

# STREET BEATS

## Queen of the blues finally gets her due

By Larry O'Connor  
staff writer

Excuse Koko Taylor, but she still sounds a little star-struck.

It's been four years since she received her Grammy Award for Best Blues Recording in 1984. Yet she continues to talk in awe of being on the same stage as Barbara Streisand, Whitney Houston and Dionne Warwick, not to mention having Dan Ackroyd blow harmonica at one of her performances.

Then along with six Grammy nominations, there's nine W.C. Handy Awards and College Music Journal's New Music Award for Best Blues Album in 1985. After 26 years, one might figure she would take it all in stride.

Some of the greats end the list of accomplishments with a yawn. Taylor completes hers with a large sigh of pride.

After all, the story of the blues artist is often one of despair, living in obscurity. No one knows that better than Taylor, which makes her even more grateful.

"A lot of blues artists never got any respect," said Taylor, known to many as the "Queen of the Blues." "Some never will. I happened to be one of the few lucky ones."

"But it took a long time. I worked hard for a long time. As long as I was waiting, I kept smiling. Now things are looking up."

TAYLOR WILL tell you how — until this year — she would always play behind men at blues shows. No matter if she was the biggest name, male blues artists were billed at the top. There's no bitterness in her voice. Like she said, she just kept smiling.

But times are a changing. She's since headlined the Chicago Blues Festival along with another show at the renowned Apollo Theater in New York. She is quite happy with the turn of events of late.

Taylor has recovered from a van

wreck, which left her with a three broken ribs along with a fractured collarbone along with injuries to her mouth. She was off the road for four months while recuperating.

In the future, there's her upcoming tour (including a stop Friday and Saturday at Alvin's in Detroit) and an album due out February or March on Alligator Records.

Expect nothing but rollicking, house rocking blues from this Chicago resident. Her raucous, heartfelt vocal style was honed by gospel and blues influences in youth, growing in Memphis, Tenn.

In a male dominated field, there were still women blues artists for Taylor to follow. Mama Thornton and Beatie Smith were well-known at the time, so was Memphis Minnie.

WHEN SHE moved to Chicago with her husband, she hooked up with noted songwriter and A&R man for Chess Records, Willie Dixon.

"When I moved to Chicago, I would sit in with local musicians like Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf and Elmore James," she said. "I was doing this, not for money, not for recording, not for anything, but just because I loved to sing."

"One time I was sitting in and Willie Dixon was in the audience. He came up to me after the show and said, 'I've never heard a woman sing the blues like that before! Where did you come from?'"

"Wang Wang Doodle" a song that would later become Taylor's trademark, was the result of the collaboration between Taylor and Dixon. The hit sold more than a million copies, sending Taylor well on her way.

Dixon wrote the song for Taylor to sing, but another blues great did the tune first. He didn't have the same kind of success. Howlin' Wolf has nothing to hang his head about.

"I like his version, too. Taylor said, 'I like Howlin' Wolf. He's one of my all-time favorites.'"

"Songs are like shooting dice. You have to shoot the dice and see how it



Koko Taylor has been singing the blues for 26 years. But only recently has she begun to receive the recognition for being the "Queen of the Blues."

rolls. Sometimes you win, sometimes you don't."

TAYLOR'S ALBUM, for the most part, have been winners. Her last four discs on Alligator Records have been nominated for Grammy Awards, "Blues Explosion," an an-

thology album on Atlantic Records, did the trick for her in 1984.

Her last album, "Live From Chicago—An Audience With the Queen," captured Taylor at her best, performing in front of an audience. The disc features classics such as

"I'm A Woman," "Come To Mama" and "I'd Rather Go Blind."

The accident hasn't dampened her enthusiasm in the least bit. She's looking forward to this upcoming tour.

"It's good to be back," she said.

## IN CONCERT

### ● AVANTE GARDENERS

The Avante Gardeners will perform on Tuesday, Nov. 29, at the Blind Pig, 108 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For more information, call 998-8555.

### ● SCOTT CAMPBELL

Scott Campbell will perform on Tuesday, Nov. 29, at Jagers, Cass and Elizabeth, Pontiac. For more information, call 881-1701.

### ● ROMANCE

Romance will perform Thursday, Dec. 1, through Sunday, Dec. 18, at Dayton's, Rochester Road, near 14 Mile, Clawson. For more information, call 528-1559.

### ● BENEFIT

Rockers Against Abuse will take place at 8 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 1, at Saint Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. Bands Huntress, Hillery Chase, Vigilante and V.X.N. will all perform. Tickets are \$5 in advance (\$6 at the door) and available at Garden City Music, Bonanza Wine Shop, Rock of Ages locations in Garden City and Redford, Dearborn Music, The Dungen Under Hair Design in Madison Heights and Saint Andrew's Hall. All proceeds will be donated to Rosalyn Bryant Foundation for Abused Children and First Step Domestic Abuse Shelter.

### ● ROBERT PALMER

Robert Palmer will perform at 8 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 30, at the State Theater in Detroit. Tickets are \$17.50. For more information, call 425-6666.

### ● SCREAMING TRIBESMAN

The Screaming Tribesman will perform on Wednesday, Nov. 30, at the Blind Pig, 108 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For more information, call 998-8555.

### ● VA-VOOM

Va-Voom will perform with special guests, Lost Patrol, on Thursday, Dec. 1, at Paycheck Lounge, 2932 Caniff, Hamtramck. For more information, call 872-9934.

### ● GRANFALLON

Granfallon will perform on Friday, Dec. 2, at Paycheck Lounge, 2932 Caniff, Hamtramck. For more information, call 872-9934.

## LOCAL

Here are the top-10 songs receiving airplay on "Detroit Music Scene," which is aired 4-5 p.m. Sundays (repeated on 5:30-6:30 p.m. Tuesdays) on WDTN-FM 90.9.

1. "Vain Boy," Cody Carter.
2. "Ghost of Autumn," Joelot Trama.
3. "Boomerang," Empty Set.
4. "Chain Gang," Volebars.
5. "Blue Crystals," Marc Lademas.
6. "Come the Dance," 22 Cave Gods.
7. "I'll Remember You," See Dick Kim.
8. "Piece of My Heart," Bat Boys.
9. "Take Care," Punkbitch.
10. "Break Loose," The Stilles.

## COUNTRY

Here are the top-10 songs receiving airplay on WWW-FM 106.7.

1. "I'll Leave This World Loving You," Ricky Van Shelton.
2. "Blue to the Bone," Sweethearts of the Rodeo.
3. "New Shade of Blue," Southern Pacific.
4. "I Know How He Feels," Reba McEntire.
5. "Chiseled in Stone," Vern Gossdin.
6. "I Wish That I Could Fall in Love Today," Barbara Mandrell.
7. "Spanish Eyes," Willie Nelson.
8. "If You Ain't Lovin' (You Ain't Livin')," George Strait.
9. "Gonna Take A Lot of River," Oak Ridge Boys.
10. "Summer Wind," Desert Rose Band.

## Huntress surges in area circles

By Larry O'Connor  
staff writer

Hey, did you think being in an all-female hard rock band was all bright lights and glamour? Think again.

"We have our problems," said Gretchen Domino, bass player in the band Huntress. "You have five women trying to get into the bathroom at the same time. It's hectic, but it's worth it."

Must be. Huntress has been making a name for itself in local hard rock circles since 1984. The group has been more than able to hold its own in a very competitive segment of the local society, performing in a male-dominated genre of music at places such as the Token Lounge, The Ritz and Harpos.

Domino said the band is versatile, basically able to incorporate any type of music into their repertoire. But, by no means, classify them as heavy metal. Huntress doesn't fit the bill.

Which is ironic, since they usually perform with heavy metal bands. Huntress will be performing on Thursday at Saint Andrew's Hall

along with Vigilante, Hillery Chase and V.X.N.

All proceeds from the show will be donated to the Rosalyn Bryant Foundation for Abused Children and First Step Domestic Abuse Shelter.

As always, any first time witnesses will have to be won over. Huntress is usually up for the challenge.

"WE ALWAYS get that from guys, 'Women can't play rock 'n' roll,'" Domino said. "Once we play, though, it's a different story."

The story on Huntress' beginnings focuses primarily on lead singer Irene Vlasin and Domino, who put the band together through a series of friendships. Vlasin and Domino played together in an all-female group named Fraulein, which performed in lounge circuit. They also worked together in hard rock band Impulse.

Other members of Huntress include Lianne Terran of Livonia, guitarist; Trina Manning of Plymouth, lead guitarist; and Laura Resseguie of Grosse Pointe, drums.

Huntress started from the basics, working for six months in the base-

ment of Domino's home in Detroit to come up with original material. From there, it's been an uphill climb.

The latest to join the fray has been Lianne Terran, who knew a friend of a friend. The band was looking for a guitarist and auditioned several for the part before snatching up Terran.

"We got so many women who said they could play guitar 'n' roll," Domino said. "They came and auditioned and we said, 'Yeh right.'"

Domino said the intentions were right for starting Huntress. Vanity was not the main reason, but the music. That's not to say if fame and fortune want to come along for the ride, they wouldn't be welcomed.

One step in that direction is being taken. The band is currently working on a six-song EP they hope to have out early next year.

"We get great response because the women in our band are very talented," Domino said. "They can play more than three chords."

Performing at benefits, such as the one Thursday, only help increase awareness about the band. But Dom-



Huntress, an all-female hard rock band, will perform Thursday at Saint Andrew's Hall in Detroit.

ino said band members become aware about the cause they're performing for.

"Any kind of benefit is worth playing, especially if it's for abused children," she said. "I've known people throughout my life who've been donated to Rosalyn Bryant Foundation for Abused Children and First Step Domestic Abuse Shelter."

Huntress will perform along

with Vigilante, Hillery Chase and V.X.N. in "Rockers Against Abuse" benefit at 8 p.m. Thursday at Saint Andrew's Hall in Detroit. Tickets are \$5 in advance (\$6 at the door). Proceeds will be donated to Rosalyn Bryant Foundation for Abused Children and First Step Domestic Abuse Shelter.

"There was one band," he said. "I think there name is Collecting Hunters or something like that."

We knew what he meant. Ever since, we've waited with baited breath for the next release from this Australian outfit. After all, if one of the Pabst Blue Ribbon drinkers at Paychecks thinks highly of them, well, that's just as good as a five-star rating in Rolling Stone in our book.

Unfortunately, the wait is for naught. On "Fate," (I.R.S.) Hunters and Collector is a band on top of its musical craft. Perhaps too much.

There's a nary a flaw in the big, vast sound of H&C. This comes from endless tours of the relentless Australian bar circuit. Yet the heart and soul of this band is somehow missing in the production.

— Cormac Wright

## REVIEWS

### VOLUME ONE

#### — Traveling Wilburys

The legendary members of this band have never exactly been known for making music for the sheer fun of it. But that's what the Wilbury brothers — Otis, Nelson, Lucky, Lefty and Charlie T. Jr. — have done on this 10-song set.

Otherwise known as Jeff Lynne, George Harrison, Bob Dylan, Roy Orbison and Tom Petty, these guys shed their heavy-headed images to come together for some well-crafted, happy-go-lucky music on "Volume One."

About the only disappointment is that the distinctly different superstar musicians did not exactly bring out some hard-driving material. Instead, they opted for harmonies, acoustic guitars and devil-may-care lyrics.

That doesn't mean "Volume One" isn't a ball.

"Ooh, babe, the pleasure'd be all mine, if you'll let me drive your pick-up truck, and park it where the sun don't shine," sings Dylan, eerily, Lucky, on tongue-in-cheek "Dirty Work."

"Margaretta," Petty (Charlie T. Jr.) croons that "it was in Pittsburgh, late one night/lost my head, got into a fight/rolled and tumbled, 'til I saw the light/went to the Big Apple — took a bite."



"Nelson" Harrison is featured vocally on the hit single, "Handle With Care," and "Heading For The Light," two easy mid-tempo songs that could have been leftovers from his "Cloud Nine" sessions. By the way, Harrison and (Otis) Lynne co-produced both that LP and the Wilbury collaboration.

Also, George's guitar style abounds throughout the disc: Listen to the intro to "End Of The Line." It's a dead ringer for that on the Beatles' "I'm Looking Through You."

Others worth mentioning are "Rattled," a rockabilly track with ex-LO stalwart Lynne handling lead vocals, and hard-edged "Tweeter And The Monkey Man," which offers some of Dylan's best storytelling lyrics in quite some time.

Radio may not be doing much to showcase the Wilburys so far. But that shouldn't matter to fans of these legends, who have put together an effort to be proud of.

— Tim Smith

### ONLY LIFE

#### — The Feelies

Anybody who was in Ann Arbor recently to witness the Feelies' brilliant gig will be my backup in saying that this LP is one of the must-haves for this year. Or any other for that matter.

Live, the Feelies are frantic, brash, loud and danceable. They also look like the serious young men (and woman) of rock, with never a simile spared. They use a manic looking gentile giant of a percussionist who adds so much power to the sound that he is a treat to watch. Add to that the frantic guitar playing of both Bill Millon and singer Glenn Mercer and you have a virtual powerhouse on stage.

This LP, "Only Life" (A&M), is not as overwhelming as their live performance but to offset this, the strength of their songs are highlighted. Stanley Demek's fabulous drumming drives each song along allowing for Mercer's infectious vocal melody and his pseudo guitar hero antics. Actually, the Feelies are one of the few bands whose songs give as much time to guitar melody lines as vocal melody lines, and Mercer con-



trols both of them with his guitar work being powerful but just short of going over the top.

If you're looking for comparisons, I'd probably have to point you in the direction of Velvet Underground and, maybe, Camper Van Beethoven. Mercer's subtle vocals are reminiscent of Lou Reed and they use a variety of acoustic instruments to back up their electricies.

Starting with "It's Only Life" all the way through the infectious "Deep Fascination" to "What Goes On," they show that they richly deserve their current status in the college charts.

This band from New Jersey does not wander outside their native territory too often so any opportunity you are afforded to see them live should be grabbed with both hands and held for fear of death.

Meantime, this album will see you through the winter doldrums and beyond.

— Cormac Wright

### FATE

#### — Hunters and Collectors

While back, we had a conversation with one of the senior set who is a regular at Paychecks in Hamtramck. He was naming his favorite bands that have come through the bar to perform.

"There was one band," he said. "I think there name is Collecting Hunters or something like that."

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Why this is so could be for a number of reasons. Very likely there was no much of an effort on part of the producer, Greg Edwards, to make this a big, commercial hit. As a result, H&C forsaked the raw edge of its music with more polish.

Frankly, it doesn't work. The few highlights of this album includes a raucous rendition of "Breadline" that has more spirit than an electric eel rapped around a live wire. The grinding guitar gives this number a sharp edge. Too bad there's not more of this here.

The rest of the album fades from there. Mark Seymour's constant yowl began to become annoying after awhile. When the last track, "I Want To Believe In," ends you know you don't believe in this album.

Chances are the guy sleeping his beer at Paychecks is right. Hunters and Collectors is a good band. They're not allowed to show it on "Fate."

— Larry O'Connor