

Cuppa Joe



Cuppa Joe includes Dave Faddri on drums, Steve Wilke on bass, and Rick King on vocals and 6- and 12-string guitar, and Kelly Collins, singer and percussionist.

Just a neo-hippie pop band

By Jill Hamilton
special writer

Cuppa Joe is a bunch of serious musicians who don't take themselves too seriously.

Formed from the remnants of an old band also called Cuppa Joe, this new version of Cuppa Joe started out in January 1989. The new line-up includes Dave Faddri on drums, Steve Wilke on bass, and Rick King on vocals and 6- and 12-string guitar. They found the final member, singer and percussionist Kelly Collins, through an ad in the Metro Times. "We auditioned a lot of people," recalled King. "We got all kinds — very old, very young, experienced, inexperienced, people who said they were a friend of a friend of someone who used to play with Mitch Ryder — Kelly played a tape for us and we loved it."

By April, the band got its first gig at Psyche's. After the promising start, things got a little tough.

"It's hard to get gigs at first," said King. "Our first one was so soon. We didn't really start playing well until August."

That's perfectly fine with King.

"Now, we don't take it as seriously as we did at first," said King. "We have different expectations this time," said King, referring to his nine-year history of playing in Detroit. "We all know we're serious musicians only because we can't get out of it. We know we don't have some other yuppie aspiration to fall back on so we're giving it more."

"The band is fun," King added, "and there is a tightness in the band. We have the same attitude... we're insistent on doing originals. Of course, with some audiences, this can be detrimental."

CUPPA JOE in concert is, well, fun. Collins sports the loose clothing and long, flowing skirts typical of the 1960s flower child look while King, with his wild haircut vaguely reminiscent of Simply Red's lead singer, Mick Hucknall, looks more like a man of the 1990s.

The combination of style is reflected in the band's music as well. It's a sort of neo-hippie blend of catchy pop tunes. Not pop, as in Milli Vanilli, but pop as in Elvis Costello. The band lists their influences as "everything... late '60s San Francisco bands, Frank Zappa, The Monkees, Burt Bacharach, classical and jazz."

King and Collins take turns on lead vocals and throw quite a few duets and some great harmonizing into their act. When Collins is not singing, she occupies herself — and the audience — by playing a vast array of strange looking, and stranger sounding, percussion instruments.

She and the band dance around and jump up and down to the bouncy melodies and appear to be having a fabulous time. Their enthusiasm is contagious and most audiences find it hard to stay in their seats.

King gives most of the credit for that to their drummer.

"A drummer has to be solid and get people to dance," he said. "Dave does a fantastic job."

King started out writing most of the lyrics for the band but now Collins is beginning to take over a bigger chunk of the job.

"Kelly writes lyrics that more people can relate to," said King. "I was writing more about personal jokes... things only I could understand."

KING SAID that his favorite part of being in music is playing with

other bands. He is pleased with the cooperation and mutual respect between Detroit musicians.

"Well, most other bands," he amended. "We're all in this together. No one is going to get anywhere saying 'We're the best band.'"

Unlike most of a few musicians, King has only kind words to say about Detroit's support of the local music scene. "It's amazing that Hamtramck is still the main point for local music — it's really cool," he said. "And the actual city of Detroit is getting more places for local bands to play — like Finney's Pub and Rock'n'Bowl."

"We'll find out about radio support when the tape is released."

The tape he is speaking of, a seven-song cassette recently released on Roll Records, Cuppa Joe just got the tape back "with the shrink wrap and everything," and are enlisting the help of a friend to distribute it to record stations throughout the country.

Previously signed releases by the old version of Cuppa Joe received airplay on WDR and WDET in Detroit and on college stations as far away as Oregon and Wisconsin.

WHETHER OR not very is accepted by the record buying public doesn't seem to matter much to Cuppa Joe; they have already decided to devote 1990 to writing a lot of new songs and are satisfied with the way things are going so far.

"It's great the way we've been accepted," said King. "I can tell when people say we're good because they think they have to, but people honestly seem to like us. We're having fun right now because we really like to play."

"It doesn't take too much to make us happy."

IN CONCERT

• I-Tal

I-Tal will perform on Monday and Tuesday, March 12-13, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2147.

• Big Chief

Big Chief will perform on Tuesday, March 13, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

• Knaves

Knaves will perform on Wednesday, March 14, at the Nectarine Ballroom in Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-5426.

• Groovy Stress Merchants

Groovy Stress Merchants will perform with guests, Classical Mushrooms, on Wednesday, March 14, at Club Heidelberg, Main Street, Ann Arbor. For information, call 663-7758.

• Jugglers and Thieves

Jugglers and Thieves will perform on Wednesday, March 14, at Key West, Six Mile, near Telegraph, Redford.

• Typhoid Mary

Typhoid Mary will perform with special guests, Culture Shock, on Wednesday, March 14, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

• King David

King David will perform on Thursday, March 15, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

• Suspects

Suspects will perform on Thursday, March 15, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

• Iodine Raincoats

Iodine Raincoats will perform on Thursday, March 15, at Club Heidelberg, Main Street, Ann Arbor. For information, call 663-7758.

• Johnny Allen

Johnny Allen and the Appeal will perform on Thursday, March 15, at 3-D, 1815 N. Main, Royal Oak. For information, call 989-3344.

• Red C

Red C will perform Thursday through Saturday, March 15-17, at the Midtown Cafe, 139 S. Woodward Ave., Birmingham. For information, call 642-1133.

• Otis Clay Soul Review

Otis Clay Soul Review will perform on Friday, March 16, at Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, Dearborn. For information, call 846-3377.

• Bone Daddys

Bone Daddys will perform on Friday, March 16, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

• Jesus and Mary Chain

Jesus and Mary Chain will perform with special guests, The Veldt, 8 p.m. Friday, March 16, at The Latin Quarter, 2087 E. Grand River, Detroit. Tickets are \$14.50. For information, call 99-MUSIC.

• Robert Penn

Robert Penn will perform on Friday, March 16, at Moby Dicks, 5452 Schaefer, Dearborn. For information, call 581-3650.

• Jay Walker & The Pedestrians

Jay Walker & The Pedestrians will perform on Friday, March 16, at the Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Canfield, off I-75. For information, call 365-9760.

• Dred Zappin

Dred Zappin will perform with guest, Gangster Fun, on Friday, March 16, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

• Wayouts

The Wayouts will perform with special guests, Radio Caroline, on Friday, March 16, at the Garden Bowl, 4150 Woodward, Detroit. For information, call 833-9350.

• Goobar and the Peas

Goobar and the Peas will perform with guests, Sensible Big Guys, on Friday, March 16, at Psyche's, 2937 Canfield, east of Jon Campus, Hamtramck.

• Gangster Fun

Gangster Fun will perform with guests, Culture Shock, on Saturday, March 17, at Club Heidelberg, Main Street, Ann Arbor. For information, call 663-7758.

• Polish Muslims

Polish Muslims will perform along with Imitation of Life on Saturday, March 17, at Lili's, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck. For information, call 875-6555.

• Butler Twins

The Butler Twins will perform on Saturday, March 17, at Auburn Lane, Village Pub, 27 South Squirrel, Auburn Heights. For information, call 852-1710.

• Blues show

Progressive Blues Band, with Johnny "Yard Dog" Jones, the Alligators, Louisiana Heat and Juice will perform on Saturday, March 17, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

• Freedom of Expression

Freedom of Expression will perform on Saturday, March 17, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

• Bacon Brothers

Bacon Brothers will perform on Saturday, March 17, at Jameson's, 1812 N. Main, Royal Oak. For information, call 547-6470.

• Skanking Voodoo Dolls

Skanking Voodoo Dolls will perform on Saturday, March 17, at Finney's Pub, 3965 Woodward, Detroit. For information, call 831-8076.

• Civilians

Civilians will perform on Saturday, March 17, at Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Canfield, off I-75. For information, call 365-9760.

• Blues Jubilee

Chicago Pete & The Detroiters, Robert Penn, Harmonics, Shah and Uptown Rollers will all perform in a Blues Jubilee Saturday, March 17, at Moby Dicks, 5452 Schaefer, Dearborn. For information, call 581-3650.

COLLEGE

Here are the top 10 songs (no particular order) on "Detroit Music Scene," which is heard 4-5 p.m. Sundays (repeated 5:30-6:30 p.m. Tuesdays) on WDR-FM 90.3.

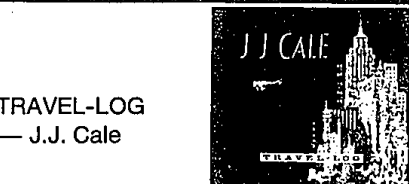
1. "Shake That Brain," Chemical Wedding
2. "Dirty, Filthy Rock'n'Roll," Palaters and Dockers
3. "The Man Is Running Out of Track," Ichabod Stowe
4. "No Money," Johanne Quest
5. "Take Up Your Mind," See Dick Run
6. "Sleep Talking," Michael Penn
7. "Can't Get Close to You," The Gear
8. "Voodoo Pain," Soul Station
9. "Another's Hand," Standing Pavement
10. "Dear Grandpa," Goobar & the Peas

PREP

Here are the top 10 songs receiving airplay on WDR-FM 90.3, student operated station of Bloomfield Hills School District.

1. "I Go to Extremes," Billy Joel
2. "Escapade," Janet Jackson
3. "Roam," B24
4. "I Wish It Would Rain Down," Phil Collins
5. "The Price of Love," Bad English
6. "Get Up," Techostronic
7. "No Myth," Michael Penn
8. "Let Love Rule," Lenny Kravitz
9. "Opposites Attract," Paula Abdul
10. "Show Don't Tell," Rush

REVIEWS



TRAVEL-LOG — J.J. Cale

J.J. Cale has been making music for more than 35 years, but he is still best known for writing "After Midnight" and "Cocaine," both of which were hits for Eric Clapton. "Travel-Log," recorded during the last six years, is Cale's first record for Silvertone, an affiliate of RCA.

While there is a clear desire on the part of the record company to position Cale for a ride on the resurgent Clapton bandwagon, this isn't quite fair to Cale.

Unlike Clapton, Cale is an extraordinarily understated musician. This record is a testament to Cale's restraint. Cale's production is whisper quiet. Instruments never hurtle out of the mix and announce themselves. Even the solos remain part of an integrated whole. While the quality of the recordings sometimes wavers, this is in keeping with Cale's front-porch jam-session sensibility.

Cale's music is an amalgamation of blues, folk, western swing and '30s guitar-based jazz. Cale is by no means a great singer, but his voice is suited to the languid, flowing tone which he coaxes from his guitar. He is backed by a strong band, featuring

Jim Keltner on drums, percussion and organ.

"Travel-Log" is, to a limited extent, a "concept record," revolving around themes of physical and spiritual journeys. Three songs specify their locales — "Shanghaied," "New Orleans" and "Tijuana" — and these are among the best on the record. They draw on the implied musical traditions and feature particularly strong storylines.

Over the course of "Travel-Log's" 14 songs, one can grow tired of Cale's approach. While most of the songs are individually strong, their collective impact is watered down by similarity, almost to the point where the record might be better with a few judicious deletions.

Even so, "Travel-Log" remains an impressive effort from a unique American voice. More often than not, Cale's limitations work to his advantage.

— John Logie

RIVERSIDE — Luka Bloom

Luka Bloom is no ordinary cry-in-your-beer singer. "Riverside" (Reprise) is a stunning debut.

Brother of well-known Irish performer Christy Moore, Bloom has set out on his own with his own name. Which is why, perhaps, there is a mention of his famous sibling in press notes or on the album.

Bloom is an intense, introspective lyricist. Only Pete Townshend can pack more wallop within the confines of a three-minute acoustic song.

His Irish. He doesn't ignore it nor, to his credit, does he milk it for every cliché about lush green hills and girls named Colleen. "An Irishman in Chinatown," an upbeat narrative about a chance meeting, provides the only hint of an Irish lilt in his voice.

Otherwise, Bloom booms with resonating vocal that are only matched by stinging acoustic guitar work. An Iranian finger drum and a bodhran can be heard here or there. For the most part, though, it's just Bloom and his guitar.

He's enamored with America and its people as "Dreams in America"



and "An Irishman in Chinatown" would suggest. His best moments come when he's observing others along with himself.

"The Man Is Alive" is a number about his father who died when he was 18 months old. The realization comes later that his dad still lives in him. The song is simple, yet riveting.

Too often the folk crowd can get bogged down sociological and political messages. Bloom doesn't.

For that, this debut deserves a hearty applause.

— Larry O'Connor

WELCOME TO — The Beautiful South

A couple of years ago, a band called the Housemartins were topping the British charts frequently with their brand of light, "happy" pop, tinged with caustic, social commentary lyrics. For some reason, their music did not travel much across the water so they did not earn a lot of recognition in this country.

They spill up and The Beautiful South is the first evidence of the re-emerging of Housemartin members. Those who were familiar with the Housemartins will find some similarities on "Welcome To" (Elektra Entertainment), but perhaps with the success of bands like They Might Be Giants on the college circuit, the atmosphere is more receptive to this style of music.

Starting off with a somewhat laid back, almost lame, sounding "Song for Whoever" a wrong impression is easily read. But upon further inspection, particularly of the lyrics, it is a wonderfully satiric examination of "Love Songs" with vocalist, Sean Welch's tongue firmly planted in his cheek.

"Oh Shirley, Oh Deborah, Oh Jane, I wrote so many songs about you, I

forgot your name/Deep so deep the number one I hope to reap, depends upon the tears you weep, so cry, cry, cry."

Brilliant.

There are 11 songs here dealing intelligently I might add, with subjects as diverse as sleazy boyfriends ("Girl you must resist, don't let him squirm his way into your heart"), sexist music videos ("Legs are where the heartbeats start, it's low in neckline and high in charts"), frustrations ("Midnight, a husband getting ready to fight, a daughter sleeps alone with the light turned on, she hears but keeps it all in"), fashionable politics ("I'm out tonight and I can't decide between Soviet hip or British pride").

Musically, piano and brass abounds aided occasionally by drums and guitars, and topped off by some marvelous vocals melodies. Their strength lies in the intelligence and "tongue-in-cheek" humor of their lyric writing and we ought to make them huge stars.

— Cormac Wright