

# STREET BEATS

## Studio A: A sound place to record

By LaVerne Griffin  
special writer

For the past 10 years, Eric and Marilyn Morgeson, both of Plymouth, have recorded some of today's well-known artists. For 8 1/2 years, they worked out of their garage and, for the last 3 1/2 years from their world class recording studio in Dearborn Heights.

Eric, formally the keyboardist in Bob Seger's band, found that he enjoyed being in the studio behind the scenes rather than on the road in the spotlight.

"We used my garage as a rehearsal place; therefore, we installed equipment to record our sessions," he said. "As we built the studio up, and it became better and better, other people wanted to use it. So, we got real busy with side clients."

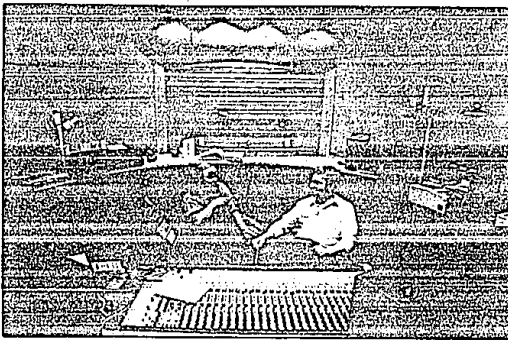
Klara, who sings Quiet Guy, and Every Little Time, Billboards current power pick, started in the Morgeson's garage four years ago. Ready for the World, who sang "Oh Sheila," along with Digital Display and Gentilly also got started in the studio garage.

The Morgeson's had a studio built next door to their home. The only studio in the metro area built from the ground up solely for the purpose of recording.

STUDIO A was designed by the renowned architect, John M. Stork of New York. Stork specializes in acoustical design and construction. His firm was responsible for the design of recording and media facilities for clients that include Atlantic Records, The Hit Factory and Institute of Audio Research in New York.

He was also commissioned to design private studios for Stevie Wonder, Ace Frehley of KISS and others. His firm has received national and international recognition.

Stork's unique design results in a building which is acoustically accu-



Marilyn and Eric Morgeson of Plymouth sit at the controls of Studio A.

JIM JACOBSON/staff photographer

rate. The interior is designed with a room within a room. The floor is constructed with rubber flooring strategically placed above the regular floor to give better acoustical sound.

The Morgesons chose to install a Synclavier recording system, the equivalent to a recording studio with a keyboard.

"Everything you need to layout a record is at your fingertips," Marilyn said. "It's unique, powerful, and expensive. Wouldn't it have been terrible to build this marvelous building and still sound as if we were in the garage. So, we made the investment and bought the best."

The Morgesons invested in the equipment seven years ago after their first album deal. The state-of-the-art, multi-track specialized equipment, interfaced with talented people, such as engineers John Jaszcz and Randy Poole, means that

they can create a product equal to or superior to most major market studios that aren't comparably equipped.

"WHAT WE have here, in Dearborn Heights, is the same expertise you can get in Los Angeles and New York. We have equipment so specialized that there are only about 500 in the world," Eric said. "This is a people business. The most sophisticated equipment doesn't mean anything without qualified people to run it. We're fortunate, we've had the same people here since we opened up."

Marilyn is the manager of the studio, while Eric produces and writes for their production company, EMP Productions Limited.

Studio A has been the recording home of Alexander Zanjic, George Clinton, Earl Klugh, Chapter 8 and the Clark Sisters, who have recently

been asked to sing backup for Barbara Mandrell.

The Morgesons are dividing their time between recording rock'n'roll, soul, gospel, commercials and films. Their business isn't based on public visibility, but on word of mouth — one successful project recommending them to someone seeking a top-notch facility.

"We took a big chance on this investment," Marilyn said. "We believe in what we do and what we can bring to the talent in this market. It's a risky business, but it's fun when you win."

"I would tell the local artist to take a chance on yourself," Eric added. "Don't expect anyone else to invest time, interest, or money in you, if you aren't willing to invest those same things in yourself. In this business, you have to do it because you love it. Success is a byproduct, not a destination."



Something Happens presents a brand of guitar-based, melodic rock'n'roll.

"Tall Girls Club," we were able to do that. But for the most part, though, it was difficult to do."

Harman attributes part of that to inexperience in the studio. Something Happens' forte has also been the live performance. The band's mini-LP "I Know Ray Harman" (Vineyard, import only) was recorded at McGonigles Pub and features Something Happens' at their fieriest.

And unlike the serious-as-a-heart-attack approach their Irish compatriots take in music, Something Happens' indeed has a sense of humor. They've done several covers of well-known music. One, in fact, that was done tongue in cheek has really become a gem. An acoustic version of Madonna's hit "Borderline" can be found as a B-side single.

"That was given the chart treatment with the synthesizers and the techno beat," said Dunne. "We found by stripping it down with just an acoustic guitar that song became more meaningful. The more I listen to it, the more the song has come to mean to me. It's really a lovely song."

Their own numbers have sort of a Jekel and Hyde quality. There's a taut line between romanticism and aggression. Numbers like the guitar-slinging "Beach" appeal to the primal rock instincts while songs like "Take This With You" bring forth a sentimental side in the group.

Dunne is the chief songwriter for the group, whose writing is matched with an equally soothing voice.

AS AN IRISH band, some subjects are not easy to avoid. Massive unemployment has forced many young people in Ireland to emigrate. "Take This With You," a rather melodic ditty, is about a friend of Dunne's who had to leave his home in Dublin to come to the U.S.

The number is heartfelt, but doesn't come off as a misty-eyed pub drinking singlet.

"It's all in the way you approach it," Harman said. "He (Dunne) writes from the perspective of an Irish person. They couldn't go along with any other nationality. We don't get into the mysticism. I think it's a positive thing, really."

## Will it happen?

### Irish band makes U.S. major goal

By Larry O'Connor  
staff writer

Does Stevie Wonder? Can Bob Hope? Something Happens! In America?

Well, the members of the Irish band Something Happens certainly do. Otherwise, they wouldn't have dropped \$20,000 of their own hard-earned money into an U.S. tour to start their career.

The foursome wants: Virgin Records to pick up their option here in the United States, which it has yet to do. Back home in the Emerald Isle, their latest album "Been There, Seen That, Done This" (available on import only in the U.S.) is No. 7 on the charts.

The group recently performed a series of gigs on the East Coast and West Coast to introduce themselves to the American public.

"Initially, we'd go into a club and we'd be quite nervous," said Ray Harman, guitarist with the band discussing the early part of the U.S. tour. "We'd turn to each other and say, 'There aren't too many people here.' But by the end, they were blown away."

What has become the biggest hurdle — breaking America — might be

their biggest asset. Something Happens has missed the initial Irish music boat with U2. In Tux Nua and Hothouse Flowers.

The music doesn't rely on the clichéd Irish mysticism. No violins, no uilleann pipes or references to surging mist from the Irish Sea. In other words, they don't wear their Irishness on their sleeve.

SOMETHING HAPPENS! sound is melodic guitar-based rock'n'roll. Nothing fancy, just good and loud.

Yet Something Happens! has still had to deflect the ever-dreaded U2 tag, especially from critics in America.

"There was a story in a Washington newspaper that said our album can be found in the 'Sound Like U2' bin at the record store," said Tom Dunne, singer and guitarist with the band. "Then we heard there was some guy who bought the album and went back and complained at the record store when he found that we sounded nothing like them."

"Anyone who listens to the music knows we don't sound anything like U2. If anything, that makes us want to prove ourselves even more."

The latest album, though, won't be used as their calling card. Band members said they were disappointed, especially from the production end with the album. Tommy Erdelyi (who worked with The Replacements), a.k.a. Tommy Ramone, was the producer on "Been There, Seen That, Done This."

"The important thing when we went into the studio was to get the energy across," Harman said. "On a couple of the songs, 'Incomin' and

## REVIEWS

### BLIND MAN'S ZOO — 10,000 Maniacs

They raised some eyebrows a couple of years ago with their debut release "In My Tribe" (Elektra), and if justice serves them right, they'll raise quite a few more with their second.

The catalyst to this quintet is vocalist/songwriter Natalie Merchant, who delivers her often-biting lyrics with the intensity to match them. Her talent shines through in every track of "Blind Man's Zoo," making this effort that much more consistent than its predecessor.

"Eat for Two," a great piece of satire, opens the album. Merchant becomes the careless girl who, now with child, watches "my folly grow inside me." "Please Forgive Us," "The Big Parade" follow with a military tone.

"Forgive Us" is a none-too-subtle conviction of the United States and people like Gille North for being involved in foreign conflicts. "Parade" talks about the trail of death beginning in Vietnam and leading all the way back home, with a parting allusion to the Vietnam Memorial in Washington.



The ominous chords throughout "Dust Box" are courtesy of Maniacs guitarist Robert Buckle (does the name sound familiar? R.E.M. fans), who shares songwriting credits with Merchant on this and two other tracks. "The Lion's Share" addresses the distribution of wealth in today's world — the rich lions get richer and the poor lambs get poorer.

The concluding track, "Jubilee," is a marked departure from the rest of the album, featuring members of Saint Luke's Chamber Orchestra in a macabre story of a demented man, "God's mad disciple."

Space doesn't allow me to mention every line (but it really isn't a bad one) of the LP. So, if you've ever speculated what R.E.M. might sound like with a female vocalist, you may find 10,000 Maniacs to your liking.

Even if you haven't, "Blind Man's Zoo" is too good to pass up. — Bob Sadler

### FLOWERS IN THE DIRT — Paul McCartney

The '80s has been a disappointing decade for Paul McCartney. Seemingly at a creative impasse for most of the last 10 years, he has put together a few lousy LPs and failed miserably with a movie project called "Give My Regards to Broad Street." Only a couple of songs have saved this period from being a complete washout.

Well, a little light has appeared at the end of the tunnel in the past few months. First, there was the release of his controversial "Back in the U.S.S.R." LP exclusively on the wrong side of the Iron Curtain. The bootleg copies that found their way to the U.S. showed that McCartney was starting to come alive again.

Now, McCartney has released "Flowers in the Dirt" for the rest of the world to enjoy. Given the lack of solid original material the man has produced recently, this album is easily his most consistent of the decade. "Flowers in the Dirt" LPs, you can always count on an impressive cast of supporting players and producers to show up. "My Brave Face," the initial single, features Pretenders guitarist Robbie McIntosh and ace producer Mitchell



From on keyboards. Elvis Costello appears on three tracks, most notably "You Want Her Too," a 1989 echo of "The Girl Is Mine" (McCartney's duet with Michael Jackson). Of course, no one will accuse Elvis Costello of being Michael Jackson, and his backbiting presence makes "Want Her" a highlight.

Other notables who appear on the album are Art of Noise and Yes producer Trevor Horn, David Gilmour and David Foster. While by no means a blockbuster, the lively Beate George Blackburn's LP "Cloud Nine," "Flowers in the Dirt" has enough solid moments to indicate that Paul McCartney is not dead as a musical entity. It also could give his fans some hope for the '90s. — Bob Sadler

## IN CONCERT

### MAP OF THE WORLD

Map of the World will perform Monday, July 3, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8355.

### 13 ENGINES

13 Engines will perform with special guest, Roger Manning, Tuesday, July 4, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8355.

### DOG SOLDIER

Dog Soldier will perform Wednesday, July 5, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

### ORANGE ROUGHIES

Orange Roughies will perform Thursday, July 6, at the D-D Dance Club, 1815 N. Main, near 12 Mile, Royal Oak. For information, call 589-3344.

### PAH THE SIRENS

Pah the Sirens will perform Thursday, July 6, at the Garden Bowl, 4120 Woodward, one block north of Orchestra Hall, Detroit. For information, call 833-9575.

### FRANK ALLISON

Frank Allison and the Odd Sox will perform Thursday, July 6, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8355. The group will also perform Friday, July 7, at Griff's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac. For information, call 334-9292.

### KIMBALLS

Kimball 13 will perform Friday, July 7, at Jameson's, 1812 N. Main, Royal Oak. For information, call 547-6470.

### STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

Strange Bedfellows will perform along with special guests, the Doe Boys, Friday, July 7, at the Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, off I-75. For information, call 325-9760.

### BLUE FRONT PURSUADERS

Blue Front Pursuaders will perform Friday, July 7, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8355.

### BROKEN YOYO

Broken Yoyo will perform Friday and Saturday, July 7-8, at the Old Detroit Salon, Beaubien at Fort. For information, call 222-7872.

### JERRY PORTNOY

Jerry Portnoy will perform Friday, July 7, at Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, north of Michigan Avenue, Dearborn. For information, call 846-5377.

### RUMPLESTILSKIN

Rumplestilskin will perform Friday, July 7, on the Boblo Moonlight Cruise. The cruise departs from the Detroit dock on Clark Avenue, at 11 p.m. and returns 1 a.m. Tickets are \$10.95 (\$9.95 with 10 or more people and reservations made in advance). For information, call 843-0700.

### SCOTT CAMPBELL

Scott Campbell will perform Saturday, July 8, at Jameson's, 1812 N. Main, Royal Oak. For information, call 547-6470.

### UNSATURDAYS

The Unsaturdays will perform Saturday, July 8, at Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, north of Michigan Avenue, Dearborn. For information, call 846-5377.

### CHEVELLES

The Chevelles will perform Saturday, July 8, on the Boblo Moonlight Cruise, which departs at 11 p.m. from the Detroit dock at the foot of Clark Avenue. Tickets are \$10.95 (\$9.50 for groups 10 or more with advance reservations). For information, call 813-0700.

### KURU

Kuru will perform along with special guests, D.N.A., Saturday, July 8, at Stanley's, 340 Pitt, Windsor. For information, call 833-3443.

### LEAGUE OF NATIONS

League of Nations will perform along with special guests, New Logic, on Saturday, July 8, at the Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, off I-75. For information, call 325-9760.

### EDDIE SHAW

Eddie Shaw and the Wolfgang will perform Saturday, July 8, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8355.

### SEE DICK RUN

See Dick Run will perform Saturday, July 8, at Griff's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac. For information, call 334-9292.

### THE GENERALS

The Generals will perform with special guests, Shanking Voodoo Dolls, Sunday, July 9, at Saint Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. For information, call 961-MELT.



Jerry Portnoy will perform on Friday, July 7, at Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, north of Michigan Avenue, Dearborn. For information, call 846-5377.

## COLLEGE

Here are the top 10 singles receiving airplay on WWWW-FM, the top campus station at Oakland University in Rochester.

1. "Pet Semetary," Ramones.
2. "See Us Light," Bob Moel.
3. "Just Like Heaven," Discosaur Juniors.
4. "Chains," Soul Asylum.
5. "You're What You Want to Be," Cruel Story of Youth.
6. "Blind Tears," XYMOX.
7. "Saved," Swans.
8. "Too Far Away," Screaming Trees.
9. "I'm Your Man," Poodles.
10. "From Out of Nowhere," Faith No More.

## COUNTRY

Here are the top 10 songs receiving airplay on WWWW-FM.

1. "Where Did I Go Wrong," Steve Wariner.
2. "Houston Solution," Ronnie Blalock.
3. "In a Letter to You," Eddy Raven.
4. "What's Goin' on in Your World," George Strait.
5. "I Don't Want to Spoil the Party," Ronnie Esrock.
6. "Like Father Like Son," Lionel Cartwright.
7. "Wine Me Up," Larry Boone.
8. "Come from the Heart," Ricky Skaggs.
9. "Levin' on Me," Ricky Skaggs.
10. "If I Never See Midnight Again," Sweethearts of the Rodeo.

### AVALON SUNSET — Van Morrison

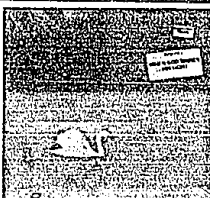
A new Van Morrison release is always highly anticipated. Is it going to be another master work on the lines of "Astral Weeks," "Wavelength" or "No Method No Guru No Teacher?"

Or perhaps it will be more self-indulgent and difficult for non-Morrison fanatics to relate to such as "A Period of Transition?"

On "Avalon Sunset," Van once again celebrates his membership in the God Squad. His worshiping is most blatant on the tracks "Whenever God Salutes His Light" on which he sings with fellow God Squadder, the Peter Pan of British pop, Cliff Richard, "Contacting My Angel," and "When Will I Ever Learn to Live in God?"

On the other tracks the object of this affection may be a deity or a partner, although there is a leaning toward the religious. It seems as though he is fed up with his non-commercialism as he sings on songs "I'd love to write another love song, to carry me along/make some money, pay some bills." Maybe this is what he is praying for.

Immediately after that song, he attempts to actually do it with



"Have I Told You Lately," which is awash with string and brass arrangements. This orchestration, a little too sickeningly sweet for my tastes, is continued throughout story, an albeit in support of some beautiful melodies. Side two favors George-Fame's Hammond organ instead. Van Morrison records are only bad, as in terms of other Van Morrison records are with that in mind. "Avalon Sunset" may not be his strongest. But his work transcends any guidelines or comparisons. He is on his own, good or bad.

A Van Morrison record is not to be overrated. A Van Morrison record is one to live with and learn. His subtlety and nuances and grow to love.

It's always worth the effort. — Gernan Wright