

Folk comes in from the street

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

From off the street comes Roger Manning.

The New York City folk artist has stepped straight from the pavement and into the alternative music charts with his spiky acoustic sound. Before signing with SST Records, Manning was a street musician in New York City. He'd perform bluegrass numbers in the subways, mostly to a large black and Hispanic audience. They seem to dig it.

So do several people on the alternative/college music trail. Manning recently wrapped up a summer-long tour, which included a stop at The Blind in Ann Arbor, in support of his self-titled debut album on SST.

Manning music is folk, but not too folksy. He's been lumped into emerging group, the anti-folksies, along with artists like Cindy Lee Berryhill. Part of the movement is in response to what Manning says is a "comfortable" folk scene.

There's nothing soothing on "Roger Manning," which was recorded on a four-track tape machine in his New York apartment. Every song title has the word "blues" in it and he even takes a swing at fellow folksies in "Lefty Rhetoric Blues."

Sings Manning, "Listen to the lefties talkin' on the radio/they're putting down the government/what the (blank) do they know/they gotta ring/they make me sick, they oversimplify everything."

So much for being vague. Manning is also direct, offbeat, and, like his favorite author Jack Kerouac, the folk scene, basking and the influence punk has in his music.

Did author Jack Kerouac have an influence on your songwriting?

"He would write musically, if you read Kerouac, you should read them, fast because they sort of top along. I never seen any Kerouac stuff until four years ago. Just the

go-man-go attitude about life, besides the fact he drank himself to death in real life.

"The first song on the whole album, 'No. 14 Blues,' has a line in it: 'The sad bird chirping church steeple down.' I didn't lift it from him, but that might have been the way he would've written it."

What's the state of the folk scene?

"The folk scene has been too relaxed and too comfortable in my opinion. There's where you have the anti-folk scene. . . . It wasn't so much being anti-folk music, but more anti-boring and comfortable scene. Today, you have people who are willing to go onstage and rock'n'roll. I'd rather play in a rock club than a folk club, but I'll play both."

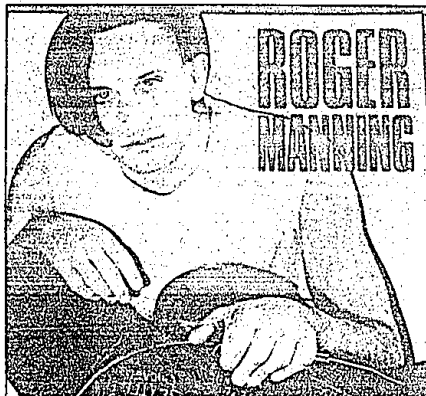
How do you compare with the likes of Tracy Chapman and Michelle Shocked?

"Did you read that review in Rolling Stone? The guy who did the writing said I was confused, self-absorbed, self-righteous. . . . and uncertain. The last line was something like 'Uncertainty is the theme of this album.' In this respect, Manning has more in common with most rock bands than Chapman or Shocked. For a month I tried to figure out what the hell he was talking about."

"He may have a point there. Chapman writes in a more loftier terms and Michelle Shocked is writing in this cutesy country way. . . . where as maybe I'm just up there being confused, self-absorbed and self-righteous. I don't know."

Why is there a lack of song titles on the album?

"That's just to screw with your head, would you write musically, if you read Kerouac, you should read them, fast because they sort of top along. I never seen any Kerouac stuff until four years ago. Just the



that and I'm supposed to be impressed. It's already been done. I thought it would funny to have the word 'blues' in every title."

What's it like making a living as a street musician in New York City?

"It's difficult. When you start out in the street or subway, you never seem to make any money no matter how good you are. It's like you have to collect some street dust before it begins to work."

"I chose to play less and less in the street because people just walk by and it's a distraction."

"It's nice to play on the platforms (in the subway) where people are standing around waiting for a train. I talk to people and say, 'This song is about this and that.' First they look at you kind of weird, but New York

people are really cool. It doesn't matter what you do as long as it's really good, they're open to it." How does your punk influences set you apart from the rest of the folk crowd?

"A lot of the folk scene, quote and quote, don't even think about that music. It's important music in this day and age, even it was 10 years ago. One of my favorite anecdotes is that I was at one more established folk club and one of bobbies was to cover Top-40 songs. I did a song by Simple Minds, 'Don't You Forget About Me,' that was in the movie 'The Breakfast Club.'"

"If I did the song and the head of booking of the club comes up to me afterward and congratulates me on the new song I had just written. Talk about out of touch!"

IN CONCERT

• **K.D. LANG**
K.D. Lang will perform on Wednesday, Aug. 2, at Saint Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. For information, call 961-MELT.

• **BENEFIT**
Fushkova will perform along with guests, Dorian Gray, in a special "Smash & Trash" Benefit Wednesday, Aug. 2, at 3-D Dance Club, 1815 N. Main, north of 12 Mile Road, Royal Oak. Admission is \$5, with a \$1 for bellbottoms or anything polyester. All proceeds will be benefit Wellcoas Networks. For information, call 555-3544.

• **WORLD STATE**
World State and Missionary Sew will perform on Thursday, Aug. 3, at the Garden Bowl, 4120 Woodward Ave., Detroit. For information, call 833-9850.

• **HIPPOTRONE**
Hippotrone will perform with special guests, Shouting Club, on Thursday, Aug. 3, at Heidelberg, Main Street, Ann Arbor.

• **PAN THE SIRENS**
Pans the Sirens will perform on Friday, Aug. 4, at Skylights, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac. For information, call 534-9222.

• **DELTA ROCKETS**
Delta Rockets will perform on Friday and Saturday, Aug. 4-5, at the Garden Bowl, 4120 Woodward Ave., Detroit. For information, call 547-6470.

• **GREG STRYKER**
Greg Stryker will perform on Friday, Aug. 4, on the Bobo Midnight Cruise. The cruise departs at 11 p.m. from the Detroit dock at the foot of Clark Avenue. Admission is \$10.95 (\$9.95 per person for groups of 10 or more with advance reservations). For information, call 843-0700.

• **THE BLANKS**
The Blanks will perform on Friday, Aug. 4, at Stanley's, 340 Pitt St., Windsor. For information, call 835-3443.

• **JIMMY DONES**
Jimmy Dones and the Grave Robbers will perform on Friday, Aug. 4, at the Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, off I-75.

• **FINAL WARNING**
Final Warning will perform along with Bludshot and Jammin on Friday, Aug. 4, at Blondie's, Seven Mile Road, east of Telegraph, Detroit. For information, call 535-0108.

CUBKODA

Cub Koda will perform along with Syren on Saturday, Aug. 5, at Blondie's, Seven Mile Road, east of Telegraph, Detroit. For information, call 535-0108.

SCOTT MORGAN

Scott Morgan will perform on Saturday, Aug. 5, at Alvin's, 5755 Cass, Detroit. For information, call 832-2355.

SEA MONKEYS

Sea Monkeys will perform on Saturday, Aug. 5, at Skylights, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac. For information, call 534-9222.

CUPPA JOE

Cuppa Joe will perform on Saturday, Aug. 5, at the Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, off I-75.

REGULAR BOYS

Regular Boys will perform on Saturday, Aug. 6, on the Bobo Midnight Cruise. The cruise departs at 11 p.m. from the Detroit dock, which is at the foot of Clark Avenue. Admission is \$10.95 (\$9.95 for groups of 10 or more with advance reservations). For information, call 843-0700.

FATAL

Fatal will perform with Creeps on Sunday, Aug. 6, at Blondie's, Seven Mile Road, east of Telegraph, Detroit. For information, call 535-0108.

GOOBER & THE PEAS

Goobar & The Peas will perform on Sunday, Aug. 6, at Saint Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. For information, call 961-MELT.

GOODFATHERS

The Goodfathers will perform on Thursday, Aug. 10, at Saint Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. For information, call 961-MELT.

CIVILIANS

Civilians will perform on Friday, Aug. 11, at Jameson's, 1812 N. Main, Royal Oak. For information, call 547-6470.

GWAR

Gwar will perform on Saturday, Aug. 12, at Saint Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. For information, call 961-MELT.

CITY LIMITS

City Limits will perform on Saturday, Aug. 12, at Jameson's, 1812 N. Main, Royal Oak. For information, call 547-6470.

MUSIC VIEWS

Some local gigs that left their mark

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

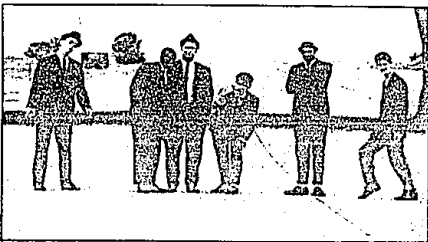
The band: Bootleg X and the Love-tones. The place: Paycheck's Lounge in Hamtramck.

Many tunes have since past through these ears (which perhaps explains why I have to say, "Could you repeat that?" a lot).

Nevertheless, it's time to sit back, cogitate, calculate and articulate just what the hell we've been listening to for nearly two years. As a result, yours truly has come up with a list of local gigs that have had a profound impact on his life, the ones that made him stay out late and endure the frying pan upside the head from his wife.

Gangster Fun, July 1987, at The Hamtramck Pub: Ska never sounded so good on this night. John Bunkley possessed all the qualities of a frontman, amiability, enthusiasm and polish. The band was called back for two encores, further enhancing a great night of music and everyone singing "Happy Birthday" to one of the band members.

Hippodrome, December 1987, at The Ritz: Having heard Chris Richards interviewed on Scott Camp-



Gangster Fun has evolved into one of best groups in the area. Their show at The Hamtramck Pub two years was one of our favorites of all time.

bell's "Detroit Music Scene," we decided to check them out. Only about five people showed up to listen, but that didn't affect this emergent outfit. In fact, Richards seemed to thrive on it and left all five members of the hard rock audience applauding.

Ann Be Davis, April 1989, at The

Blind Pig: The lead singer (fopped around like perch on the Cleveland shore. The stage antics blended well with some scorching guitar work and a crack rhythm section.

Frank Allison & The Odd Sox, March 1988, Nectarine Ballroom: Frank and the rest of crew opened for Adrian Belew and The Bears. The sparse acoustic quality of the

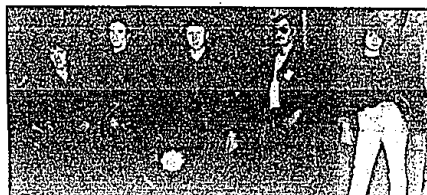
songs mixed with Allison's intensity onstage were an unbeatable combination.

Volebeats, June 1988, at Paycheck's Lounge: The Voles were performing as part of a Tremor Revue, so the set was short. Yet the tumbleweeds were blowing down Caniff Avenue after this contrived group took the stage, providing a very intriguing sound.

Orange Roughies, July 1987, at The Blind Pig: The purpose of the visit was to check out The Hysterical Narcotics, but the opening act caught our eye. The lead singer was bouncing off the walls while the guitarists continually drove home some excellent guitar lines.

3-D Invisibles, January 1989, at Saint Andrew's Hall: A friend told me this band was hot. I didn't believe him. Then when Creeping Rick started to crank out some serious monster boogie, we were hooked.

Strange Bedfellows, January 1989, at Hamtramck Pub: The striking thing about this show was the lead singer, Missy Gibson, who sang about such obscure things as doughnuts. The nice harmonies with back-up vocalist Beth Yates made for some delightful music.



Scott Morgan and his band performs Saturday at Alvin's in Detroit.

COUNTRY

Here are the top 10 songs on WWW-FM.

1. "What's Goin' on in Your World," George Strait.
2. "If I Never See Midnight Again," Sweethearts of the Rodeo.
3. "Lovin' Only Me," Ricky Skaggs.
4. "Cathy's Clown," Reba McEntire.
5. "She Don't Love Nobody," Desert Rose Band.
6. "Why'd You Come Here Looking Like That," Dolly Parton.
7. "Houston Solution," Ronnie Milsap.
8. "3-0 Blues," Merle Haggard.
9. "Timber, I'm Falling in Love," Patty Loveless.
10. "One Good Well," Don Williams.

LOCAL

Here are the top 10 songs receiving airplay on "Detroit Music Scene," which is heard 4-5 p.m. Sundays (repeated 5:30-6:30 p.m. Tuesdays) on WDRB-FM 80.9.

1. "What the Water Gave Me," Nemo.
2. "No Room to Swing the Cat," Rubber.
3. "I Can't Change the World," Art School.
4. "Pearl of Perla," Chasing the Pain.
5. "Muscles and Diamonds," Dancing Smoothies.
6. "I Don't Think So," Nine Pound Hammer.
7. "Take 495," Fushkova.
8. "It's the Fall," Doe Boys.
9. "Golf Holes," Len Fuchs.
10. "Winner," Peter G.

REVIEWS

ANDERSON, BRUFORD, WAKEMAN AND HOWE



Over the past two decades, the art rock ensemble Yes went through quite a few personnel changes. And the game of "musical chairs" continues, with bassist Chris Squire and guitarist Trevor Rabin now holding on to the Yes name while vocalist Jon Anderson has reunited with the band's early '70s core players.

You would guess that a reunion of such capable players — charismatic keyboardist Rick Wakeman, versatile drummer Bill Bruford and stalwart guitarist Steve Howe — might produce some memorable music. Unfortunately, the best playing this group will provide is likely to come during their concert tour, playing songs from the old days. The album comes off sounding like an excuse to tour and resurrect a bygone era.

The individual brilliance of each of the players actually seems to detract from this album's success. In the first track, "Themes," the ground being covered is familiar; it's another of the multi-themed compositions that made Yes so artsy in its

heyday. However, each player is featured at the expense of the others, creating a disjointed piece of art.

The only song that comes close to remembering the glory days is the track now receiving album-rock airplay — "Brother of Mine." Rick Wakeman and Howe temporarily revert back to their prime form, and Bruford proves that he's never lost it. In the final movement of the piece, ex-Yankee Geoff Downes (who also played with Steve Howe in Asia and produced part of Howe's ill-fated GTR collaboration with Steve Hackett) steps in for added support.

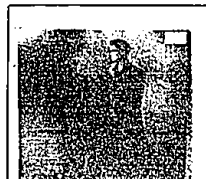
The rest of the album explores some different musical planes, like the totally ill-advised "Teabols" — which features a Calypso melody. But the word for this album is excess — too much virtuosity and not enough thought in writing and arranging an album worthy of the cast of characters.

It could be said that these old masters of art rock run a musical gamut here — heading into an artistic wall.

— Bob Sadler

GOOD EVENING

— Marshall Crenshaw



Verse, chorus, verse, chorus, guitar break, chorus, chorus, "Aaaaah," backing vocals, clean guitar sound, broken hearts, misguided love. This is pop, yeah, yeah.

Marshall Crenshaw, Berkeley's own pop has come to recreating Buddy Holly, releases his fourth LP for Warner Bros. and his first since 1987. It is definitely one of his strongest.

On this LP, he forgoes having all his own songs showcased in favor of strong songs which showcase his ability to pick winners.

Amongst the songwriters featured are Richard Thompson ("Valerie"), John Hiatt ("Someplace Where Love Can't Find Me"), The Isley Brothers ("Live It Up"), Diane Warren ("Some Hearts") and he co-writes with Bo Diddley and Leroy Preston.

Not bad company. Despite the diversity of the people involved, the songs all gel really smoothly. From Thompson's "Valerie" ("Well, I'm soft in the head and I give her hard cash, She spends all

my money on junk and trash.") through John Hiatt's "Someplace . . ." ("Surely there's somewhere in this great nation, Where no one comes together just to fall apart") and Warren's "Some Hearts" ("Some hearts seem to have it so easy, some hearts have the stars on their sides.") back to Crenshaw's own "Whatever Way the Wind Blows" ("Whatever wind of change goes tearing across the world, I'm always going to be close to you, girl.") things flow well.

With some fabulously passionate slide playing from Sonny Landreth, solid and imaginative bass playing from ex-Joe Jackson Band member Graham Maby and topped off by Crenshaw's vocals (and impressive guitar work), this album deserves, and more than rewards, repeated listens.

Crenshaw is forging way ahead for a band that enjoys a song and happily it may open a few unplugged ears.

Are you listening Detroit radio programmers? — Cormac Wright

IN THE NEW HITVILLE

— The Gear



The Gear is on the edge of something big or nothing at all. "In the New Hitville" EP (Chocolate Mustache Records), there is a group at the crossroads.

At times, the threesome has all the hooks and lyrics to wreak havoc on the music scene. There are those signs that The Gear is following down the same path worn by many other sparse guitar punk groups.

On please, let us believe that songs like "Get Twisted" and "In the New Hitville" are an indication of where The Gear is headed. If so, this band has hope of breaking out.

Undoubtedly, "Get Twisted" is the song of the year in these circles. An engaging melody is wrapped delicately around some rather cynical but well-written lyrics.

— Larry O'Connor

track off the four-song EP, is a bit more aggressive but still carries its own niche with some spirited guitar playing and forceful vocals.

Again, The Gear seems to hit the right groove and rides it. The same, however, cannot be said for the other numbers. "The Real You" and "Loud Hard and Fast." They are not bad. In fact, they're quite expressive guitar numbers.

But those are not the kind of songs that will make people take notice. In fact, they make The Gear sound like a handful of other Detroit bands. One gets the feeling that there is a need to conform to the model of guitar crashing heroes, such as The Replacements or Soul Asylum.

What The Gear will do remains to be seen. But after listening to this EP, we definitely know they can do.