

# STREET BEATS

## Book overcomes techno label

By Larry O'Connor  
staff writer

Want well-written, clever lines? Go to the library. The dance floor is usually the last place to go.

Until now that is. Book of Love, a four-member group out of New York, appears to be bucking the sameness of today's dance floor music with its own brand of thoughtful songs. How many dance bands today include liner notes?

Well, Book of Loves does. And for good reason.

"I think they're witty in a way that few people tend not to notice," said lead singer Susan Ottaviano, who shares the songwriting duties with Ted Ottaviano (they are not related). Witty, perhaps, but synthesizer for synthesizer, Book of Love certainly matches any of their European contemporaries. For one, they're multidimensional whereas many dance bands are repellent.

Along with better-than-average lyrics, Book of Love features the seductive vocals of Susan Ottaviano.

On many of the songs featured on "Lullaby," the group's latest release on Sire, Susan Ottaviano breathes life into each note. Tiffany and Debbie Gibson could hold her microphone cord.

ALSO, MONTHS of touring has Book of Love's stage show functioning at its best. The band has ditched tape sequences, preferring to do everything live.

In club circles of New York and beyond, Book of Love has earned its fair share of kudos for providing a hypnotic beat.

Book of Love formed from the remains of Head Cheese, a group that came together at the Philadelphia College of Art, Ted Ottaviano and Susan Ottaviano (again, they are not related) performed in the band.

Book of Love signed a deal with Sire and hits such as "Ego" and "You Make Me Feel So Good" led to tours with Depeche Mode.



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This time out on "Lullaby," a follow-up to their self-titled debut LP, Book of Love was teamed up with producer Flood (U2 and Exodus). Flood was instrumental in bringing out the creative side of the group while keeping the rhythms quite danceable.

Nonetheless, Book of Love faces the problem of being segregated in the techno-dance category, known more for its fickleness than creativity.

"We didn't start out to be a synthesizer band," Susan Ottaviano said. "We happened to meet and more of us played keyboards and none of us played guitars. We were looking for a guitar player at first."

"So we got lumped into the category. I'd rather be considered an alter-

native band than a throwaway dance band."

THAT PRESENTS problems as well. Although their music is highly regarded for originally, radio play has been tough to come by.

The story is a familiar one: Too commercial for alternative radio and too alternative for commercial radio. "Which makes you angry," she said.

Too bad. "Lullaby" features some rather interesting cuts, including a cover of Mike Oldfield's "Tubular Bells" that was used in the film "The Exorcist." Book of Love made the somewhat eerie tune compatible for the dance floor.

Another number of interest is "Pretty Boys and Girls," which deals with love and the fear of AIDS.

"We did it in sort of a positive way," she said. "It's an issue we feel strongly about. Living in New York, the issue is something that has touched us. We wanted to do something to show we care."

The song brings awareness to a problem, but also fits in the face of what has become rather desensitized music. Ottaviano agrees.

"I think I've had it with house and the rest of the throwaway stuff," she said. "Maybe there's one or two songs I might like. But for the most part, I don't like what I'm hearing."

Book of Love will perform on Friday, March 3, at Saint Andrew's Hall, 430 E. Congress, Detroit. For information, call 961-MELT.

## Romance 'tunes in' on success

By Larry O'Connor  
staff writer

Romance: A musical tango in the form of a lyrical liaison of extraordinary proportion?

Maybe.

But when you're constantly asked to play "Wild Thing," Romance is a five-member band whose problem is

not uncommon with Top 40 bands. They have to play other people's music at the expense of their own.

"We know what we don't like," said Kevin Holvear, who is a guitar player and one of the many singers in the multi-talented band. "We have to play it every night."

Of course, the obvious solution would be to front an all-original band. Then again, most people also

like to eat.

So Romance forges ahead with pop rock sensibilities garnished, with a few tunes of their own. "We sneak them in when we can," said Gino Minichella, keyboard player and singer.

For more than six years, Romance has been quite successful as a Top 40 entity. That time has allowed them to hone their craft to a fine art, picking their spots carefully to insert their material.

On the surface, survival as a nightclub act for six years is astounding. Then talking to the rather articulate members of the band, it's obvious why that's no fluke.

"I THINK a lot of it has to do with the way we laid out our goals," Holvear said. "When we started the group, we didn't want a bunch of songs and just go out and start playing."

"We sat down and said, 'These are the things we want to achieve and this is the way we have to do it.' We've stuck to the plan as much as we could."

The focus for Romance is developing more of their own material, which already shows considerable promise. The band has the luxury of having its own studio.

Already, the group has cut some tracks that will be featured on an upcoming compact disc, "Metro Masters," along with RH Factor, Teen Angels and Flash. At this point, the band knows what it wants to achieve in terms of song writing.

"We want to make music with guts to it," Minichella said.

THE ENGAGEMENT was a month-long one at this club, a testament to Romance's drawing power. The real challenge of playing the same club every night is staying fresh.

"Sometimes you can feel yourself getting into a rut," said Steve Perkins. "When we find ourselves doing that we pull out of it quick by doing something different."

Romance believes it has the difference to make it big.

"There's a tremendous void in music right now," Holvear said. "There's this homogenized style. There's this tremendous remake market where everyone is remaking hits from the past."

"One day, someone is going to walk into that void. It would be real nice if it was us."

For information on Romance, call 528-1550.



## REVIEWS

### DON'T TELL A SOUL — The Replacements

Richard Replacements fans are screaming. Their favorite band has left them in the cold with this latest album.

A band, who has the image of being loose, loud, arrogant and childish, has sought to deviate from that by being — egads — mature. "Don't Tell A Soul" (Sire) reflects a band that has come of age.

How dare they.

But to those who listened to the Minneapolis band's last album, "Pleased to Meet Me" (Sire), this shouldn't really come as a surprise. That disc featured the unbridled fury The Replacements possessed musically. In some of the finer moments, "Pleased to Meet Me" also displayed a group whose members weren't half bad songwriters to boot.

The Replacements have sought to capitalize on that talent this time. For the most part, they succeed. "Don't Tell A Soul" is the group's most accessible album to date.



### FIGURES ON A BEACH — Figures On A Beach

Here we have the second major label from Detroit ex-patriots and now Boston-based Figures On A Beach.

I would think that this LP is particularly make-or-break for the band as their debut for Sire didn't exactly make them a household name, despite containing the particularly rare radio suitable single, "No Stars."

I think a large order of the blame for that may be laid at the record company's feet as there did not seem to be much of a publicity campaign put behind them.

But enough of that. What about this LP. Well, Figures On A Beach are their own worst enemies. They deliberately aim their music to a dance club-oriented audience, which is enormously fickle in its choice of this year's model. To add further to Figures' problems is that their basic sound is that of a Duran Duran when even Duran Duran isn't doing Duran Duran anymore. Ehhhh... Do you follow me so far?

Throughout every song, Tony Kaczynski sounds strained and characterless, although I suspect they got Roger Rabbit in for their version of the B.T.O. song "You Ain't Seen Nothing Yet."

Their songs are well-constructed, but it seems as though producer, Ivan Ivan, has borrowed from any successful band in this vein, Frankie Goes to Huntington Woods, Simple Minds and the aforementioned Drome, in his presentation of Figures.

Unfortunately, in this case the results are very linear with nothing outstanding to grab your attention.

With all this said, everyone knows they deserve more attention than the likes of the Escape Club or Information Society who are operating with a lot less in reserve.



### THE WHITEY ALBUM — Ciccone Youth

Ciccone Youth's "Whitey Album" is the most stunning musical statement since the Beatles' "White Album."

That is, of course, only if you've been lucky enough since 1983 when the Fab Four released their great LP. Other than that, Ciccone Youth's "Whitey Album" is what one might come to expect from a group formed in the inspiration of pop idol Madonna herself.

A little history might be in order. Ciccone Youth is the alter-ego of the famed underground outfit Sonic Youth along with Firehouse member Mike Watt. Band members profess to be intrigued by this Madonna character, who is relatively the same age and emerged out of the same late '70s/early '80s New York scene.

But if someone were to make the mistake of purchasing this disc with any hopes, aspirations or longings to hear any faint sounds resembling the Material Girl herself, you're out of

luck. This is far better.

This album is a keeper, if only for two reasons. Those include the back-handed tributes to Madonna herself "Into the Groove" and "Burnin' Up." Then there is the slow moving great "Addicted to Love." Indeed, great stuff. The singer sounds as inspired as one of the models in Robert Palmer's video.

Those who enjoy the marinating guitar work of Sonic Youth, take listen as it abounds, for example, in "MobyDik."

Ciccone Youth delves into a wide variety of musical genres, including rap ("That Rap") and techno-beat ("March of the Ciccone Robots"). This album is a musical experience not to be missed.

— Larry O'Connor

## COLLEGE CLASSICAL

Here are the top 10 albums receiving airplay on WYAN-AM, campus station of Wayne State University.

1. "Disgraceland," Elvis Hitler.
2. "Tender Prey," Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds.
3. "Tet Kl," Radon Acid.
4. "Vivid," Living Colour.
5. "Kick Out the Jolly," Jack Monkeys.
6. "Back with a Bang," Murphy's Law.
7. "Green," R.E.M.
8. "Under the Covers," Vertical Pillows.
9. "(demo tape)," Inside Out.
10. "(demo tape)," Almighty Lumberjacks of Death.

Here are the top 10 classical selections on Dick Wallace's midday program on WQRS-FM.

1. "Light Cavalry Overture," Suppe.
2. "Symphony in C," Bizet.
3. "Norwegian Dances," Grieg.
4. "Rodeo," Copland.
5. "Winter Concerto," Vivaldi.
6. "España," Chabrier.
7. "Symphony 21," Mozart.
8. "Unfinished Symphony," Schubert.
9. "New World Symphony," Dvorak.
10. "Mississippi Suite," Grofe.