

STREET BEATS

Don't let the 'Sensitive' fool you

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

Hey, Sensitive Big Guys, let's watch TV. Wanna watch Geraldo? Not sensitive enough?

OK then. We could watch Phil Donahue, or better yet, there's M*A*S*H reruns with Alan Alda.

"We're into anything Alan Alda is into," said Rob Varney of Livonia, lead singer and songwriter.

Sensitive Big Guys, surprise. Their music sounds anything but tender, caring, compassionate.

This stuff is as subtle as a bag of nails thrown into a cement mixer. Dinner music? Sure, if the super happens to be on the beam of a construction site.

Need we say more? Of course, we do. The Sensitive Big Guys have been in operation for nearly 1 1/2 years, forming in November 1987. The product is strictly Livonia, except for guitarist Bryan Rossell who lives in Westland. "I live right on the border," Rossell said.

He also went to Livonia Franklin High School as did bass player Steve Bauer. Drummer Rob Paul and Varney went to Livonia Bentley where they played in numerous bands, which may be filled under obscurity.

SO, at a concert awhile back, they all decided to join forces. Their Livonia roots put them into company with other fine area musicians such as Bootsey X, Dave Peeny of Orange Roughies, Chris Richards of Hippodrome, Mike Murphy of the Moonmen, etc.

Yet, like the aforementioned people, Sensitive Big Guys are strangers in their own land. "Nobody has heard of us around here," Rob Paul said. "We play any-



The Sensitive Big Guys is strictly a Livonia product, except for guitarist Bryan Rossell of Westland. The remainder of the group includes Rob Varney, Steve Bauer and Rob Paul from Livonia.

where but here... (the clubs) won't have us. They want us to play 60 percent covers."

As a result, the Sensitive Big Guys have sought fame and fortune elsewhere. The four-member band is a regular on the Hamtramck circuit. Also, they have made the outstate tour to Kalamazoo and, most recently, to Mount Pleasant.

Through all this, Sensitive Big Guys have only headlined on a few occasions. Which is all fine and dan-

dy with them. They just like to play.

"We liked to get boozed just as much as we like to get applause," said Rob Paul, jokingly.

In that sense, the Sensitive Big Guys are quite refreshing. They are one of the few local bands that don't serve you a line about record label interest or bombard you with cosmic debris of the social significance of their music.

A FEW flaws can be found on the

Sensitive Big Guys cassette, "Simply Sensitive." Band members attribute that to the first time being in a recording studio.

Still, there is a certain spark on the nine-song offering that all the studio wizards in the business couldn't hope to reproduce.

"We're a lot better live than we are on tape," Steve Bauer said.

Added Rob Paul, "No matter how bad we get. We know we could do worse."

Dreams break out of Athens mold

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

You can take the band out of Athens, Ga. But you can't take Athens, Ga., out of the band.

Dreams So Real is trying. At least with their music anyway.

The three-member band's latest album, "Rough Night in Jericho" (Arista) is a conscious effort on its part to distance itself from the rest of the Athens bands it grew up with. So, R.E.M., B-52s and dB's, take a hike.

"Personally, I think we're representing our own Athens sound," said Drew Worsham, drummer of Dreams So Real. "We're not going to deny we're from Athens."

Unlike most of those from the Georgia hotbed for alternative music, Dreams So Real went for a big sound on their latest LP.

For that, they opted for the technologically proficient studio setting in Los Angeles instead of some backwoods setup.

They snared themselves a big name producer, Bill Drescher, whose past credits include the Bangles and Julee Shear. And they spent three months in the studio, compared to eight days as with their first LP "Father's House."

The end result is a big, brassy and, dare we say, commercial production.

"WE WANTED something modern

sounding that wouldn't be out of place, say, on AOR radio," Worsham said.

They could have gotten Mitch Easter or Don Dixon to produce it and gone for a more regional sound," Worsham said. "The record company wanted us to return to our own sound... We wanted a big sound. We wanted the album to rock."

For the most part, Dreams So Real succeeded. The melodic rock quality of "Rough Night in Jericho" seems it appropriate for AOR radio play. Are you listening, Atlanta??

Nonetheless, striking out for an identity of its own is admirable, but could have its drawbacks. For one, the fact the band is from Athens alone sparks a curiosity.

With that, though, comes the endless comparisons.

Dreams So Real was open season for comparative analysis, especially after R.E.M.'s Peter Buck produced the band's first single, "Everywhere Girl"/"Whirl" (Coyote/Twin-Tone). The psychedelic pop offering quickly became a best-selling single.

Buck was also at the controls of the band's first album, "Father's House" (That, too, received critical acclaim.

After pounding the college alternative musical highway, Dreams So Real signed with Arista Records. Suddenly, a dream the band had when it first formed after meeting in a record store was real.



Dreams So Real is trying to distance itself from the rest of the Athens, Ga., bands it grew up with and as a result, has gone for a big sound on their latest LP.

INTENT to make the most of it, the group wanted to do things differently production-wise.

"He (Buck) pretty much knew we were going for a big production on this album," said Worsham, who added that Buck likes the band's latest album. "He knew he wouldn't be appropriate this time."

If things go according to plan, Dreams So Real will be added to the long list of names who have made it big from Athens. Creativity must flow in the water in the relatively

small college town.

A film documentary was done, "Athens Inside/Out," which focused on the phenomenon of the music scene there. Worsham is even at a loss to explain it.

"It's weird," he said. "Somehow, cosmically, it all comes together."

Dreams So Real will perform at 10 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 21, at the Blind Pig, 208 First St., Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$7.50 in advance. For information, call 99-MUSIC.

IN CONCERT

● **TOOTS & MAYTALS**
Toots & The Maytals will perform at 10 p.m. Monday, Feb. 20, at Nectarine Ballroom, 510 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$12.50 in advance. For information, call 99-MUSIC.

● **IDYLE ROOMERS**
The Idyle Roomers will perform on Monday, Feb. 20, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 99-8555.

● **MISSION IMPOSSIBLE**
Mission Impossible will perform on Monday, Feb. 20, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● **ARGOSY**
Argosy will perform on Mondays and Tuesdays, through Feb. 28, at the Studio Lounge, 6921 N. Wayne, south of Warren Road, Westland. For information, call 729-2540.

● **DREAMS SO REAL**
Dreams So Real will perform with special guests, Crossed Wire, at 10 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 21, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$7.50 in advance. For information, call 99-MUSIC.

● **FULLY LOADED**
Fully Loaded will perform on Tuesday, Feb. 21, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● **JOE ELY**
Joe Ely will perform on Wednesday, Feb. 22, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● **ATOMIC CAFE**
Atomic Cafe will perform on Sunday, Feb. 22, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● **JODINE RAINCOATS**
Jodine Raincoats will perform on Thursday, Feb. 23, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● **LAZY LESTER**
Lazy Lester will perform on Thursday, Feb. 23, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● **SOULSIDE**
Soulside will perform along with Kuru and Forced Anger on Thursday, Feb. 23, at Blondie's, 21139 W. Civic, Mt. Pleasant. For information, call 535-8108.

● **THE SHAKERS**
The Shakers will perform with special guests, New Logic, on Fri-

day, Feb. 24, at Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, near I-75. For information, call 365-9760.

● **SEE DICK RUN**
See Dick Run will perform on Friday, Feb. 24, at Jameson's, 1812 N. Main, Royal Oak. For information, call 547-6470.

● **MEANIES**
Meanies, Rated R and Black Anthem will perform on Friday, Feb. 24, at Blondie's, 21139 W. Seven Mile, east of Telegraph, Detroit. For information, call 535-8108.

● **CHEVELLES**
Chevelles will perform on Friday, Feb. 24, at Lili's 21, 2930 Jacob, off Jos. Campau, Hamtramck. For information, call 365-9760.

● **OMEN**
Omen will perform along with Infection on Saturday, Feb. 25, at Blondie's, 21139 W. Seven Mile, east of Telegraph, Detroit. For information, call 535-8108.

● **JUNK MONKEYS**
Junk Monkeys will perform on Saturday, Feb. 25, at Lili's 21, 2930 Jacob, off Jos. Campau, Hamtramck. For information, call 875-6555.

● **THE FEW**
The Few will perform on Saturday, Feb. 25, at the Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, off I-75. For information, call 365-9760.

● **CARUSO**
Caruso will perform on Saturday, Feb. 25, at Jameson's, 1812 N. Main, Royal Oak. For information, call 547-6470.

● **PRETTY POISON**
Pretty Poison will perform on Sunday, Feb. 26, at Blondie's, 21139 W. Seven Mile, Detroit. For information, call 535-8108.

● **DEAD MILKMEN**
Dead Milkmen will perform at 10 p.m. Monday, March 6, at the Nectarine Ballroom, 510 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$10.50 in advance. For information, call 99-MUSIC.

● **REPLACEMENTS**
The Replacements will perform at 8 p.m. Friday, March 10, at the Michigan Theatre, 503 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Reserved tickets are \$16.50 in advance. For information, call 99-MUSIC.

● **MICHELLE SHOOKED**
Michelle Shooked will perform on Sunday, March 12, at Saint Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. Tickets are \$12.50 in advance. For information, call 99-MUSIC.

COLLEGE

Here are the top 10 songs receiving air play on WDRB-FM 90.3, campus station of Oakland Community College Orchard Ridge Campus in Farmington Hills.

1. "Dirty Blvd.," Los Reed.
2. "I'll Be You," The Replacements.
3. "Strange Boat," Waterboys.
4. "Welcome to Paradise," Frost 212.
5. "Punk Rock Girl," Dead Milkmen.
6. "Pop Song #9," R.E.M.
7. "Fine Time," New Order.
8. "The Sprawl," Soozie Youth.
9. "Gals," Oira Hana.
10. "Overture," The Fall.

LOCAL

Here are the top 10 songs receiving air play on "Detroit Music Scene," which is heard 4 1/2 p.m. Sundays (repeated 5:30-6:30 p.m. Tuesdays) on WDRB-FM 90.3.

1. "Blind Justice," Figure 4.
2. "Flux," Figure 4.
3. "Springtime," Jagglers and Thieves.
4. "Moving Forward," Fly Away Hatr.
5. "Tattoo," Oriental Spaz.
6. "Ghost of Autumn," Colorful Trama.
7. "Night Comes On," Bobby East.
8. "Love You to Death," Sullies.
9. "Insult (Live)," Iggy Pop.
10. "Frog Life," 22 Cavi Godz.

REVIEWS

SPIKE — Elvis Costello

The verbal gymnast is back. Elvis Costello's latest offering, "Spike," (Warner) has more twists, turns, flips and flops than a macaroni out of water. Coming on the heels of last month's release by Lou Reed, "Spike" gives fans of tremendous lyrics another reason to push up the volume and pull out the lyric sheet.

Backed by an all-star cast with a wide variety of instruments, Costello shines on "Spike." The music ranges from folk to funk to pop to ballads.

The connecting yarn is Costello's ability to weave intricate tales while making keen observations like "They say that travel broadens the mind/ I'll you can't get your head out of doors."

Great Britain's political woes are one of Costello's favorite targets. "Any King's Shilling," a traditional Celtic folk song, paints the Irish struggle in a portrait of a friendship between two opposing combatants. "Trump the Dirt Down," recalls Bob Dylan's "Masters of War" with its spiteful graveyard scene and rough



MYSTERY GIRL — Roy Orbison

Roy Orbison's untimely passing ensures this album will become a best seller. The good news is that "Mystery Girl" (Virgin Records) deserves whatever success comes its way.

Here, Orbison succeeds where most other rock legends have failed — creating a new body of work that not only matches past glories, but builds upon them.

Of the 10 songs, only "You Got It," the first single, clings self-consciously to the past. The rest shows Orbison completely at home in the 1980s.

There's a fair share of help from notable friends. Fellow Wilburys Jeff Lynne and Tom Petty each contribute songs, while Lynne and Mike Campbell, one of Petty's Heartbreakers, handle most production duties.

But the spotlight belongs to Orbison alone. Even to the end, his magnificent, soaring voice remained one of pop music's treasures.

The difference between Orbison and other rock vocalists is never more apparent than on "She's a Mystery to Me." Bono's contribution to this cast of fame. While the US leader has delivered similar material with man-falling-off-the-cliff despair, Orbison's singing is at once powerful yet beautifully controlled. Despite the desperation and heartbreak al-



TECHNIQUE — New Order

I'm sure that at this stage most everybody knows the history of New Order, i.e. the three remaining members from the breathtakingly powerful Joy Division continue after the suicide of their frightening and sad lead singer, Ian Curtis, in May 1980.

That band created a phenomenal legacy, which I'm sure is still paying a lot of bills for New Order.

New Order, on the other hand, is experiencing a different kind of phenomenon — that of a hugely successful dance band, popular with swinging "MTV-ites." They are having large record sales worldwide and are slowly being acknowledged/absorbed by the music mainstream.

I mean, they are having records mixed by the same people responsible for Madonna and Pet Shop Boys and even "Blue Monday '83" was mixed by Quincy Jones. I can't wait to hear Michael Jackson's version of it.

Anyway, this album is essentially their first new recording since 1988



and it starts off on an extremely tight ice with their single, "Fine Time." This is utterly devoid of any redeeming qualities as it is simply comprised of repetitive computer dance rhythms. I had hoped for better, and thankfully, I was not let down over the rest of the LP.

While the other songs maintain a certain dance quality, they are solid songs. Nonetheless, they feature New Order's most attractive aspects — vocalist/guitarist Bernard Albrecht's vulnerable vocals and Peter Hook's thundering bass lines.

Don't be put off by the lead off track and give the rest of them a few listens. They're worth it.

— Cormac Wright

— Wayne Peal