gators will perform Thursday, Sept. 15, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For more information, call 996-8555.

● HIPPODROME

Hippodrome will perform Friday, Sept. 16, at the Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, Hamtramck. For more information, call 365-9760.

● ORANGE ROUGHIES

The Orange Roughies will perform Friday, Sept. 16, at Lili's 21, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck. For more information, call 99-MUSIC.

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● BLUES JUBILEE

Robert Penn, Juanita McCray, Butler Twins and Redford Steve will perform on Saturday, Sept. 17, in a blues jubilee at Moby Dick's, 5452 Schaefer, Dearborn. For more information, call 581-3650.

● CIVILIANS

Civilians will perform will perform Saturday, Sept. 17, at the Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, Hamtramck. For more information, call 365-9760.

● KAREN MONSTER

Karen Monster will perform Saturday, Sept. 17, at Lili's 21, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck. For more information, call 875-6555.

● FUNHOUSE

Funhouse will perform Sunday, Sept. 18, at Saint Andrew's Hall, East Congress, Detroit. For more information, call 961-MELT.

● SOUL ASYLUM

Soul Asylum will perform with special guests, Living Colour, on Monday, Sept. 19, at the Nectarine Ballroom, 510 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$12.50. For more information, call 99-MUSIC.

● S.B. KING

S.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.



Jugglers and Thieves will perform with Raggamuffin on Saturday, Sept. 17, at Alvin's, 5755 Cass, Detroit.

COLLEGE

Here are the top-10 albums receiving airplay on WOLU-FM 105, the campus station of Oakland University in Rochester.

1. "Life's Too Good," Sagarcabes.
2. "A Bell is a Cup," Wire.
3. "Conscious Party," Ziggy Marley.
4. "Tracy Chapman," Tracy Chapman.
5. "Green Thoughts," Smitherens.
6. "Our Beloved Revolutionary Sweetheart," Camper Van Beethoven.
7. "Bullet La Volta," Bullet La Volta.
8. "Submarine," Catbeats.
9. "Echo and the Bunnymen," Echo and the Bunnymen.
10. "Short, Sharp, Shocked," Michelle Shocked.

CLASSICAL

Here are the 10 most requested selections on WQRS-FM 105, which broadcasts classical music 24 hours a day.

1. "Canon in D Major," Johannes Pachelbel.
2. "Piano Concerto No. 23 in A Major," W.A. Mozart.
3. "Meditation from Thaïs," Jules Massenet.
4. "The Four Seasons," Antonio Vivaldi.
5. "Adagio in G Minor," Tommaso Albinoni.
6. "Adagio for Strings," S. Barber.
7. "Piano Concerto No. 2," Sergei Rachmaninoff.
8. "The Symphony No. 6 in F Major," Ludwig van Beethoven.
9. "Toccata and Fugue in D Minor," Johann Sebastian Bach.
10. "The Liberty Fanfare," John Williams.

REVIEWS

FOLKWAYS: A VISION SHARED — various artists

Folk music is not bland and wimpy, as some think.

Then again, that opinion is understandable. When many think "folk music," they hear sappy John Denver or the old fogey style of Burl Ives.

But folk music at its best is a rough-and-tumble, gritty, often unbridled music.

Lately, its best practitioners have included Bob Dylan, on selected recordings, and Bruce Springsteen, on his fine 1983 album "Nebraska."

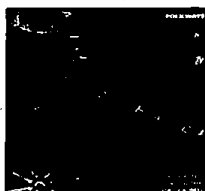
And both contribute songs to a new collection album, "Folkways: A Vision Shared." It's a tribute to the premiere folk singers of the '30s and '40s, Woody Guthrie and Leadbelly (Huddie Ledbetter).

Guthrie was the ultimate anti-yuppie. He hated country anti-yuppie, who sacrificed personal dignity and the dignity of others for a buck.

More than that, he was a gifted songwriter, best known for "This Land Is Your Land." Like early Dylan, Guthrie often grafted his own words onto traditional folk melodies with wit and a poetic touch.

Leadbelly, a booming singer who mastered the 12-string guitar, who wrote some memorable songs, including "Goodnight, Irene."

The music of Guthrie and Leadbel-



MUSIC FROM THE FILM "MARRIED TO THE MOB" — various artists

Director Jonathon Demme is one of the hippest cats in Tinseltown. His credits include "Stop Making Sense," the Talking Heads concert movie; "Melvin and Howard," the strange story of the guy who met Howard Hughes; and "Something Wild," about the suit-and-tie guy who goes for a ride with an adventurous woman.

It follows that the sound track from Demme's latest film, "Married to the Mob," is equally hip. The lineup includes New Order, Sinead O'Connor, Ziggy Marley and Tom Tom Club.

These days most movie sound tracks are loaded with excess. They have become another vehicle for marketing the film or capitalizing on the movie's success, and often feature rotten outtakes from rotten bands or gimmicky rejuvenated oldies.

The "Married to the Mob" sound track (Rapine) is better than most, though. Especially strong are O'Connor's "Jump in the River," Chris Isaak's "Smileless" and Brian Auger's "You Don't Miss Your Water."

Also included is a female singer named Lazzarus, a New York City taxi driver Demme met in a snow-



storm, and a Haitian band called The Voodooist Corporation.

There is some fat here, and some stuff that was rescued from the scrap heap. Debbie Harry of Blondie fans offers an uninspired version of the Castaways' hit, "Liar, Liar." It doesn't match the original.

Having not seen the movie though, this soundtrack, like most others leaves the listener somewhat unsatisfied.

— Brian Lipscomb

DETROIT MUSIC SCENE VOL. 1 — various artists

The main idea behind compilation albums is to offer a potpourri of what's out there. They are of particular value locally, mainly because if you like a band's single, chances are you'll investigate further.

In that sense, "Detroit Music Scene Vol. 1" is a success. Here we get a good mix of Detroit rock 'n' roll talent. Included are local music heavyweights like See Dick Run, Beer on the Penguin, The Difference and Funhouse. Also, we get the recent works of groups who are just starting out or who keep a rather low-profile like Hippodrome, Anion James and Jugglers and Thieves.

The end result, if anything, is quite encouraging. There's an actual attempt by some of the bands to break the strait-ahead, ram-bam, nuts and bolts rock 'n' roll mentality born out of the era of MC 5 and Iggy and the Stooges. Remember folks, MC 5 and Iggy were unique 15 years ago because their sound at the time was new.

That's not to say there's not some derivative stuff here. The Edge-like guitar riffs and the Euro-dance sound has been tried before.

Also, there are some technical blemishes as well. Scott Campbell's "Come Home (With Me)" sounds a bit muddled. Chrissy McCall's eth-



real voice never seems to mesh with the snarling guitar tracks in Jugglers and Thieves' "Springtime."

Yet there are some pleasant surprises. Anion James futuristic post-punk number "Can't Let On" reflects an artist with definite promise. The same can be said for Hippodrome whose "Autumn Colors" will stand the test of time.

The Difference's funk-soaked "Lonely One" will get the wallflowers dancing. And with their croissant approach to songwriting (light and airy), See Dick Run's "They Were So Young" will definitely hang on your ear.

This album, in general, will impress more than disappoint.

— Larry O'Connor