

STREET BEATS

Gospel according to Mercy Rule

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

As a band of Christian heavy metal artists, Mercy Rule has found an audience of its peers.

"Our influence is more on other bands than we play with and the audience we play for," said bass and keyboard player Bruce Tordrup. "We hear things like, 'It was so nice working with guys that we didn't have to worry about our equipment being ripped off.'"

Well, as the church lady would say, isn't that special? Mercy Rule is trying to carve out its own niche in what has suddenly become a fashionable market — Christian heavy metal.

Strayer has led the way for other bands wearing spandex to sing for Jesus. From that standpoint, Mercy Rule is one of many.

But they have taken a different tact with their message music. Mercy Rule's approach is a bit more subtle than their Bible waving brethren that makes up most Christian rock'n'roll.

"We don't like to continually drive the message home on every song," Tordrup said. "The songs have to be accessible to people. They all have their own meaning."

"Not all of the songs mention Jesus Christ, but all the lyrics have a Christian meaning behind them."

BEHIND THEM. Mercy Rule moves forward with a spirited band of melodic metal. Group members include Tordrup, drummer; Aaron Byrnes, singer and guitarist; George Farazza, singer and guitarist; along with Tordrup.

The seeds for Mercy Rule were planted in 1979 when Farazza started a metal group, Black Ace. A series of Christian bands followed, such as Witness and Az Iz and, finally, Mercy Rule.

Once the band members found religion in 1981, they've become driven.

"I always felt something was missing in my life," Farazza said. "Now I found it."

Mercy Rule found that it's a hot



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property in the Christian music scene. The band performed regularly in a series of concerts presented on Saturdays by Harvest Ministries of Detroit.

The group is featured on a compilation of Christian hard rock artists from around the country, "Underground Metal." Also, they have their own eight-song mini-LP in the works.

Only recently, though, has Mercy Rule left the security of the Christian audience and staked out in the secular nightclub scene. The band has performed before receptive crowds at Blondie's in Detroit and The Ritz in Roseville.

The venture has not only allowed them to widen their audience, but to gauge their music against what secular bands have to offer.

"WE LOOK at ourselves as a band that is Christian instead of a Christian band," said Tordrup, who lives in Redford. "If you look at Christian bands like Petra, they only perform for Christian audiences. We want to win over secular audience well."

The scandals of Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart have left the secular world more than a tad cynical about preachers. Tordrup said he's yet to see any fall out in Christian music circles.

If anything, he said bands such as Mercy Rule have flourished because Swaggart was a noted critic of Christian rock'rollers.

Still, there are those critics who doubt the sincerity of some Christian rockers. Some accuse them of embracing Christianity as a marketing tool.

Members of Mercy Rule said no one has ever accused them of that. And, besides, being famous is not the main goal.

"We see ourselves as successful at what we're doing now," Tordrup said. "If we get a record contract, then fine. If we don't, then fine."

Added Rich Farazza: "That's what the name of the band is about. God's mercy rules our lives."

Mercy Rule will perform along with Rez Band and Sacred Warrior at 7:30 p.m. Friday, March 10, at The Redford Theater, Lahser Road, a half block north of Grand River Avenue, Detroit. Tickets are \$13.50 at the door. For information, call 561-4559.



Proclaimers profess a genuine love for American country music.

America for the first time with a full band. Charlie Reid believes the added members provide more punch to their tunes.

Sales of "Sunshine on the Leith" would indicate that people are getting knocked out. The album has gone platinum in the United Kingdom. All that waits is the United States.

Here, though, the Proclaimers are an unknown entity. One ad for the group's Thursday's show at Saint Andrew's Hall has them billed as being from Ireland.

Also, they come to these stores

with no commercial radio play. A problem that besets many groups. Charlie Reid doesn't sound too worried.

"I think one of the problems is that we don't fit neatly into any one category," he said. "But we're getting airplay on college radio. So that helps."

The Proclaimers will perform along with special guests, The Blanks, on Thursday, March 9, at Saint Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. For information, call 961-MELT.

IN CONCERT

● **DEAD MILKMAN**
The 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.

● **OMEN**
Omen will perform an all-ages show at 7 p.m. Monday, March 6, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● **TRIP SHAKE SPHERE**
Trip Shake Sphere will perform on Monday, March 6, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● **BORAX**
Borax will perform on Tuesday, March 7, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● **FLASH BACK**
Flash Back will perform on Tuesday, March 7, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● **DIAMOND BACK**
Diamond Back will perform on Wednesday, March 8, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● **CHISEL BROTHERS**
The Chisel Brothers will perform on Wednesday, March 8, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● **JUICE**
Juice will perform on Thursday, March 9, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● **MISSION IMPOSSIBLE**
Mission Impossible will perform on Thursday, March 9, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● **ETC**
ETC will perform on Friday and Saturday, March 10-11, at Jameson's, 1812 N. Main, Royal Oak. For information, call 547-6470.

● **REALM**
Realm will perform along with special guests, Acropolis and Entice, on Friday, March 10, at Blondie's, 21139 S. Seven Mile, Detroit. For information, call 353-8168.

● **FOGHAT**
Foghat will perform on Friday, March 10, at Harper, 14238 Harper, off I-94, Detroit. Tickets are \$5. For information, call 823-6400.

● **REZ**
Rez Band will perform with special guests, Mercy Rule and Sacred Warrior, at 7:30 p.m. Friday, March 10, at The Redford Theater, Lahser Road, a half block north of Grand River Avenue, Detroit. Tickets are \$13.50 in advance. For information, call 561-4559.

● **COLORFUL TRAUMA**
Colorful Trauma, along with Dancing

Smoothies, will perform on Friday, March 10, at the Redford Township Community Center, 12121 Hemingway, a half mile west of Beech Daly Road, Redford. Proceeds from the show will benefit Redford Assisting Local Youth (R.A.L.Y.).

● **RAGGAMUFFIN**
Raggamuffin will perform on Friday, March 10, at Lili's, 2130 Jacob, off Jon Campau, Hamtramck. For information, call 873-6555.

● **3-D INVISIBLES**
3-D Invisibles will perform with special guests, Victims of Circumstance on Friday, March 10, at Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, off I-75. For information, call 365-9760.

● **REPLACEMENTS**
The Replacements will perform at 8 p.m. Friday, March 10, at the Michigan Theatre, 603 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Reserved tickets are \$16.50 in advance. For information, call 99-MUSIC.

● **COMMUNITY CONCERT**
David Watson, Felice, Surrender, Argosy and Cosmic Lovers will all perform on Friday, March 10, at the Paradigm Center for the Arts, 1437 Randolph, Detroit. A donation of \$3 is requested. For information, call 548-7235 or 541-8853.

● **FINAL WARNING**
Final Warning will perform with special guests, Solemn Promise, on Saturday, March 11, at Blondie's, 21139 W. Seven Mile, Detroit. For information, call 535-8108.

● **BOBBY EAST**
Bobby East will perform along with special guests, Autograph and Rock Candy, on Saturday, March 11, at The Ritz, 9 1/2 Mile and Frazee, Roseville.

● **KAREN MONSTER**
Karen Monster will perform on Saturday, March 11, at Lili's, 2130 Jacob, off Jon Campau, Hamtramck. For information, call 873-6555.

● **STRANGE BEDFELLOWS**
Strange Bedfellows will perform with special guests, The Slackers, on Saturday, March 11, at Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, off I-75. For information, call 365-9760.

● **BLUES FESTIVAL**
The Detroit Blues Band, Little Jr. Cannaday, The Alligators, Code Blue and Harmonica Shah will all perform at the Blind Pig Winter Blues Bash from 8 p.m. to 2 a.m. Saturday, March 11, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● **MICHELLE SHOCKED**
Michelle Shocked 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.

● **VIOLENT FEMMES**
Violent Femmes will perform at 8 p.m. Saturday, March 11, at Hill Auditorium in Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$16.50. For information, call 99-MUSIC.

COLLEGE

Here are the top 10 songs receiving airplay on WDRB-FM 90.3, the campus station of Oakland Community College Orchard Ridge Campus.

1. "Motorcycle," Love and Rockets.
2. "Last Great American Whale," Low Reed.
3. "I'll Be With You," Replacements.
4. "Fine Time," New Order.
5. "Welcome to Paradise," Front 242.
6. "Come Out Fighting," Easter Home.
7. "Dank Rock Girl," Dead Milkmen.
8. "Black Velvet," Lilac Time.
9. "Walking After Midnight," Cowboy Junkies.
10. "Red Berry," Wooster Staff.

LOCAL

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

1. "Perfect in Autumn," Jugglers & Thieves.
2. "This is John Galt," Figure 4.
3. "Chiara," Fly Away Hair.
4. "How Did You Know," Shane.
5. "Firing Line," Bobby East.
6. "Lion de Loup," Strange Bedfellows.
7. "Job Well Done," Hellam 3.
8. "It's So Late," Response.
9. "I Couldn't Smile," Junk Monkeys.
10. "Bart's Reunion Party," Frank Allison & the Odd Sox.

American country with a little Scotch

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

Merle Haggard in a kilt? Hardly. But the Scottish musical outfit Proclaimers profess a genuine love for American country music. Their latest album, "Sunshine on the Leith," (Chrysalis) showcases that as well as influences in folk, rock and pop.

Country? C'mon when is the last time Waylon and Willie pulled into Edinburgh.

"It's a place where you always have country records in your collection and it's usually in the bars as well," said Charlie Reid, who is one half of the twin brother group. "So it's always around you. When you're a kid you don't admit you like country music. It did have an influence on us."

The Proclaimers, though, don't

sing about whiskey, women and railroads. Instead, they grapple with the issues affecting their fellow Scots in the storytelling fashion of country music.

Love and politics get equal time on "Sunshine on the Leith," their folkiest album. "This is the Story," "Employment and being under the thumb of England make for passionate subject matter for the Brogue Brothers. The steel guitar flavored "What Do You Do" and the soulful "Cup in Hand" have political edges to them. Then sentimental torches such as "I'm Gonna Be" reveal a group who can be gushy.

THE PACKAGE is delivered with more vigor these days. The group has decided to forsake its sparse acoustical presence, opting for a full electric guitar rich sound. The Proclaimers are touring

REVIEWS

FLIP FLOP



— Guadalcanal Diary

More fun from Georgia.

Fans of Guadalcanal Diary's previous three albums will also enjoy this one. The band produces more its brand of rollicking rock'n'roll on "Flip Flop," although at times without as much passion or verve.

By now Murray Attaway and crew's formula is fairly familiar. Lay down some heavy rockers. "Look Up!," "Likes of You," "Whiskey Talk," throw in a couple of heady ballads ("Happy Home," "Ten Laws"), toss in a pinch of psychedelia ("Fade Out") and add at least one off-the-wall number ("... Vista").

The band doesn't really break any new musical ground, except on "Barometer," a fantastic piece of funk rock which showcases Jeff Walls' searing guitar. Walls' omnipresent, Townshendian guitarwork and John Poe's thunderous drumming provide the musical anchor for the band, particularly on "Fade Out" and "Pretty Is as Pretty Does."

BELEZA TROPICAL



— Brazilian Classics No. 1

No, no, don't automatically skip past this after reading the album title. OK, so maybe the thoughts of a compilation of Brazilian songs doesn't exactly set your heart racing, but the fact that it is compiled by David Byrne of Talking Heads should be something to grab your attention by the ear.

There is some interesting information on the sleeve, written by Byrne, about the history of Brazilian music. Most notable is how easy it is to mistake the lightness and easy rhythms of the music for bland middle-of-the-road radio schlock when in fact many of the artists on this record were viewed as dangerous by the military regimes of the late '60s and '70s, and were forced into exile by the threats they posed.

As may be surmised by this, most of the artists on the compilation have been around for a long time. They are cultural heroes in their own country and some have made more than 25 LPs already.

easy-listening fallacy when hearing the album. Acoustic guitars and soothing, happy vocals abound. The first six songs on side one are very attractive and are reminiscent of the so-called "world music," i.e. Sunny Ade, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, etc., in that they keep that happy bouncy guitar feel.

It is somewhat "off-putting" not be able to understand what is being sung, but I guess that's as much my fault as it is theirs.

Thankfully, the inner sleeve has an English translation of the lyrics printed alongside the Brazilian version, and it is here that the main strength of the songs are found. For me, the first six songs have the best combination of melody and lyrics, while the remaining songs are somewhat lacking in the former department, but still manage to retain the marvelous lyrics.

This album, I'm sure, will be a big hit on daytime WDET shows.

JUGGLERS AND THIEVES



— Jugglers and Thieves

The slickly produced debut release from Livid's Jugglers and Thieves is a maze of musical inconsistency. Imagine an unnatural mixture of Kate Bush, The Cars and Loverboy and you'll get some idea of the various sound emanating from this record.

The best thing going for the band is the full-throated throat of vocalist/keyboardist Crissy McCall. She has the effortless range of Bush, and her powerful pipes are packed with as much raw emotion as Maria McKee's, although she hasn't quite harnessed it.

The words that she sings are a drawback. The seasonal and topical images glossing the album are limp and cliché. Some lines are plain laughable, as from "Springtime," "Life should be lived/For it's not here too long."

The lyrics aren't the only problem, as shown in the awful instrumental "Mara's Song." The song starts like a cosmic "Dark Side of the Moon" outtake, and then cranks into what could be the theme to a mid-'70s biker movie.

Despite that, the potential of Jugglers and Thieves to produce quality rock'n'roll shines through on two songs co-written by McCall and bassist Jill Zimba, "Released Again" and "Train Tracks." The latter has more cohesiveness than any other track. It features rhythmic snare drumming by Colin O'Brien and clean, melodious guitar lines from Matthew Sage and Paul Cortez (no relation, I think).

These two songs are the only highlights on the record, but they prove that the band can succeed in making adventurous sounds. They don't have to "make music with overused images and trite guitar solos. And they don't have to cover "Amazing Grace," which can't even be rescued by McCall's acrobatic voice.

All Jugglers and Thieves needs is some musical direction and some better lyrics. Or stop printing lyric sheets.

— John Cortez