

STREET BEATS

Band has hand in success

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

A simple equation in the music business: Simple lyrics plus idealism equals snickers from critics.

Show of Hands, a California based three-person acoustical outfit, is no exception. Their self-titled debut album on L.R.S. Records has been on the receiving end of both positive and negative reviews.

The reasons for liking the LP are many, including nice harmonies and skillful musicianship. On the other side, the rose-colored views presented on the album might be considered somewhat naive.

"I think one of the reasons it sparks cynicism is that some of the lyrics are so direct," said Randall Kirsch, whose group will perform Tuesday at The Ark in Ann Arbor. "They're easy to make fun of because they are so idealistic. Some of the reviewers said it sounded like we are trying to save the world."

"We're a band that believes anything you do changes the world." "I think cynicism is part of the problem," added band member LuAnn Olson. "It's something to hide behind. I know because I was cynical at one time."

Oh really? There isn't a cynical syllable uttered on the Show of Hands LP. Songs directly address things like love ("Real Love"), war ("Another War") and God ("God Made the World").

Like the song titles suggest, there is no underlying message or surreal imagery. What we have here, folks, is a band that tells like it really is.

AND THAT has its pluses and minuses. Some people already know war is bad, love is good. People usually don't need a musical group to tell them as such.

Also, there is always the drawback of being automatically labelled as a political band, which Show of



Charlie Hickey (left), Randall Kirsch and LuAnn Olson of Show of Hands don't beat around the musical bush on their views of the world.

Hands turns a thumbs down to. They also disdain any comparisons to Peter, Paul and Mary.

Yet the musical clarity is what helps sell the package. David Kerschbaum produced "Show of Hands." He helped bring a sparse sound that didn't allow the lyrics to become echoes but actual statements.

Kerschbaum has had experience in this area before, working with Tracy Chapman on her stunning debut LP on Elektra records last year.

"I think the best thing David did was allow us to let go of it," Olson said.

That was difficult, especially since each member of the group is a songwriter. With three people with

separate ideas, the normally chaotic state of recording would have been heightened. Kerschbaum provided the serenity to make it work.

Members found they do have similar world views that puts everything into focus.

And every member of the group was upset to see the footage of the recent crackdown in China. Show of Hands spent three weeks there, even performing as street musicians in Tiananmen Square.

Show of Hands went as part of a cultural exchange program, performing before crowds of 15,000 each night.

"IT BREAKS my heart," Olson said. "When we were there, they

were just beginning the peaceful protests. They were going about it in such rational manner. I thought they were making great strides... and then it seems they went backward 1,000 years."

"We've been hesitant to get in touch with any friends we had made there," Kirsch said. "They're arresting anyone associated with Western culture. I did promise to write a song for someone over there. So one song will come from our experience."

Show of Hands will open for Indigo Girls at 7:30 p.m. and 10 p.m. Tuesday, July 25, at The Ark, 637 S. Main, Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$12.50 in advance. For information, call 99-MUSIC.

IN CONCERT

• TODD RUNDGREN

Todd Rundgren will perform at 7:30 p.m. Monday, July 24, at the Royal Music Theatre. Tickets are \$18.50. For information, call 546-7610.

• ROBERT NOLL

Robert Noll Blues Mission will perform on Wednesday, July 26, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 998-2747.

• THE GEAR

The Gear will perform at noon Wednesday, July 26, at Wayne State University Underground Concert Series, Gulien Mall, across from the Student Services Building. Also, the group performs at 10:30 p.m. Thursday, July 27, at the Garden Bowl's "Rock n' Bowl," 4120 Woodward, Detroit. For information, call 533-9950.

• ALL

All will perform with special guests, Thrash Brats and Skulls Squad, on Thursday, July 27, at Blondie's, 21179 W. Seven Mile, Detroit. For information, call 535-8165.

• BADLANDS

Badlands will perform on Thursday, July 27, at the Ritz, 17550 Frayne, Roseville. For information, call 778-8150.

• GOOBER & THE PEAS

Goober & The Peas will perform on Thursday, July 27, at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. For information, call 832-2355.

• BROKEN YOYO

Broken Yoyo will perform on Thursday, July 27, at Novi Sheraton Oaks, 27500 Sheraton Dr. For information, call 348-5000. The band will also perform on Saturday, July 29, at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. For information, call 832-2355.

• JIMMY REED

Jimmy Reed will perform on Friday, July 28, at Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, north

of Michigan Avenue, Dearborn. For information, call 846-3377.

• UNCLE SAM

Uncle Sam will perform with Skam and Odeyssey on Friday, July 28, at Blondie's, 21179 W. Seven Mile, Detroit. For information, call 535-8165.

• CARUSO

Caruso will perform on Saturday, July 29, at Jameson's, 1012 N. Main, Royal Oak. For information, call 547-4470.

• YARDOGG JONES

Johnny "Yardogg" Jones will perform on Saturday, July 29, at Moby Dicks, 5452 Schaefer, Dearborn. For information, call 581-3650.

• MUCKY PUP

Mucky Pup will perform on Saturday, July 29, at Blondie's, 21179 W. Seven Mile, Detroit. For information, call 535-8165.

• BIG TOWN

Big Town will perform on Friday and Saturday, July 28-29, at Griffs Grill, 48 N. Saginaw, Pontiac.

• DETROIT BLUES

Detroit Blues Bar, featuring Jimmy McCarty, will perform on Saturday, July 29, at Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, north of Michigan Avenue, Dearborn. For information, call 846-3377.

• BRUCE COCKBURN

Bruce Cockburn will perform along with special guests, Holly Near and Sarah McLachlin, at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, July 29, at the Royal Oak Music Theatre, 318 W. Fourth St. Tickets are \$17.50 in advance. For information, call 99-MUSIC.

• JOOLS FOR JADE

Jools for Jade will perform on Saturday, July 29, at Stanley's, 340 Pitt St., Windsor. For information, call 833-3143.



Johnny "Yard Dog" Jones performs Saturday, July 29, at Moby Dicks in Dearborn.

MUSIC VIEWS

Tour sparks question: Who cares?

Here's some advice for all you rock and rollers: Skip The Who's mammoth tour, which comes to town Tuesday.

Save \$25. Stay home. Watch reruns. Read Sartre. Give blood. Talk to your parents. Anything.

Let's face it, who goes to the Silverdome anymore? Nobody. Pistons fans don't. Lions fans don't. Only tractor pull devotees hang out in that inflatable cavern these days. It's just not the place to be seen. It's so big and empty. It's so 70s.

Admittedly, the Who is likely to attract enough fans to fill the place. After 25 years, the last few offering nothing but an occasional mediocre recording. The Who is still a big draw.

It doesn't hurt to fit the classic rock format. The Who, Led Zeppelin and The Rolling Stones are rock bands that no longer exist or come to life only once in awhile. But they are as popular now as they have ever been.

This sustained popularity is due in part to the classic rock format, which has breathed new life into old songs and old bands, at the expense of new music.

This Who tour is reaping big benefits from classic rock stations. Locally, the stations and advertising clients are offering plenty of ticket giveaways. The stations are giving the band plenty of airplay as well.

SOME MIGHT argue whether the

band's 25th is worth celebrating. It may well be, but the band is likely to get rich celebrating regardless of the occasion's worth.

Pete Townshend, the band's songwriter/philosopher, told Rolling Stone magazine that generous Americans are going to insist on sending the band home from its tour very wealthy.

Very generous of us isn't it? Basil, John Entwistle has sold some of his massive bass guitar collection but said it isn't because he's broke. He still has a mansion, he said.

Singer Roger Daltrey has tried acting, but without notable success. The difference between this LP, Townshend, Daltrey and Entwistle have never enjoyed the success,

commercially or financially, in solo pursuits as they have as members of the band.

The band hadn't had much success on the record charts in recent years either. When they broke up several years ago and we were told we'd never be hearing from them again.

But the pressures to reform in time to commemorate this anniversary must have been too great, and the money too tempting. They launched a stadium tour with a huge band.

This doesn't offer much for the fan. There is plenty of good rock and roll to go around in this town, but it won't be found in the Silverdome this week.

— Brian Lysaght

COUNTRY

Here are the top 10 songs on WWW-FM.

1. "What's Goin' on in Your World," George Strait.
2. "In a Letter to You," Eddy Raven.
3. "If I Never See Midnight... Again," Sweethearts of the Rodeo.
4. "Lovin' Only Me," Ricky Shaggs.
5. "Cathy's Clown," Reba McEntire.
6. "She Don't Love Nobody," Desert Rose Band.
7. "Why'd You Come Here Looking Like That?," Dolly Parton.
8. "Houston Solution," Rebbie McIlsp.
9. "So Blue," Merle Haggard.
10. "Timber, I'm Falling in Love," Patty Loveless.

LOCAL

Here are 10 songs on "Detroit Music Scene," which is heard 4-5 p.m. Sunday (repeated 3:30-4:30 p.m. Tuesday).

1. "No Room to Swing the Cat," Hubber.
2. "Childhood," Missionary Sew.
3. "How Much More?," The Generals.
4. "Can't Wait Another Day," Punks.
5. "Falling Apart," Doe Boys.
6. "The Real You," The Gear.
7. "Mighty Son," Dancing Smoothies.
8. "State of Mind," World State.
9. "Watch Me Fly," Beer on the Pegasus.
10. "Ceremony," New Order.

REVIEWS

THE IRON MAN

— Pete Townshend



One of the best things to come out of the demise of The Who has been Pete Townshend's solo career. Other members of the band have not exactly set the recording world on fire with their own work. Yet we've seen Mr. Townshend evolve from a guitar smashing hero of mods to one of the most thoughtful and accomplished artists of our time.

Even from the self-destructive nature presented on his second solo LP, "Empty Glass" (ATCO), Townshend has grown as he's come to grips with himself as an artist, and as a person. Pete Townshend doesn't need music (despite this out-for-the-money tour), music needs Pete Townshend.

This latest LP, "The Iron Man," (Atlantic) is certainly his most ambitious to date along the lines of "Tommy" and "Quadrophania."

"The Iron Man" is the musical adaptation of a children's book by poet Laureate Ted Hughes. Townshend takes on the role of the main character,

"Hogarth," who is a 10-year-old boy. Other performers on the album include blues great John Lee Hooker as "The Iron Man" and Who vocalist Roger Daltrey "Hogarth's Father."

It's Daltrey who provides the most aggressive moment on the album, doing a remake of Arthur Brown's "Fire." Otherwise, this is a very musically serene album.

Part of the reason lies in that Townshend did most of the writing for "The Iron Man" on an acoustic guitar. He disdains the use of an electric one due to his well-publicized hearing loss.

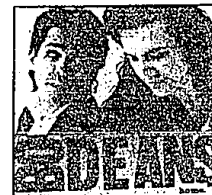
This conceptual work definitely has an easy feel to it, which makes it endearing and enjoyable. No longer is Townshend compelled to write anthems or children to the pop world.

In a children's book, he's found in peace and, as a result, we've found a great piece of music.

— Larry O'Connor

HOME

— BoDeans



This is the BoDeans first LP since their 1987 release, "Outside Looking In," and a lot has happened to the band in the interim.

It shows on many levels. BoDeans are a very hard working band and they have been touring quite extensively since 1987, which explains the large gap between LPs.

The difference between this LP, "Home" (Slash Records), and "Outside Looking In" is akin to the difference in their live shows in Traxx in 1986 and Ann Arbor in 1988.

At the earlier show, the BoDeans were fresh, exciting, just good guys having a good time playing what they liked most. At the Ann Arbor show, they were sharp, "professional," impersonal, going through the motions.

The things that have happened to them have obviously affected them, sometimes not to their advantage. They toured six weeks with U2, and while that is a major step for exposure, I think guitarist Kurt Neumann (BoDeans), spent too many nights checking out The Edge's equipment. This is most evident on "Brand New" and "You Don't Get Much" when even the drums are U2's.

They also performed on the Robb Robertson LP and his influence is notable lyrically, especially on "Red River," which coincidentally

was written between shows with Robertson (according to the sleeve notes). Their lyrics betray the fact that they've been touring for awhile.

"And I got so tired of love on the phone/I'm standing here when I should be at home" — or, as offered in "Far Far Away From My Heart" — "I'm so tired of fighting with myself as I curse the telephone along these lines."

Musically, they range from the melancholy Springsteen-esque "No One," "Don't Get Much" and "Far Far Away From My Heart" to the sanitized good time rock'n'roll of "Good Work." The latter is dedicated to Jerry Lee Lewis and is also mentioned on the sleeve notes as having been performed in Hampton, Va., with members of U2! This prompts one question: Who cares?

These songs are not strong enough to overcome the "gloomy" feel of the new BoDeans.

— Cormac Wright

HILLBILLY MUSIC

— various artists



Country music gets a bad rap, and that just isn't right.

You'll know what I mean. Just get a group of folks together, mention country music, and listen to the snickers.

So go ahead and laugh. But for every dippy country song, there's plenty that will make your spirits soar.

Merle Haggard has written some of the finest lyrics in American music, but he's dismissed as a yaboo for singing "Ode from Mackay." In the '60s, Buck Owens assembled a hot recording and touring band, the Buckaroos, and recorded a string of great country hits, before his career languished as a co-star on TV's "Hee Haw."

The great soul and rock music of the '60s has been rediscovered in recent years, but vintage country is mostly unappreciated.

But that could change. Capitol Records has just released a 54-song compilation of its country hits from the late '40s and '50s, "Hillbilly Music... Thank God! Volume 1."

Many songs in the collection dem-

onstrate a playfulness country music can capture like no other music. In this category are Hank Thompson's "How Cold Hearted Can You Get," "Swampy Boogie" by Jimmy Bryant with Speedy West, and "Live Fast, Love Hard, Die Young" by Faron Young.

The Thompson and Bryant numbers feature hot electric and steel guitar work underscored by modern effects — a clean, fresh sound.

Other standouts include Buck Owens and Rose Maddox' duet on "Mental Cruelty," and "Flash, Crash and Thunder" by the Farmer Boys.

Three songs by the great country duet team the Louvin Brothers are included, along with Merle Travis' "Nine Pound Hammer" and "Ker-Boogie Woogie," which features more hot guitar playing.

So some will laugh and pass of this collection. Go ahead — that makes it easier for the rest of us to find it in the stacks.

— Kevin Brown