

Esprit de Corps?

Band comes 'home' to record 2nd album

By Bob Sadler
special writer

They call it the sophomore jinx. In the music industry, it is an affliction that besets many a young band following the success of their first album.

Whether it be at their own insistence or the decision of a profit-hungry record label, a band will immediately re-enter the studio and quickly cut another album to capitalize on their initial acclaim.

More often than not, it usually results in failure, permanently placing a group on the list of so-called "one hit wonders."

Five men determined to avoid the jinx are Detroit's own Rhythm Corps and their producer Ben Grosse. Recording their second album at Pearl Sound in Canton (about as far away from the pressure of recording barons in Los Angeles and New York as you can get).

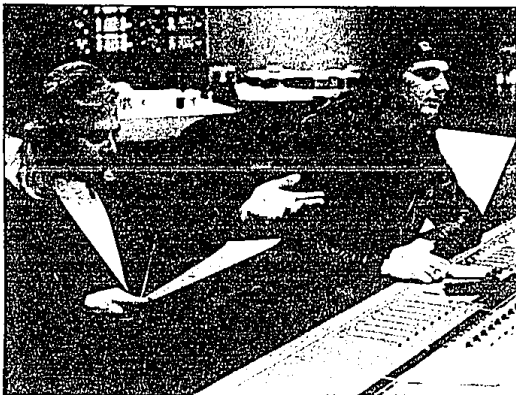
"We're taking a lot of time with this record," said Michael Persh, Rhythm Corps' lead vocalist.

The new album is currently about half finished and is expected to be released by summer.

"Common Ground" was quite a successful debut for Persh, guitarist Greg Agro, bassist Davey Holmbo, and drummer Richie Lovsin. The band managed to land the opening slot on tour with Pat Benatar. The title track became a Top 40 single on the Billboard charts, getting Rhythm Corps substantial airplay across the country.

HOWEVER, THE song got even more exposure when it was used by NBC during their Seoul Summer Olympics coverage, becoming the soundtrack for a video collage aired before the men's volleyball gold medal match between the United States and the Soviet Union.

"We had thought of it (the idea of



Rhythm Corps has come home to Michigan to work on its follow-up album to its successful debut with "Common Ground."

KATHY RANDINIS

using the song)," said Holmbo, a Redford native. "On the same day we were going to contact our booking agent to see if someone could get involved with it, this guy (an NBC producer who was putting the collage together) called our agent on his own."

Needless to say, all involved were thrilled to see the result when it aired.

"I was sitting on the bus at the Fox Theatre in Atlanta," Holmbo recalled. "It was pouring rain and we'd just finished our show. We all ran out there in the rain, and we'd just finished our show. We all ran out there in the rain and watched it. When the song came on, it was a great feeling to know that millions and millions of

people were hearing our song at the same time."

All the success enjoyed by Rhythm Corps has been a long time coming. Formed early in 1981 and at one point having five members, the group settled on its current lineup on Oct. 31, 1981. Persh said.

In 1982, they released their first EP on the Metro America label titled "Paquet de Cinqu," French for "Packet of Five" (there were five songs on the EP). A couple of tracks from that and their second EP "Esprit de Corps," "Broken Halos" and "Vanishes," received airplay on Detroit rock radio.

"WE GOT a lot of support from the local people and radio stations," Persh said. "We've never had any

reason to complain. Fortunately for us, we were there at a time when the radio stations were playing more local bands."

In 1985, Rhythm Corps shifted its headquarters from Detroit to Los Angeles, in an effort to be noticed by a major label. They were eventually signed by Posi Records, an independent label distributed by CBS. By the fall of 1987, they began recording "Common Ground."

Rhythm Corps will appear with Tunjunt Image and Beer on the Penguin on Sunday, Dec. 31, at St. Andrew's Hall, 421 E. Congress. Detroit. Tickets are \$14.50 and are available at all TicketMaster outlets. For information, call 961-MELT.

IN CONCERT

● Idiots

The Idiots will perform along with Grievance Committee and the Generals on Tuesday, Dec. 26, at St. Andrew's Hall, 421 E. Congress, Detroit. For information, call 961-MELT.

● Idyl Roomers

Idyl Roomers and Friends will perform Tuesday, Dec. 26, in an after-Christmas party at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● Detroit big guns

Detroit Big Guns will perform Wednesday and Thursday, Dec. 27-28, at the Studio Lounge, 6921 N. Wayne, south of Warren Road, Westland. For information, call 723-2540.

● Beer on the penguin

Beer on the Penguin will perform on Wednesday, Dec. 27, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● Orange roughies

Orange Roughies will perform on Thursday, Dec. 28, at S-D Club, 1815 N. Main, Royal Oak. For information, call 589-3344.

● Second self

Second Self will perform on Thursday, Dec. 28, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● The samaritans

The Samaritans will perform on Thursday, Dec. 28, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● Hysterical narcotics

Hysterical Narcotics will perform on Friday, Dec. 29, at the Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, off I-75, Hamtramck.

● Tracey Lee and the Leonards

Tracey Lee and the Leonards will perform on Friday and Saturday, Dec. 29-30, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● Koko Taylor

Koko Taylor will perform on Friday and Saturday, Dec. 29-30, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● Son Seals

Son Seals will perform on Friday, Dec. 29, at Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, north of Michigan, Dearborn. For information, call 466-5377.

● The gear

The Gear will perform with guests, the Opossums, on Friday, Dec. 29, at Lili's 21, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck. For information, call 875-6555.

● Strait

Strait will perform with guests, Stratus, on Saturday, Dec. 30, at the Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, off I-75.

● Bigger than mass

Bigger Than Mass will perform with guests, Mondo Cane, on Saturday, Dec. 30, at the Garden Bowl, 4120 Woodward, Detroit. For information, call 823-9550.

● The generals

The Generals will perform with guests, The Gear and The Gorins, on Saturday, Dec. 30, at Finney's Pub, 3965 Woodward, Detroit. For information, call 831-8070.

● 3-D Invisibles

3-D Invisibles will perform with guests, Screaming Saws and the Caveners, Zombie Surfers and Kean Killers, on Saturday, Dec. 31, at the Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, off I-75.



Son Seals will perform on Friday, Dec. 29, at Sully's on Greenfield in Dearborn.

Midtown hosts musical 'summit'

By Jill Hamilton
special writer

Malta hosted the United States/Soviet summit, and Birmingham will have a summit of its own this week at the Midtown Cafe. The "Midtown Summit" — a glass-inspired evening of music — will feature Detroiters Pamela Conn, an Academy-award winning filmmaker, presenting Soviet singers Thomas and Tarmo Urb.

Conn, a professional vocalist and composer in her own right, will open the program with a combination of jazz and pop tunes. The Urb brothers, who defected to this country six months ago, will sing the folk ballads that charmed audiences during their previous Michigan visit.

Conn, who lives in Plymouth, first heard Thomas and Tarmo sing at a performance at a private home. "When I heard them sing, I was so impressed with their music," Conn said. "I don't think I have gotten so excited about anybody's music, ever."

Conn didn't think she'd ever have the opportunity to talk with people behind the Iron Curtain, but a combination of the sweeping changes of

glasnost and, not incidentally, an Oscar-winning film had allowed many things to happen that she previously thought were impossible.

While Conn sings with Thomas and Tarmo in Birmingham, a film she co-produced with Detroit Sue Marx, "Young at Heart" will be broadcast over Soviet television.

"Young at Heart" was shown at the Leningrad First International Non-Feature Film Festival and earned an award from the Leningrad International Women in Film (KIWI).

A PROGRAM exchange, originally started by The Learning Channel in the United States, selected "Young at Heart" to be shown on Soviet television. The film, the first independently produced documentary to air in Russia, will be broadcast on Channel One through Gostelradio, the State Committee for Television and Radio. Gostelradio reaches an estimated 180 million viewers in Russian and 30 million in Eastern Europe.

Conn opted not to go to the awards ceremony in Russia because she felt that it was not yet the right time and that, perhaps, another chance to go



Academy Award-winning filmmaker Pamela Conn is sharing the stage with Soviet singers Thomas and Tarmo Urb at the Midtown Cafe in Birmingham.

would come up in the future.

She was partially right, except that, instead of Conn traveling to Russia, Russia came to her in the form of the two Estonian brothers.

"It was thrilling to get to meet them," Conn said. "I realized that everyone all over the world is pretty much the same. . . . We're all human beings. But it was also fascinating to see their different viewpoints and outlooks on everything."

Conn's love of music, and especially jazz, began when she was 4. "I started out listening to my parents' old records," Conn said. "They had a bunch of great old jazz 45s from the '30s and '40s."

She embarked on a full-time film career, teaming up with filmmaker Sue Marx. Together they wrote, directed and produced a number of award-winning films and television spots, many of which featured original music by Conn.

Her music has been nominated twice for Emmy Awards, including her original song, "Foxy Lady," composed for the 1988 Emmy-winning film "Encore on Broadway: Detroit's Fox Theatre." The song also won a CINE Golden Eagle.

Pam Conn and Thomas and Tarmo Urb will perform at 8 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday, Dec. 27-28, at the Midtown Cafe in Birmingham.

COUNTRY

Here are the top-10 country songs on WWW-FM.

1. "A Woman In Love," Ronnie Millap.
2. "Til Love Comes Again," Reba McEntire.
3. "The Lonely Side of Love," Patty Loveless.
4. "I've Been Loved By The Best," Don Williams.
5. "Two Dozen Roses," Shenandoah.
6. "The Vows Go Unbroken," Kenny Rogers.
7. "The Race Is On," Sawyer Brown.
8. "Country Club," Travis Tritt.
9. "She's Gone, Gone, Gone," Glen Campbell.
10. "Never Had It So Good," Mary Chapin Carpenter.

TOPS HITS

Best-selling records of the week:

1. "We Didn't Start the Fire," Billy Joel.
 2. "Another Day in Paradise," Phil Collins.
 3. "Angela," Richard Marx.
 4. "Back in Life," Soul II Soul.
 5. "The Way That You Love Me," Paula Abdul.
 6. "Don't Know Much," Linda Ronstadt with Arnie Neville.
 7. "With Every Beat of My Heart," Taylor Dayne.
 8. "Rhythm Nation," Janet Jackson.
 9. "Don't Close Your Eyes," Kiss.
 10. "Love Shack," B-52's.
- (Source: Cashbox magazine)

REVIEWS

BLOW

— Red Lorry Yellow

If you are looking for an album of generic post-modern music by a band from England, rush out and grab "Blow" by Red Lorry Yellow Lorry. It has all the proper elements — gloomy lyrics about love, vocals sung in a bored and detached monotone and repetitious, plodding guitar parts — with none of that annoying passion or originality.

"Blow" has none of the energy of punk, nor humorously depressing "I wear black on the outside because that's how I feel on the inside" lyrics, and certainly no one would feel like dancing to it. The music is just like listening to a car when you were in no particular mood whatsoever.

Lead singer Chris Reed has a deep, rough voice that is reminiscent of Richard Butler of the Psychedelic Furs — the Lorrys even have a song called "Heaven"— but Butler's voice adds only a deadened, sluggish tone to "Blow."

The Lorrys sing mostly about, guess what, love. In "It Was Wrong," Reed sings, "I was wrong to bring you down, in a life you see me/I see your smile I'm lost and found with the things I see today."

In "Shine a Light," Reed laments, "All along you proved me wrong/I said I was to blame/See the way I turn my head and cry/It was just another day all the things stood in



our way/See the way you break me down inside."

But Red Lorry Yellow Lorry is at their best when they sing about things other than love. "West Wakes Up" is a vaguely reggae-like tune with interesting lyrics like, "The west wakes up to find completeness in half-truth/The east wakes up to fall asleep/When I find it shows me sense is all forgotten/Then I'll wait then I'll wait."

The song, "Blow," consists simply of the words "Ya na na na na . . . Blow!" repeated over and over in a sort of chant, giving the song a somewhat European feel.

"Blow" isn't a terrible album — it still manages to be better than 99 percent of what is played on Detroit radio — but it's an uninspired album. For those who enjoy familiar and palatable music, "Blow" is a sure bet.

— Jill Hamilton

AND IN THIS CORNER

— D.J. Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince

This tandem burst into prominence last year with the inventive pop-rap single "Parents Just Don't Understand," a sly piece of insubordinate social commentary which earned them a slew of awards, including the first rap Grammy.

"And in This Corner" (RCA/Jive) fails to deliver on the promise of Jazzy and the Fresh Prince's earlier efforts. It is remarkably conservative for the genre and generally un-inventive.

The album unforgivably opens with its worst track, "Then She Bit Me," which features an organ riff nicked from "The Phantom of the Opera," which is tolerable, but the rapping is nothing short of pathetic.

The Fresh Prince usually reels off unbelievable but entertaining stories, but here in weak attempt at comedy, he keeps correcting himself. He seems oblivious to the fact that it really doesn't matter whether it was "All My Children," "Cosby," "Speed Racer" or "Kimba" on the television unless he makes it matter.

Things get a little better on "I Think I Can Beat Mike Tyson," wherein the Fresh Prince recounts an understandably painful and embarrassing one-rounder with the heavyweight champ. Unfortunately, the funniest parts of the tape consist of the Prince and Jeff imitating the fluff-cuff-loving barbers that Eddie



Murphy and Arsenio Hall created for the film "Coming to America."

"Everything That Glitters (Aln's Always Gold)" is pleasantly silly in the manner of "Parents Just Don't Understand," but its subject matter — a shipwreck followed by an encounter with crudely portrayed cannibals — lacks the earlier song's appeal.

The team's best effort on this record is "Who Stole My Car," which pairs scratched-in automotive noises with the Prince delivering a self-deprecating story about an IROC that someone drove to Kalamazoo. After the car meets up with a telephone pole, the Prince moans, "I wanted to just jump into the ocean/My car looked like it was a Lego explosion."

— John Llopis

DOGBUNNY

— Hippodrome

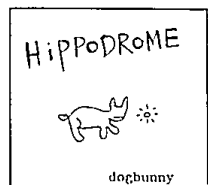
Some two years ago, Chris Richards sat at a table in an area nightclub. He didn't want to go on, he said. Only a couple of leather clad patrons dotted the otherwise vast sea of empty tables. Who could blame him?

Once on stage, though, this often times young bespectacled guitar-playing gent burned through one of the best sets of rock'n'roll this person has ever heard. Hippodrome's music has always had that manic quality, teetering on the brink of all-out mayhem.

Fortunately, two years later, that sense of urgency has not waned in the Hippodrome camp. If anything, it's grown more intense on this, the band's first full-length release on compact disc.

"Dogbunny" is a carnival of sound, jumping from one high-speed musical ride to another. Only in the acoustical dreamscape of "Under the Tree" and the orchestral feeling of "Crumble" does Hippodrome catch its collective breath for a moment.

From there, grab your hat. Most of the songs are guitar dominated, which has drawn unfair comparisons to R.E.M. in the past. Lyrically, the pair are completely two different animals. Hippodrome's songs are more along the lines of post-teenage melancholy. More than a few times, there are references to love lost,



love unattainable and love for another day.

A favorite? Take a pick from the country pickings of "Caroline" to the bar chant of "Foggy Notion" to the wavy "I'm in Love with Everything" and anything in between and on the side.

This is a solid effort and the best part of it is that Hippodrome's better days lie ahead.

— Larry O'Connor