

A bit of culture

Bandits are long on music and on style

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

Ken Haas wildly swings his blond mane out from his eyes and kick starts his guitar. Terry Bradley drums along, stripped down to a pair of cutoff sweats and bassist Jason Bowes wears his graying white Doughboys T-shirt like a trophy.

Let it not be said the Culture Bandits lack style.

It's kind of hard to imagine these three musicians once walking down the registered halls of Catholic Central High School, but they did. All three graduated from the all-boys school in Redford in 1987.

"We were kind of misfits there," said Haas, who is from Livonia. "Besides ourselves, we didn't have many friends."

This amiable trio, no friends? Naw. These guys are just misunderstood youth.

Haas said he was nearly kicked out for his long hair and Bradley had to sweep the parking lot because he "oppressed" another student.

"We took some guy with a broken leg and picked him up by his elbows. We started to take him to the end of the hall so we could take him outside," said Bradley, who shakes his head.

They take a dim view of humor there," Bowes added.

They might have the same view for metal pop bands, who are influenced by such unlikely music heroes as the Doughboys, All and Big Drill Car. Nonetheless, the three decided to give it a shot by auditioning for the school's "Battle of the Bands" competition.

They didn't make the cut, further fueling their ambition to become a raucous rock outfit.

A LITTLE Culture history is in order.

First, before becoming the Culture Bandits, the group was a foursome with a lead singer and was known as the Basement.

After a few gigs together, members went their separate academic ways. Bowes went to Western Michigan University, while Haas went to Oakland Community College and Bradley attended Henry Ford Community College.

A year in Kalamazoo was enough for Bowes (who without his glasses is



Guitarist Ken Haas, drummer Terry Bradley and bassist Jason Bowes have shed the registered halls of Catholic Central High School to become the rock group Culture Bandits.

a deadringer for the Dead Milkmen's Dave Blood). The rebels banded together again, this time as the Culture Bandits.

The group performs regularly at Blondie's in Detroit, often sandwiched between the heavy metal acts.

The Culture Bandits also can be found at other venues as Paycheck's Lounge in Hamtramck and Club Heidelberg in Ann Arbor. On this night, the Bandits have rolled into the Heidelberg, opening up for the Generals.

The audience is small, but enthusiastic. Haas seems to be on first-name basis with most of them. Much to their delight, he jumps into the

audience, playing guitar while driving out some guttural guitar twang.

Among the originals are a few odd covers from Rosanne Cash and alike. The decibel level doesn't relent until the very last song when Haas performs a reggaillied cover of Dire Straits' "Once Upon a Time in the West."

If anything, the band might be lauded for tightness. That, again, can be attributed to friendship. One desire: to do without the other.

BEFORE the band goes on, Bradley joins his two bandmates at a table. He promptly tells Haas he owes for some film he just bought. Haas reminds he just paid the phone bill, so they're even Steven.

"We divide the costs on everything," Haas said. That way of operation applies to other band functions, such as songwriting and material selection. The trio has been visiting White Rose Studios in Ann Arbor,

putting together a demo tape. Like many bands, they've come along way in a short time. Haas recalls, with a laugh, recently listening to some tapes the Culture Bandits recorded in their unrecruited days. All three admit the band was too loud and too fast for its own good.

Not any more, though, as the Culture Bandits come to grips with the music they've played out of rebellion. At any rate, seriousness is not a high order.

"If something happens we're prepared to drop everything and let it happen," Haas said. "If not, we have lives to fall back on."

The Culture Bandits will perform along with Colorful Trauma and New Gods on Sunday, Feb. 11, at Blondie's in Detroit. For information, call 535-5108.

IN CONCERT

• Big Fun

Big Fun will perform on Monday, Feb. 5, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

• Opossums

Opossums will perform on Tuesday, Feb. 6, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

• Innocence Mission

Innocence Mission will perform with guests, Peter Himmelman, on Wednesday, Feb. 7, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

• Plastic Onkari Band

Plastic Onkari Band will perform Wednesday, Feb. 7, at Club Heidelberg, 215 N. Main, Ann Arbor. For information, call 663-7758.

• Generators

The Generators will perform on Wednesday, Feb. 7, at Key West, 24230 W. Six Mile, Detroit. For information, call 592-0099.

• Knaves

The Knaves will perform on Thursday, Feb. 8, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

• Expose

Expose will perform on Thursday, Feb. 8, at Clubland in Detroit. Advance tickets are on sale at all TicketMaster outlets. To charge tickets, call 645-6666.

• Roomful of Blues

Roomful of Blues will perform on Thursday, Feb. 8, at Rick's American Cafe, 611 Church St., Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$8 in advance. For information, call 99-MUSIC.

• Voodoo Hippos

Voodoo Hippos will perform on Thursday, Feb. 8, at Red Carpet, 16423 E. Warren, Detroit. For information, call 881-3280.

• The Avenue

The Avenue will perform on Thursday, Feb. 8, at Club Heidelberg, 215 N. Main, Ann Arbor. For information, call 663-7758.

• The Suspects

The Suspects will perform on Thursday through Saturday, Feb. 8-10, at Key West, 24230 W. Six Mile, Detroit. For information, call 592-0099.

• Bootsy X

Bootsy X and the Lovemasters will perform on Friday, Feb. 9, at the Blind

Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

• Allison's Ghost

Allison's Ghost will perform with guests, May One Group, Friday, Feb. 9, at the Hamtramck Pub, 204 Caniff, off I-75. For information, call 365-9700.

• Static Alphabet

Static Alphabet will open for the Opossums Friday, Feb. 9, at Club Heidelberg, 215 N. Main, Ann Arbor. For information, call 663-7758.

• Red C

Red C will perform on Friday and Saturday, Feb. 9-10, at Jameson's, 1811 N. Main, near 12 Mile, Royal Oak. For information, call 547-6470.

• Straight Ahead

Straight Ahead will perform Friday and Saturday, Feb. 9-10, at the 3rd of Paradise, 207 S. Ashley, Ann Arbor. For information, call 662-8310.

• J.D. Lamb

J.D. Lamb will perform on Saturday, Feb. 10, at Grill's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac. For information, call 334-9292.

• The Few

The Few will perform with guests, Inga & the Enablers, on Saturday, Feb. 10, at Hamtramck Pub, 204 Caniff, off I-75. For information, call 365-9700.

• Love Ball

North Cass Community Union will present its annual benefit for neighborhood soup kitchens, "Love Ball 1990," at 8 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 10, at St. Dominic's Church Auditorium, 1419 Warren. Spanking Bozo and the Layabouts will perform along with Eden Winter, vocalist and drummer; Dennis Pruss, singer and guitarist; and Roberto Warren & Performance, poetry and music. Admission is \$4. For information, call 365-8008.

• Frank Allison

Frank Allison and the Odd Sox will perform Saturday, Feb. 10, at Club Heidelberg, 215 N. Main, Ann Arbor. For information, call 663-7758.

• Jeanne and the Dreams

Jeanne and the Dreams will perform on Saturday, Feb. 10, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

• Tom Petty

Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers will perform 8 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 11, at the Palace of Auburn Hills. Tickets are \$20. For information, call 377-0100.



Sugarcubes will perform their brand of Icelandic new music Friday, March 2, at the Latin Quarter in Detroit. For ticket information, call 645-6666.

COLLEGE

Here are the top 10 singles receiving airplay on WOUX-AM campus station of Oakland University in Rochester.

1. "Burning Inside," Ministry.
2. "Ozula Board Ozula Board," Morrissey.
3. "Blues Before and After," Smithereens.
4. "Should God Forget," Psychedelic Furs.
5. "Blue Savannah," Erasure.
6. "Too Many Colors," Red Lorry Yellow Lorry.
7. "Yebbo," Art of Noise.
8. "Between Planes," Jesus and Mary Chain.
9. "Birdhouse on Your Soul," They Might Be Giants.
10. "Sitzgriah," Seven Seconds.

LOCAL

Here are 10 songs (no particular order) receiving air play on "Detroit Music Scene," which is hosted by Scott Campbell and heard 45 p.m. Sundays on WDR-FM 90.9 (repeated 5:30-6:30 p.m. Thursdays).

1. "With Abandon," Dark Theatre.
2. "Could It Be You," See Dick Run.
3. "Be Like You," The Gear.
4. "Taking Control," Standing Pavement.
5. "Stop Killing Me," Imitation Life.
6. "See Me Now," Lost Patrol.
7. "Marriage On His Mind," Walk the Dog.
8. "This Train Is Running . . .," Ichabod Stowe.
9. "Take My Heart Away," EFX.
10. "Chan Chan," Nemesis.

TREMOR REVUE — Paycheck's Lounge, Hamtramck

Recently, far too many patrons packed Paycheck's Hamtramck for the second night of the annual Tremor Revue, a smorgasbord of area bands. As always, the format was one of the best things about the show.

With 10 bands on the bill, no band performed for more than 20 minutes. This rendered the show's lesser talents more bearable than they might otherwise have been and forced the better acts to present their finest material.

As might have been expected, the best performances came from two bands which have recently released their debut LPs, the Orange Roughies and the Volebeats.

After four years on the local

scene, the Roughies have ironed out most of their undesirable kinks and become the area's finest "art pop/new music/prog rock" combo.

Guitarist Dave Feeny's technical prowess played through his many effects boxes. Lead singer/dancer Rossey occasionally spouted alarming poetry, but he did so with impressive verve and combined this with a startling array of dervish-like stage maneuvers.

The Roughies hit the stage with more force than the other bands and packed a whole set's worth of energy into their songs.

The Volebeats, a country/folk combo that sounds for all the world like a Hank Williams hangerover, maintained the high standard set in

recent performances. Owing to fiddle player Rebecca Kaplan's temporary hiatus, the band is performing as a quintet. The reconfiguration emphasized the excellent guitar playing of Mark Niemenski and Matt Smith.

On a bill filled with more traditional rock bands, the Volebeats were bound to stand out, but they distinguished themselves through inspired playing in addition to their uncommon sound.

While some bands were a few gigs away from hitting their stride, or a few past their prime, the Revue did feature pleasant surprises.

Bootsy X and his Lovemasters churned out a satisfying and upbeat,

albeit unrepentantly "new wave" set. Colorful Trauma, a stripped-down trio, played a promising set of straight-ahead rock with occasional "new music" nods.

Bass player Chris Girard gave excellent performances as part of a quasi-industrial duo and as a member of Cinecye. In both settings, he managed to pull the bass from its traditional background role without becoming too flashy or overbearing.

Tremor's "Whitman's Sampler" approach to local music is becoming an institution and deservedly so. The bands got off stage quickly, played hard, and undoubtedly won a few new fans.

—John Logie

REVIEWS

DESERT WIND — Ofra Haza



As "world music" gains popularity, more artists are experimenting with mixing various styles of music. Quirky popster David Byrne went Brazilian and Paul Simon gave his slacking career a major boost when he found the African sound.

Perhaps the strangest combination yet can be found on Ofra Haza's second album, "Desert Wind." This album contains a truly bizarre mix of Middle Eastern traditional music and Western dance music.

Haza sings about such atypical dance music subjects as deserts, the Jewish/Palestinian situation and slavery. She incorporates lyrics in English with the ancient Aramaic language and chanting choruses like, "Hoo bak oon eyoo nihoo bak." Now, imagine this set to a pulsing disco beat.

Two of the songs on the album, "Taw Shi" and "Fatamorgana (Mirage)" were produced by Thomas Dolby. His typical mechanical sound, popularized in the 1980s' new wave hit "She Blinded Me With Science" is obvious as is his love of programmed drum sequences and synthesized sounds.

Whether or not you'll like the dance tracks on this album depends on your opinion of dance music in general. If you listen to Madonna

WOKE UP THIS MORNING — Passion Fodder

— Passion Fodder

This record is so horrible, it leaves the listener numb and disoriented. It is impossible to understand how a decision was made to record this material and this band for posterity. Passion Fodder is not just an irritant, it is a powerful argument against Western civilization.

The band is made up of men with names like Pascal, Benedicte and Jean-Yves, which suggests that the record springs from the same Gallic pretension that produced Jean-Luc Godard. In fact, the record is in some senses quite similar to Godard's "Hail Mary."

It announces itself as art grappling with the great issues of the times while simultaneously forwarding appeals to people's baser instincts. The results is a product that is too pretentious to develop sincere appeal and too degraded to be mistaken for art.

But this is a mole hill, not a mountain. One need only listen to the faux U2 guitars, or the pleading basswork, or the snickering percussion, or the smarmy wobbles of the lead singer, or the lyrics, to be sure that this is a trifle. And those last two elements constitute a stunning indictment.

No vocalist deserves to be compared to Passion Fodder's lead singer.



er, but in the interest of greater understanding, Stan Ridgway will be dropping over-the-counter data and cautiously twisted religious imagery. That might be too harsh. Maybe there are people out there waiting for a partially educated scam-artist to croon, "I'd sell my soul to God. If they'd give you back to you/chope he'd off my dog, if that's what I had to do/I'd go out and campaign for more acid rain . . . I'd swear off champagne, trout fishing and cocaine/I'd it would help make you sane, make you whole."

Now that's love — making Fido partial to make your lover whole. Later in the song he says he'll knife a kitten for his true love. Makes one nostalgic for the old cherry that had no stone, doesn't it?

—John Logie

HUMAN SOUL — Graham Parker

Graham Parker emerged with the 1976 explosion of new faces, although he was already a favorite on the London club and pub rock scene.

He was quickly acclaimed as a major protagonist of the "angry, cynical young man" syndrome on the release of his first LP "Howling Wind," with his experienced and solid backing band, "The Rumour," featuring Brinsley Schwarz on guitar.

After the release of their second LP "Heat Treatment," there followed a downturn in critical and commercial reactions.

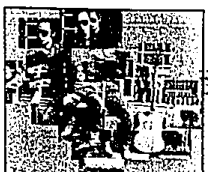
It wasn't until 1979 and the release of the landmark "Squeezing Out Sparks" that Parker and The Rumour were once again revered.

Since then Parker has coasted along as a popular cult figure, always known for writing solid, emotional and meaningful songs.

This is Parker's third LP for RCA and, once again, he is joined by the wonderful Brinsley Schwarz on guitar and production duties.

He is also ably assisted by Steve Nieve and Pete Thomas from Elvis Costello's Attractions.

"Human Soul" is split into two distinct halves: The "real side" has a



more conventional structure of songs dealing with personal relationships, love ("When the World Asleep and there's no one in your arms, raindrops hit the window like distant alarms, you don't have to worry, hey girl, don't you cry, my love beats a devil's baby, eat it alive"), and self doubt ("Big Man on Paper").

The surreal side has one song flowing into another and dealing with more social issues such as AIDS, environmental politics, drugs and commercialism.

Musically, Parker remains the aggressive, soulful cynic he always was.

With liberal use of brass, keyboards and Schwarz's subtle guitar he presents an album of songs on a par with his releases in the '70s.

Songs not to be missed are the elegy to self doubt, "Big Man on Paper," the new headline style reflection of modern living, "Everything Goes," and a comment on AIDS, "Green Monkeys."

—Cormac Wright