

STREET BEATS

Stowe-ing away the songs

Singer strums away, shuns music's labels

By Larry O'Connor Staff writer

You can call him Bruce Springsteen. You can call him Warren Zevon. You can call him John Cougar Mellencamp. But you doesn't have to call him a folk-roots-rock-pop singer.

In fact, Ichabod Stowe prefers you wouldn't. For Stowe, labels belong on clothes and food products, not music. He actually prefers being compared to another artist than have his music affixed with some description that doesn't apply.

"I try to avoid labels of any kind," said Stowe, 30, a native of Franklin and a Birmingham Groves graduate, "especially ones like stale or something like that."

That would probably be the last thing one would call his latest LP, "It's My Turn," on the New York-based independent label Gaffdy Records. Stowe's music includes folk, rock and even reggae this time around.

The cover features a person trying to balance the cube (from Ann Arbor) on his finger. Sometimes humorous, sometimes serious, indeed, this LP is something of a balancing act for Stowe (whose real name is Mitch Cantor).

The LP opens with the folk-rock inspired "This Train is Running Out of Track" and then follows with the reggaeed "All Grown Up With Nowhere to Go." From there on, anything goes.

"It's My Turn" is the follow-up to the singer/songwriter's acclaimed debut "The Legendary Ichabod Stowe" two years ago. Though well-received, the LP perhaps didn't capture the essence of what Ichabod Stowe is onstage, one who is funny, the artist who is quite versatile.

Versatility is Stowe's middle name. After all this is a guy who has two master's degrees, teaches the martial art Aikido Yoshikai, held public office in Ann Arbor and had a role in the Dino DeLaurentis film "Evil Dead II."

Stowe's musical resume is as extensive. His musical roots can be traced to Ann Arbor, where he joined a band, Gary Pryka and the Seales.

He then started his own group The Fine Line.

HE WENT on to Washington D.C. where he was in a group called The Jump and then performed with a band in Paris, France, The Ice Cream Men.

A move to the Big Apple, though, would prove to be the core of his solo career. It's a career that continues to evolve despite the usual obstacles. He does not have a recording deal, operating his own label, and he is trying to stake a claim in the highly competitive New York folk scene.

"It's a double-edged sword," Stowe said. (New York) is a better place for meeting people from other parts of the country, it's more centralized. Again, on the other hand, you don't walk down the street and meet the president of C.B.S. Records."

Nonetheless, Stowe carries on. His audience is targeted, primarily college-educated people who listen to such things as lyrics. Now, it's only a matter of reaching them.

He believes an open-minded audience helps give him *currie blanche* in terms of the type of music he performs. Along with folk, pop and reggae, Stowe has a bagful of rockabilly tunes he might pull out during a live performance. That won't change anytime soon, he said.

"I write whatever I feel like writing," he said. "I don't think of it as settling down, I think of it as limiting yourself. If you enjoy writing in different styles, if you cut yourself off from that... I don't know why you would do that."

Much the same attitude is applied to his choices of venues for live performances. He will perform a show at his alma mater, Birmingham Groves, on Thursday, Dec. 7. He will also perform that evening at the Ark in Ann Arbor. He talks of perhaps his one live performing a show at the Apple Orchard in his hometown of Franklin.

Nonetheless, Stowe is looking forward to returning to his old school.

"The guy who book the date wanted to know what I did in high school," Stowe said. "Basically, I went to school. There no extracurricular activities... I was just there."

riach band, at times like a guitar army.

HE WORKED THROUGH HITS like "I'm a Man," and "Roadrunner" with a strong voice, and got into some twisted, love-gone-bad raps. Bo Diddley is no feminist. His odd sense of humor remains.

On one song, he berates a lover then adds: "Wait a minute, Woman, put away that razor. Don't you know I love you?"

Local bluesman Johnny "Yard Dog" Jones opened up the show with The Rhythm Kings, who stayed on stage to back up Diddley.

If there was a complaint, it was the brevity with which he whipped through "Bo Diddley." He didn't even play "Who Do You Love?"

That's too bad because I could have listened to that beat all night. — Brian Lipschitz

IN CONCERT

● HIPPODROME Hippodrome will perform on Monday, Nov. 27, at Todd's, 5139 Seven Mile, Detroit. For information, call 366-TODD.

● CULT HEROES Cult Heroes will perform with Scott Morgan on Monday, Nov. 27, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● J.D. LAMB J.D. Lamb will perform on Monday, Nov. 27, at Rick's American Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● CARDINAL SIN Cardinal Sin will perform with Baskit Case and Lane on Monday, Nov. 27, at Blondie's, West Seven Mile Road, Detroit. For information, call 535-8108.

● RUN WESTY RUN Hun Westy Hun will perform with guests, 11th Dream Day, on Tuesday, Nov. 28, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● JUICE Juice will perform on Tuesday, Nov. 28, at Rick's American Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● BLASPHEMOUS Blasphemous will perform with guests, Noise That Hurts, on Tuesday, Nov. 28, at Blondie's, 21139 W. Seven Mile, east of Telegraph, Detroit. For information, call 535-8108.

● MY PLANET My Planet and Ragnar Kvaran will perform on Wednesday, Nov. 29, at Club Heidelberg, 315 N. Main, Ann Arbor. For information, call 663-7758.

● HUNTYNES The Huntynes will perform on Wednesday, Nov. 29, at Rick's American Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● CROSSED WIRE Crossed Wire will perform on Wednesday, Nov. 29, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● NETWORK Network will perform on Wednesday through Saturday, Nov. 29-Dec. 2, at Jagers, 3481 Elizabeth Lake Road, Waterford. For information, call 681-1700.

● CROSSED WIRE Crossed Wire will perform on Thursday, Nov. 30, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● BEER ON THE PENGUIN Beer on the Penguin will perform on Thursday, Nov. 30, at 3-D, 1815 N. Main, Royal Oak. For information, call 589-3344.

● INSIDE OUT Inside Out will perform with guests, Sabine Wedge, on Friday, Dec. 1, at the Garden Bowl, 4120 Woodward, Detroit. For information, call 833-9850.

● TRINIDAD TROPOLI Trinidad Tropoli Steel Band will perform on Thursday, Nov. 30, at Rick's American Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● IODINE RAINCOATS Iodine Raincoats will perform on Thursday, Nov. 30, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● OFF KILTIER Off Kiltier will perform with guests Second Order Thinking Friday, Dec. 1, at the Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Canfield, off I-75. For information, call 365-9760.

● DIFFERENCE Difference will perform on Friday, Dec. 1, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.



Inside Out will perform Friday at the Garden Bowl in Detroit.

COLLEGE LOCAL

Here are the top-10 singles receiving heavy airplay on WOOD-A.M. campus station of Oakland University in Rochester.

- 1. "The Big Picture," My Dad Is Dead.
2. "Regina," Sugarabes.
3. "Drama," Erasure.
4. "Blues from a Gun," Jesus and Mary Chain.
5. "Nothing to Be Done," The Pastels.
6. "No Big Deal," Love & Rockets.
7. "Gravitate," Miranda Warning.
8. "Kingdom of Pain," The Tea.
9. "The Line Between the Devil's Teeth," Peter Murphy.
10. "Blow at High Dough," Tragically Hip.

Here are 10 songs receiving airplay on "Detroit Music Scene," which is heard 4-5 p.m. Sundays (5:30-6:30 p.m. Tuesdays) on WDTR-FM 90.9.

- 1. "Lilly of the Valley," Strange Beefe-lows.
2. "One of These Days," Caruso.
3. "Tribes," Rubber.
4. "History," Tom Thomas.
5. "I.O.," Sia Synol.
6. "Sunday," Eldia.
7. "Break Loose," Sillies.
8. "Walked on the Horizon," The Straits.
9. "Who," Metallist.
10. "Honor," Happy Death Men.

LIVE

BO DIDDLEY
Majestic Theatre, Detroit

This show had the feel of a high school sock hop: a rockin' little trip back in time.

The boys were lined up front, pounding the stage with their fists, thump-a-thump-a-thump... thump-thump. The Bo Diddley Beat. A couple fellows even sported 1950s, Da-style haircuts. They were too young for the original, but looked good nonetheless.

A few girls were up front as well, moving to that beat. The man, Bo Diddley, was on stage in all his glory, at times gyrating, shaking and strutting, his eyes showing keen interest in the girls.

"I've been doing it for 35 years..." he told the Majestic Theatre crowd. "Long live rock and roll."

Bo Diddley did many things that night, but he did not show his age.

In 1955, Chess Records released a 45 by Diddley - a.k.a. Elbert McDaniel, Mississippi-born and Chicago raised - with "Bo Diddley" on one side and "I'm a Man" on the other.

DIDDLEY AND HIS SIMPLE but captivating guitar sound brought rhythm and blues to rock and roll, much like his contemporaries Chuck Berry and Chubby Checker did.

Unlike Berry and Checker, Diddley never scored big on the record charts. He has complained bitterly over the years about getting ripped off by record companies, promoters, and other music industry sharks.

Dozens of 1960s artists, the Rolling Stones and Bob Seger among them, paid tribute to Diddley. While the sound is well known in rock'n'roll, the man is less so.

But here it is 1989, and the forgotten man resurfaces in a tennis shoe commercial, and becomes popular again. Poetic justice lives, irony or not.

He played two hours to a couple hundred fans at the faded but fun Majestic, seeming to enjoy himself as much as his audience.

Diddley's trademark guitar licks - a square, loaded with switches and a sticker that reads "Turbo 3 Speed." His master worked all the gears.

Flipping switches and pedals, Diddley had that square, Gretsch guitar sounding at times like a ma-

REVIEWS

RHYTHM NATION 1814 — Janet Jackson

Make no mistake, the queen of the dance floor is back... but there's more on her mind than just shaking her booty.

After taking on sexual politics with "Control," her 1986 breakthrough, the youngest Jackson sibling is cutting across the pop stratosphere and throws down a bold, substantial challenge to all who would dare follow.

But whether the credit belongs to her alone, her production team or a combination of each, this album re-establishes Jackson as a shooting star cutting across the pop stratosphere and throws down a bold, substantial challenge to all who would dare follow.

Those questions, however, only surface after the record is over. Once it's on the turntable, cassette deck or compact disc player, the listener is swept away by a stunning production that makes reference to a struggle of the human spirit against a dehumanizing, 1984-style future —

AUTOMATIC — The Jesus and Mary Chain

It may well be time to reassess the Jesus and Mary Chain as a gimmick band that unwisely dumped its gimmick.

Four years ago, the Chain was the darling of the independent music scene. The black-clad quartet drenched its simple pop songs with a squalling wall of feedback and guitar noise. The Chain's debut LP, "Psychocandy," set a new standard for noise, and it remains influential.

On "Automatic" the Chain has been pared down to Jim and William Reid, brothers, guitarists, singers and songwriters. While the Reids can fairly claim the bulk of the credit for the band's earlier successes, they must now accept the blame for the band's stagnation.

Their attempt to dispense with the ultimately limiting sound they invented on "Psychocandy" is presented on "Automatic" with cleaner arrangements leaving the Reids' limited songwriting abilities.

Simply put, the pair has yet to come up with a chord progression that sounds even remotely original.

But while the lyrics do sink through a harsh, dark, metallic landscape broken up only by the occasional Coke machine, this is turf that has been well covered by the Reids

STORYTELLER — Rod Stewart

Few rock artists have been as commercially successful as Rod Stewart, none so revered by critics.

Spanning Stewart's 25-year recording career, Storyteller (Warner Bros.) makes at least 30 strong arguments for Stewart's return among rock's select.

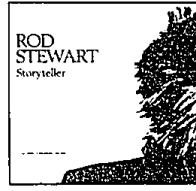
Most are contained in the album's first half - pulled from the often-brilliant albums Stewart recorded with the Jeff Beck Group, the Faces and from early, folk-based, solo albums released on Mercury in the U.S.

These songs demand little individual comment. "Maggie May" is as vital a part of rock's history as "I Wanna Be Like You," "She Loves You" or "Purple Rain."

Those unaware of the power of Stewart's early work, which also includes such classics as "Gasoline Alley," "Mandolin Wind" and "You Wear It Well," have some serious catching up to do.

And the album's CD configuration is a good way to do it. The generally clean sound is a welcome relief for those who have sat through Stewart's soggy LP releases.

It's generally conceded (maybe even by Stewart himself) that the



— Wayne Peal

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