



The members of Passion Nouveau include Marc Andria, vocalist Jimmy Page and Jimi Hendrix as his. Derrick Thompson, drummer Vern Blevins and guitarist John Macca.

Their 'passion' is dance music

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

Three out of four members of Passion Nouveau recommend dance music with an edge. And the fourth member, you ask. Well, Marc Andria of Troy chooses to sit this interview out at the other table while other band members hover around a tape recorder. "He is the quiet one," said Derrick Thompson, vocalist and spokesman for Passion Nouveau. Drummer Vern Blevins of Warren and guitarist John Macca of Farmington Hills along with Thompson more than make up for Andria's silence. All three enthusiastically discuss the direction of Passion Nouveau, keeping their concentration along the way despite talking above a soundcheck by the British synth band Flock of Seagulls at Blondie's.

First off, Passion Nouveau proclaims itself as a dance band with a spark. While members cite New Order, Duran Duran and Rory Music as influences, guitarist Macca lists Jimmy Page and Jimi Hendrix as his. So there you go. There's the edge. Members believe that the raw guitar sound puts Passion Nouveau a few steps ahead of the average disco band. "Our live show adds a lot of guitar and movement up front, which British bands don't offer," said Thompson, 25, who lives in Detroit. "Their stage show is usually boring. We try to offer a lot of excitement."

Passion Nouveau certainly captures that on tape. Songs are filled with musical virtuosity and improvisation. To their credit, they don't fall into the trap of repetitive beats and display a certain spark uncommon for bands of their ilk.

That obviously is by design. Thompson formed the band, under a different name, six years ago with the idea of being new without falling

into a formula. Joey Kool was the beginning of what would later become Passion Nouveau. Influenced by the likes of Missing Persons, that band was fronted by a female. Thompson played guitar in the group. Things grew stale and Thompson reorganized. He met Andria, who suggested Blevins. A few people auditioned the guitarist spot until Macca emerged. "I feel confident that he is the missing link," Thompson said. "The four of us planned to go far." So far the band has made it to Chicago and Toronto along with a tour of the college circuit. Also, they are one of the few bands that can boast of playing rock'n'roll venues, such as Paycheck's Lounge and Lili's 21, as well as dance clubs like Taboo.

THE SOUND, they believe, crosses a wide genre of musical tastes. Again, credit for part of that goes to the guitarist. "I think it's good to have a dance

sound," said Blevins, who lives in Warren. "But it's good to have an edge to it. John brings that." "The guitar is a very emotional instrument," Thompson added. "I heard Jimmy Page make his guitar cry once." Another facet to the Passion Nouveau sound is the song writing of Thompson. He admits writing one out of four songs for a pop hit. He said the other stuff comes from within. Songs off a slickly-produced demo tape shows a group whose quite confident in its direction. At first, Thompson said the band tried to play all types of music, including country and western, rhythm and blues and straight ahead rock'n'roll. "Dance is where it's at, though, for Passion Nouveau." "The thing about this band," Macca said, "is that it seems to be involved in whatever is new. It's always on the cutting edge of what is happening in music."

MUSIC NOTES

Proving that good music and a lot of hard work pays off, Second Self has been signed by national record label EMI.

The Detroit band will celebrate the event with a combined record release/record label signing bash on Tuesday, Feb. 14, at Saint Andrew's Hall in Detroit. The four members of Second Self are already heralding the news.

"We've been trying for awhile," said drummer Jeff Fowkes, "and all of a sudden it happened."

Second Self has extensively toured the Michigan, Ohio and Ontario region along with the East Coast for the past two years. After hearing a six-song tape, EMI arts and repertoire man, Rob Gordon, flew in to Cincinnati to check out the band.

Gordon was impressed enough to have Second Self showcase for the entire label in New York. Shortly after, they were signed.

"I felt they exemplify what's missing in music these days," said Gordon, who works out of EMI's New York office. "The passion. The very strong live show. The dedication to the music for music's sake, not necessarily just for success. I think they write great songs."

Eight of Second Self's songs will be released next week on a mini-LP. EMI will pick up distribution on that date. Also, Fowkes said the group will head into the studio to work on an album to be released by August.

The next few months will be spent picking a producer. The band is working with a list of about "30-40 names."

Fowkes said that will be tough considering the short amount of time they have before they're back into the studio.

"We're looking for somebody who really understands our approach to music," Fowkes said. "Somebody where we can just walk right in, set up and do it. Our stuff is pretty much where we want it to be."

Second Self has Rebel Heels (Atlantic), Elvis Hitler (Restless/Enig-

ma), Sedace (I.R.S.) and Rhythm Corps (Pasha-CBS) as Detroit groups that have been recently signed by national record companies. Of the four, Rhythm Corps appears to be enjoying the most of success. Their album, "Common Ground," is selling well and receiving considerable airplay on commercial radio.

Fowkes believes that type of notoriety is within Second Self's grasp.

"We will make it," Fowkes said. "I think we have all of the elements. It's just a matter of keeping the focus. So far, we've been able to do that."

ALSO, SEEKING to put Detroit bands in a national light is Tremor Records' Gary Reichel. He's involved in the distribution of latest releases by Frank Allison and the Odd Sox, "Monkey Business" (LP); Bootsey X, "Strip Music for the Suburbs" (cassette); 3-D Invisibles, "Vampire A Go-Go" (LP); Jack Monkeys, "Kick Out the Jolly" (LP); Vix Akalidren, "Witness" (mini-LP); Sleep, "Brain Child" (LP) and his group Clacetye, "Who Goes There?" All of those performers, and then some, were action recently as Tremor Records presented on its come-to-be-expected excellent review shows at Saint Andrew's Hall.

People were remarking at the show about the stellar performance put in by those fellas from out yonder, the Volebeats. We had a chance to catch 3-D Invisibles, who had everybody bumping and moving on the floor.

Clacetye, with Bootsey X sitting in on drums, didn't disappoint. Neither did Shouting Club, who played their last show with lead singer Jim Cortez. Scams the vocalist scored himself a promotion at Elektra Records and has moved to Boston. The band will continue on with a yet-to-be named new lead singer.

Also performing were Frank Allison and the Odd Sox, Moon Men, True Blue Hearts, Static Alphabet and the Junk Monkeys.



Detroit band Second Self will celebrate its signing with national record label EMI with a bash Tuesday, Feb. 14, at Saint Andrew's Hall in Detroit.

IN CONCERT

- **HALLOWEEN**
Halloween will perform Monday, Feb. 6, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8553.
- **PASSION NOUVEAU**
Passion Nouveau will perform on Tuesday, Feb. 7, at Jagers, 3481 Elizabeth Lake Road, Pontiac. For information, call 581-1700.
- **WALK THE DOGMA**
Walk the Dogma will perform on Tuesday, Feb. 7, at Rick's American Cafe, 411 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.
- **HOLY COWS**
Holy Cows will perform on Tuesday, Feb. 7, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8553.
- **SWEET CRYSTAL**
Sweet Crystal will perform with special

- cial guests, Opossums, on Wednesday, Feb. 8, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8553.
- **THE AFFAIR**
The Affair will perform Wednesday through Saturday, Feb. 8-11, at Jagers, 3481 Elizabeth Lake Road, Pontiac. For information, call 581-1700.
- **PRIVATE DRIVE**
Private Drive will perform on Thursday, Feb. 9, at Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, Dearborn. For information, call 840-5377.
- **MERCY RULE**
Mercy Rule will perform along with Red Tear and Fly Away Hair on Thursday, Feb. 9, at Blondie's, 2113 W. Seven Mile, east of Telegraph, Detroit. For information, call 585-8108.
- **ROY ROGERS**
Roy Rogers and the Delta Rhythm

- Kings will perform Friday and Saturday, Feb. 10-11, at Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, north of Michigan Avenue, Dearborn. For information, call 840-5377.
- **JAZZ QUARTET**
Milt Jackson, John Lewis, Connie Kay and Percy Heath will perform at 8 p.m. Friday, Feb. 10, at the Power Center in Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$15 and available at Ticketmaster outlets and the Michigan Union. For information, call 765-0046.
- **LEAGUE OF NATIONS**
League of Nations will perform along with special guests, The Stand, on Friday, Feb. 10, at Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Canfield, off I-75. For information, call 385-9760.
- **VERTICAL PILLOWS**
Vertical Pillows will perform Friday, Feb. 10, at Lili's 21, 2930 Jacob, off I-75, Campus, Hamtramck. For more information, call 875-6553.

- **MOTOR CITY ROCKERS**
Motor City Rockers will perform along with special guests, The Reputations, on Saturday, Feb. 11, at Blondie's, 2113 W. Seven Mile, east of Telegraph, Detroit. For information, call 535-8108.
- **BOOTSEY X**
Bootsey X will perform Saturday, Feb. 11, at Lili's 21, 2930 Jacob, off I-75, Campus, Hamtramck. For more information, call 875-6553.
- **JOHNNY ALLEN**
Johnny Allen will perform with special guests, Sealed Out, on Saturday, Feb. 11, at Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Canfield, off I-75. For information, call 385-9760.
- **G.G. ALLEN**
G.G. Allen will perform with special guests, Ugly But Proud and Slaughterhouse, on Sunday, Feb. 12, at Blondie's, 2113 W. Seven Mile, east of Telegraph, Detroit. For information, call 535-8108.

COLLEGE

Here are the top 10 albums receiving air play on WHFR-FM, campus station at Henry Ford Community College in Dearborn.

1. "Beemba," Dead Milkmen.
2. "Fisherman Blues," Waterboys.
3. "The Wilton Album," Sonic Youth.
4. "Prodigal Songs," Salata.
5. "On Our Big Fat Merry-go-round," Home.
6. "Daydream Nation," Sonic Youth.
7. "Don't Hit Me Up," Doggie Style.
8. "Vampire A Go-Go," 3-D Invisibles.
9. "California," American Music Group.
10. "The Wolves," The Wolves.

LOCAL

Here are the top 10 songs receiving air play on "Detroit Music Scene," which is heard 4 to 5 p.m. Sundays (repeated 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Tuesdays) on WDRB-FM.

1. "Vain Boy," Oat Movement.
2. "Blind Justice," Figure 4.
3. "So What Baby," Fly Away Hair.
4. "Born to Die," Dave Uchall.
5. "Again," It's Raining.
6. "Checkin' Out," Reputations.
7. "Night Comes On," Robby East.
8. "Tattoo," Oriental Spies.
9. "Lonely One," The Difference.
10. "Accidental Fourth Street," Figures as a Beach.

REVIEWS

OFRA HAZA

— Ofra Haza

Information on Ofra Haza is not an easy to come by. With Middle Eastern vocal style and the fact that some of these tracks were recorded in Tel-Aviv, I assume that she's from Israel.

The only other reason that she has gained any attention, as far as I know, is that's the voice that was sampled by M/A/R/S on their dance-floor mega hit, "Pump Up the Volume."

With this in mind, what can we expect? Well, we are introduced musically with the first track, "I'm Nin'Ala." And, as suspected, her singing is an Indian (not native American) style of wailing, similar to that used on "Pump Up the Volume." Musically, it is electronics all the way. Obviously aimed at the dance floor crowds, it smacks of being a watered down "Pump Up



Unfortunately, the material is too weak for Ofra to get way with this. The music is anemic electro-dance oriented and the lyrics are more than bland. Check the obviousness of this from "Face to Face." "When we're face to face, look in my eyes/ When we're face to face, tell me no lies." Illuminating, eh?

She comes across sounding like a lame Madonna or a weak Debbie Gibson. Now there's a thought to frighten mere mortals. — Cormac Wright

SIBLING RIVALS

— the Smothers Brothers

Once upon a time, these two guys were America's favorite comedy duo. Now, it's Bush and Quyle. That, of course, is political humor — the kind that doesn't show up on this best of compilation culled from albums the brothers originally recorded for Mercury in the mid-1960s.

Despite the pair's infamous dismissal from their CBS television show two decades ago, "Sibling Rivalry" (Rhino) is surprising only in its non-offensiveness. That means it's pretty tepid stuff by today's standards. As with all comedy albums, the lack of visuals also hurts. Lines like "Mom always liked you best" just aren't funny without seeing Tommy's gleefully mugging Simple Simon face. The brothers' music fares a little better. Slightly off-center denizens of the coffee house circuit, the brothers skillfully lampooned the upright, uptight folk singers of their day. But "Jenny Brown" their attempt at a rock'n'roll parody falls flat. Peter, Paul and Mary's "Daisy Bell" to "Music," for instance, yields a much sharper scalpel.



It's not that the brothers weren't — or can't still be — funny. But the Smothers Brothers, especially Tom, were more than just another mildly amusing '60s comedy act — after all it wasn't Louden Lee who sat ring-side at the Lennon-Ono 1969 Bed In for Peace, or who emceed the Monterey Pop Fest. And it wasn't Bob Hope who brought the Doors and Who into millions of suburban living rooms.

"Sibling Rivalry" however, suggest the brothers' '60s recording output, like that of some of their rock and roll friends, is best left to memory. I guess you had to be there. — Wayne Peal

LIVING YEARS

— Mike and the Mechanics

Say it loud, say it clear. Who needs Phil Collins and Genesis, anyway? Yes folks, there's another member of that prolific band who is making some pretty good music of his own these days. That's Genesis bass player Mike Rutherford.

Along with a few "Mechanics," primarily singers Paul Carrack and Paul Young, Rutherford's moonlighting group has produced "Living Years," an album which is both high-tech and powerful rock.

Unlike Collins, whose solo releases always seem to automatically reach hit status, Mike + the Mechanics have had to be patient with reaction to their second LP, on the Atlantic label.

The quirky-but-melodic first single, "Nobody's Perfect," somehow failed to drive the masses to Mike's music faster. But the Carrack-led follow-up, "The Living Years," has exploded onto play lists across the country.



The title track is full of messages and emotion, unlike most mindless drivel which Top 40 radio usually plays. "I wasn't there that morning, when my father passed away," sings Carrack, backed by a youth choir. "I didn't get to tell him all the things I had to say. . . I just wish I could have told him — in the living years." Carrack, formerly of Ace of Squeezes, also shines on the haunting "Why Me," "Don't" and "Nobody Knows."

But the most explosive tracks belong to Paul Young, who may be unfairly categorized as a sugar-coated popper from his past solo work. Besides the impassioned "Nobody's Perfect," Young blasts his way through the two-line "Heading In" and "Black and Blue" and the sharp-cutting "Poor Boy Down."