

Muses: Sweet sound of success

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

Kristin Hersh of Throwing Muses quickly apologizes for being late with her scheduled telephone call. "I had some Pixies on the phone," said Hersh, whose band performs Friday at Saint Andrew's Hall in Detroit. "They sure liked to talk."

And, likewise, people in new music circles are talking about both the Pixies and Throwing Muses. The Boston-based bands have quickly gained a reputation for their ability to turn out fresh and innovative music.

As a result, Throwing Muses and the Pixies are at the forefront of the new wave of American bands making it big at home on college radio and abroad in Great Britain.

As both groups grapple with critical success, they appear to be taking different routes. The Pixies appear to have gravitated to the more obscure with their latest LP "Doolittle" (Elektra).

Not so with Throwing Muses.

Last year's stellar album "House Tornado" (Sire) thrust the four-member band into the spotlight. The LP was hailed by critics.

"House Tornado" (Sire) is the latest volley as Throwing Muses seeks to garner radio airplay while keeping their integrity. The band's latest releases have three LPs to their credit, two on major record label Sire.

Ironically, the shores of the United Kingdom served as the band's ground breaking instead of the U.S.



The Throwing Muses is one Boston-based band that has quickly gained a reputation for its ability to turn out fresh and innovative music.

British independent label, 4AD, signed the group after the quartet gained a large following in the Boston area. "Throwing Muses" (4AD), the band's debut, was released along with an EP "Chains Changed." Both are available in this country on import only.

"In England they respond to us in an emotional way," Hersh said. "... They don't see how it all seeps in, though. We're very much an American band."

It's an American band that formed from a childhood friendship between Hersh and Tanya "Tea" Donnelly. They learned how to play guitar together at 14. When they attended college in Boston, they performed

around the club circuit. Bass player Leslie Langston and drummer David Narciso later joined the group.

The creative spark emanates from Hersh, who handles the songwriting and vocals.

The success of "House Tornado" made the stakes higher when recording "Hunkapapa." Gary Smith produced both albums. In making "House Tornado," though, the band learned a great deal about the creative process.

"AFTER THE fact, we learned we treated the material right," Hersh said. "When we were going into the studio, we said, (beck with) the producer. We know what we want to do."

"Then when we got in there we started saying to one another, 'What do you want to do?' I don't know. What do you want to do? We argued throughout the recording of the album. It was a horrible experience, really."

"On this album... we said, 'let's have fun,'" Hersh added. "What I think we did on this one is bring all the albums together in a definitive way. So now we can go beyond on that."

Throwing Muses will perform on Friday, May 19, at Saint Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. For information, call 861-MELT.

IN CONCERT

IN VAIN

In Vain will perform Monday, May 15, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

LIVE SKULL

Live Skull will perform Tuesday, May 16, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

CROSSED WIRE

Crossed Wire will perform Wednesday, May 17, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

FRED KOLLER

Fred Koller will perform on Wednesday, May 17, at the Midtown Cafe, Woodward at Maple, Birmingham. For information, 450-9031.

THE VANDALS

The Vandals will perform Thursday, May 18, at Blondie's, 21139 W. Seven Mile, Detroit. For information, call 535-8108.

SECOND SELF

Second Self will perform Thursday, May 18, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

TRINIDAD TRIPOLI

Trinidad Tripoli Steel Band will perform Friday-Saturday, May 19-20, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

LONNIE MACK

Lonnie Mack will perform Friday-Saturday, May 19-20, at Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, north of Michigan Avenue, Dearborn. For information, call 846-5377.

ROXX GANG

Roxx Gang will perform Friday, May 19, at the Ritz, 17580 Frayne, Roseville. For information, call 778-8150.

ASH CAN VANGOGH

Ash Can Vangogh will perform Friday, May 19, at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. For information, call 832-3355.

BONNIE RAITT

Bonnie Raitt will perform at 7:30 p.m. Friday, May 19, at Royal Oak Music Theatre. Tickets are \$17.50. For information, call 546-7810.

FRANK ALLISON

Frank Allison and the Odd Sox will perform Friday-Saturday, May 19-20, at Lilly's, 2230 Jacob, Hamtramck. For information, call 875-6555.

THE CIVILIANS

The Civilians will perform along with special guests, Alices Ghost, Friday, May 19, at the Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Canfield, off I-75. For information, call 365-9760.

PAN THE SIRENS

Pan the Sirens will perform Friday, May 19, at Griffs Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac. For information, call 334-7651.



Fred Koller will bring his brand of music to the Midtown Cafe in Birmingham Wednesday, May 17.

'Spin' zooms in on alternative tunes

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

While the competition merely rolls along, Spin is quickly turning out to be the magazine voice of alternative music in America.

"Did you see the latest issue of Rolling Stone?" asked Bob Guccione Jr., publisher of the New York-based music magazine with a cackle. "It makes the catalog look like a radical magazine."

Such jabs at the heavyweight in the music magazine industry are to be expected. But the point Guccione makes hits a spot.

While one appears to be selling a lifestyle, Spin is aggressively covering new trends in music.

Spin has new life despite the obituary written on it last year. The magazine missed publication for one month last year after papa Guccione of Penthouse International pulled the financial plug. Since finding new capital, the music magazine is not only floating, but moving on a steady course.

"Rolling Stone has a decisive edge in terms of circulation — 1.175 million for Jan. Women's publication to 175,000 for Guccione. But, hey, who's counting?"

Apparently, Guccione isn't. Instead, the New York-born, London-raised publisher would rather concentrate on Spin's targeted audience.



As publisher of Spin magazine, Bob Guccione Jr. is aggressively covering new trends in music.

center on Spin's targeted audience.

UNLIKE OTHER publications who are trying to reach the yuppie crowd between the ages of 18-34, Spin is focusing in on the 18-24 set.

"When you to an audience that wide (18-34), you dilute the editorial content," said Guccione, whose magazine recently celebrated its fourth anniversary. "We really aim for the 18 to 24 group. That slice of humanity is very interesting. That particular group is always evolving; they are quite curious."

Their curiosity, when it comes to

music, goes beyond the top-40 spectrum. Which is why Spin's focus is on new trends in the industry.

The issue will feature stories on standard college radio favorites. But the magazine goes into diverse styles such as rap, house and world music.

There's also a concerted effort to cover the underground scene in the United States. As a result, the magazine has been criticized for being unfocused at times.

Stories in Spin, though, have a common thread in their irreverent style of writing. At times, it resembles the British music press.

"We use a lot of young writers," Guccione said. "They are not necessarily impressed with the '70s or the '60s. Most of all, they're not impressed with themselves. They're not concerned with keeping up an image."

"With older critics — yes, they get the interviews with the Winwoods, the Claptons and the Springsteens — but they are protecting a sensibility. They're afraid to discover a new sensibility. ... The rock criticism of the '70s doesn't fly today. It's a new culture."

IN KEEPING with the younger set, Spin has delved into social and environmental issues such as AIDS and the Greenhouse effect.

Their comprehensive coverage of AIDS has drawn both praise and criticism, especially when the magazine included a free condom in one of its issues. Some viewed it as a publicity stunt, which, of course, Guccione denies.

"But let's say it was," he said. "Does that change the value of what we're trying to say? Our statement was completely compatible of what we've been saying for a year in the magazine."

Spin's separation from Penthouse International drew a considerable amount of publicity. Junior Guccione prefers not to discuss the situation, which resulted in Spin missing an issue.

"It was a family thing," he said. Publishing has stayed in the Guccione family. While Bob Guccione Jr. gained notoriety in the men's magazine business, his son followed in a little more diverse path.

Guccione Jr. published "Step by Step Guide to Kung Fu" in England and was the creator of "Poster Press," a monthly music magazine that unfolded into a poster. He became vice-president of promotion and marketing for Penthouse International in 1978 and was instrumental in the launch of Omni. Then came Spin in 1985.

Some saw the latter as dad pacifying son with his own magazine. The survival of Spin has given Guccione Jr. some vindication in that regard.

COLLEGE

Here are the top 10 songs on WOUX-AM, campus station of Oakland University in Rochester.

1. "Monkey Gone to Heaven," The Pixies.
2. "Fire Women," The Cult.
3. "Hard Light," Band of Sissies.
4. "Riddle of the Eighties," Firehouse.
5. "Facelash on Street," The Cult.
6. "I May Hate You Sometimes," Poies.
7. "Warrior," P.I.L.
8. "Stop," Eraserhead.
9. "Weirdo," The Jesus Lizard.
10. "Mayor of Simpleton," XTC.

COUNTRY

Here are the top 10 songs on WWWW-FM.

1. "Is It Still Over?" Randy Travis.
2. "From the Word Go," Michael Martin Murphey.
3. "After All This Time," Rodney Crowell.
4. "Don't You Up Away," Party Lovers.
5. "Which Way Do I Go (Now That I'm Gone)," Wayne Jennings.
6. "If I Had You," Alabama.
7. "Hey Baby," M. O. C.
8. "Young Love," The Judds.
9. "You Got It," Ray Charles.
10. "The Church on Cumberland Road," Shenandoah.

REVIEWS

LIVE FROM AUSTIN

— Delbert McClinton



If this were a perfect world, Delbert McClinton would be a major star. This album, drawn from a performance for the "Austin City Limits" television show, is as close to perfection as this Texan is likely to get.

Good as his studio albums have been, McClinton's shot-and-shell barroom blues works best in front of a live audience. Here, he reprises the triumphs of his rambling, three-decade career before a friendly crowd.

"B-Movie Boxer Blues," recorded by the Blues Brothers, is perhaps the best known of the album's five originals. McClinton also throws in expert cover versions of "Shakey Ground," the 1975 Temptations' hit, Otis Redding's "I've Got Dreams to Remember" and "Lipsick Traces," a much-covered chestnut from Aaron Neville's New Orleans songbook.

His loose hit, "Giving It Up for Your Love," is the set's closer. Like the Fabulous Thunderbirds,

Joe Ely, Doug Sahm, Stevie Ray Vaughan and a host of others, McClinton represents Texas rock at its bluesy, funky and — in his case — brassy best. Like those other artists, however, McClinton's fine, enjoyable music has generally been overlooked outside Lone Star State.

Released on the small though respected Alligator label, this album isn't likely to change McClinton's fortunes. But if you're tired of the tedious neo-disco, slippery-soft soul and droning heavy metal that's clogging up the airwaves these days, then McClinton just might be your man.

— Wayne Peal

ANSWERS TO NOTHING

— Midge Ure

Midge Ure must have been thinking about something when he concocted "Answers to Nothing," his latest Chrysalis album.

Such as, "I don't give a rip if this is or isn't a commercial success. ... I want to be free to make music the way I want to."

That statement would pretty much sum this up, a creatively ambitious album ignored by the critics. Not too many record buyers today often shell out money for songs like "Dear God," a five-minute hymn about saving the world, embellished with a soaring guitar solo. It never broke the Top 95, despite strong exposure at college radio.

But "Dear God's" message never found a mass audience because of the reluctance of Top 40 programmers to play it. Add it to this is or isn't a commercial success. ... I want to be free to make music the way I want to."

Creatively speaking, however, Ure has written and produced quirky, almost avant-garde material requiring repeated listens to fully appreciate.

The title song bursts through the speakers, nearly assaulting the listener with the first verse, delivered in rapid-fire fashion.

"High upon a hillside, a preacher tells a story to a crowd/He tells the same old story, a thousand times he's read that story loud/He wants



to give the answers but his words are only — Answers to Nothing."

Family is a recurring theme on "Take Me Home" and "Sister and Brother." On the former, Ure croons "I need to feel that sense of belonging."

The second side opens with "Just For You," maybe the most straightforward rocker on the album. It builds throughout, then winds up with an intense guitar riff.

"Answers to Nothing" won't spawn any hits or beer commercials. What it does yield is good music, something that seems to be a low priority these days.

— Tim Smith

THE MAN WITH THE BLUE POST-MODERN FRAGMENTED NEO-TRADITIONALIST GUITAR

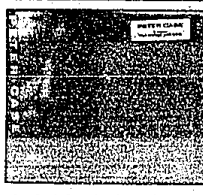
— Peter Case

Peter Case's second solo album since the breakup of his former group, The Pilgrimage, on Geffen Records, easily wins the award for the longest, and possibly the strangest title of the year.

Anyone who caught Case's solo in this part of town a couple of years back will be familiar with his easy going and, dare I say, "Dylanesque" style of acoustic guitar pop.

The genial, and funny, Mr. Case gave performances at Sam's Jams and various radio stations and made an impromptu appearance at Saint Andrew's Hall in Detroit, all done as much for the fun of it as promoting his album.

This LP sees him expanding the instrumentation on each song, although the style of the songs will still allow him to perform solo. He uses a variety of people on instruments as diverse as ukulele to mandolin to harmonica, most notably by Cooper, Mitchell Proom and T-Dogg Burnett.



who also helps with the production. Each song paints a little picture and tells a little story. He casts his opinion, shares hard luck stories and wraps them all up in sweet folk and blues-oriented pieces of music.

The lead track, "Charles James," is a traditional song, which Case used for the soundtrack of Sam Shepherd's play "A Life of the Mind." The tempo and atmosphere break up with the track, "Put Down the Gun," musically similar to the Reddies, on which he offers hope to someone who's down.

We then travel to the "Estrella Hotel," a piece of lodging for transients in San Francisco, which turned down last year. A big band grabbed America and stole it, and everything loose rolled to the exact.

On "This Town's a Flak," he offers his opinion about modern society and then adds, "But there's nothing like an earthquake to remind you who's in charge."

On this record, Peter Case takes charge of your imagination.

— Corinne Wright