

Not so innocent

Mission attracts a following on tour

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

Suddenly, Don Peris wants to know about seats. An aspiring furniture salesman, perhaps?

Not quite, the guitarist with The Innocence Mission is interested in seats in terms of numbers, as in how many are in the venue his band will play in tonight. The Innocence Mission opens for ex-Eagle Don Henley tonight at The Palace in Auburn Hills.

By far, The Palace is the biggest venue the up-and-coming group from Lancaster, Pa., has played to date. As an opening act on Henley's tour, the group will also visit such-less-than-quiet places as the Nassau Coliseum on Long Island, the Meadowlands in New Jersey and The Arena in Orlando, Fla.

Peris sounds a bit taken back by it all. After all, this was a group that only a year or so was performing in venues where a crowd of 100 was a good night.

"It's really exciting," said Peris in a telephone interview from Milwaukee. "The opportunity to play in front of that many people (as many as 14,000 at The Palace) . . . it will be a challenge. It makes all four of us work that much harder to put it over."

Apprehension is understandable. Some rock'n'roll crowds have been unmercifully cruel to opening acts on big-name tours. Just ask Lone Justice, which was continually booed off the stage during U2's "Unforgettable Fire" Tour in 1985.



Don Peris, his wife Karen Peris, Mike Blits and Steve Brown formed The Innocence Mission soon after working together on a high school musical production.

ON THE FLIP side, work as a support acts offers wider exposure and opens new avenues. Heck, AOR radio might be willing to give the band's self-titled debut album a spin. Some already are in The Innocence Mission's case.

Until now, though, The Innocence Mission has depended on the support of college radio. The debut LP has been likened to a cross between Kate Bush and the Cocteau Twins by critics.

Peris considers such associations flattering but not totally on the mark. Songs definitely have a new music feel, earmarked by the ethereal vocals of Karen Peris, wife of Don Peris.

The couple met back in high school. Bassist Mike Blits and drummer Steve Brown are also from Lancaster. All four were involved in their high school production of "Godspell."

The Innocence Mission soon formed and

began playing clubs around Philadelphia. After listening to the group's demo tape, A&M took an interest and signed the band near the end of 1987.

With Larry Klein at the helm, the band recorded "The Innocence Mission." Klein's involvement enhanced the group's mission, which has always been to be strong lyrically as well as musically.

THE MARRIAGE is conducive to songwriting. Karen Peris is the chief songwriter while Don Peris helps layer the sound.

"We have this little room in our apartment," Don Peris said. "Usually, the songs come out of playing things for each other. Hopefully, it will spark an idea."

"I think the lyrics are an important part of the song," he said. "It's up to the four musicians to create a sound to go around it."

The Innocence Mission opens for Don Henley tonight at The Palace in Auburn Hills. For information, call 377-8600.

LIVE REVIEW

MICHAEL PENN — Saint Andrew's Hall

Perhaps you heard the radio ad announcing the concert. It shouted out something along the lines of — You've seen the actor Sean Penn, now see his brother Michael live in concert.

Maybe this explains why Penn seemed a bit uncomfortable at his recent concert at Saint Andrew's Hall. His behavior was understandable, I mean, the guy has a debut album that was on many critics' 1989 top 10 list but to most people he is known as the brother of Madonna's ex-husband?

Luckily, neither Michael Penn nor his audience seemed to care about the brother connection at Friday's concert — everyone was there for the music.

The crowd at the concert was a bit

on the small side, but seemed well-acquainted with Penn's album, "March." They weren't disappointed. Penn played all of the songs from "March." With each new song, the audience shouted with approval and recognition.

The small size of the crowd lent intimacy to the concert — anyone who wanted to could get a fairly good look at Penn if they were willing to engage in a little skillful maneuvering to get themselves to the front of the stage.

Penn's interpretations of his "March" tunes were completely faithful to the album versions. Perhaps this was because he was nervous about improvising or because, unlike Milli Vanilli, Penn can reproduce his album in a live setting.

Speaking of Milli Vanilli, Penn

made them the butt of many of his jokes throughout the evening. At one point, he even pretended that the German duo was off-stage, ready to make a surprise guest appearance.

Penn's stage presence was low-key and unassuming. He seemed not to want to look at the audience, instead preferring to look at his fellow band members or to gaze over the heads of the audience members at some unspecified point near the back of Saint Andrew's Hall.

This was probably smart thinking because several female members of the audience appeared to be love-struck by the singer and were waving their arms and bodies at him in a somewhat manic, groupie-like fashion.

Penn played his MTV hit "No Myth" in the middle of the show, introducing it with the mocking, satiric

comment, "As seen on TV."

The other "March" tunes — "Brave New World," "Bedlam Boys," and the rest — translated well in a live performance. Penn introduced most with a little story of what the songs were about then proceeded to sing the hell out of them.

Penn fleshed out his March material with a Richard Thompson cover and a cover of the Everly Brothers tune, "The Price of Love." Penn also presented a new tune of his own, "Wrong Way Down." This folkie gem left little doubt that Penn's next album will be just as good as "March."

Penn's music is the intimate, personal sort that should be heard in small venues like Saint Andrew's Hall. In other words, try to catch him in concert now, before everyone else finds out about him.

— Jill Hamilton

REVIEWS

A VIEW FROM 3RD STREET

— Jude Cole

Funny, when we look out the window, we usually see the postman stuffing our mailbox or the neighbors' dog leaving its mark on our yard. Jude Cole looks out his window and sees relationships. Go figure.

His 10 songs on Riverside records are not that hard to decipher, though. Most of "A View from 3rd Street" is about love — some good and some gone bad — and friendship. Stop us if you've heard this one before.

Sorry, but Cole is no great lyricist. He sounds like a greeting card singing such precious lines like "I can still hear your voice falling down with the rain."

Cole wrote most of these songs while holed up in a second-floor apartment overlooking a Los Angeles thoroughfare. What connection that has with the subject matter of these numbers is beyond us.

But make no mistake, this stuff is radio ready, dressed up in the finest rock, rhythm & blues and pop. This album, if anything, is a guilty pleasure on the production quality alone.

Cole's husky voice is wreathed with emotion. At least he believes in what he sings.

"Compared to Nothing" is bonafide hit in the making. Cole's



guitar work on this album is skillful and diverse.

The problem is that it sounds too much like everything else thrown down our throats by AOR radio in the last 10 years. Off the top, one can hear Richard Marx, Chris Rea, Corey Hart and John Cougar Mellencamp in his music to name a few.

Can one blame him, though? This is the kind of stuff the radio programmers go ga-ga over. It's a proven formula.

— Larry O'Connor

VERY — Cuppa Joe

When someone says that an album by a local band is "good," what they really mean is that the album is good for a local band. In other words, the songs are probably passable (but not really up to national standards), the sound quality is OK (considering it was probably recorded in someone's garage studio) and the playing is pretty decent (for a bunch of kids).

"Very" by Cuppa Joe is an outstanding album, no matter what standards it is held up to. In other words, don't buy "Very" because it is done by a local band and it is patriotic to buy stuff by local groups, buy "Very" because it is a great album.

The sound quality is as good as any national release you can find in your friendly neighborhood album mart and the songs are so likeable as to be almost addicting.

Cuppa Joe plays "Mugga Fugga" music, which to the uninitiated means upbeat, rhythmic tunes with a generous dose of wild sax thrown in for good measure.

Anyone who has seen the band play at a club around town knows that Cuppa Joe puts on a great show.



The energy and fun of their songs translate well onto vinyl.

Rock King and Kelly Collins share vocals on "Very," sometimes singing solo and sometimes singing harmonies for each other. King's voice sounds like a mixture of Elvis Costello and Ranking Roger back in the days of the English Beat, circa the album Special Beat Surface.

Local music fanatics are already beginning to discover Cuppa Joe's fresh brew of cool tunes — "My Time" is getting airplay on WDRB's "Detroit Music Scene." But, don't be disillusioned, the rest of the music on "Very" is pretty much what it sounds like it is — cool, rhythmic tunes that have a way of staying in your head and on your turntable.

— Jill Hamilton

IN CONCERT

- **Vudu Hipples**
Vudu Hipples will perform on Monday, April 16, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.
- **Gringos**
Gringos will perform on Monday, April 16, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.
- **Sense of Smell**
Sense of Smell will perform on Tuesday, April 17, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.
- **The Volcano Sons**
The Volcano Sons will perform on Tuesday, April 17, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.
- **G.K.W.**
G.K.W. will perform along with guests, Aural Sect, on Wednesday, April 18, at Club Heidelberg, 215 N. Main, Ann Arbor. For information, call 663-7758.
- **Bourgeoisie**
Bourgeoisie will perform on Wednesday, April 18, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.
- **Baby Blue**
Baby Blue will perform Wednesday through Saturday, April 18-21, at Yesterday's Bar, Days Hotel, 17017 W. Nine Mile, Southfield. For information, call 557-4800, ext. 2256.
- **The Simply You Show**
The Simply You Show, featuring Acid and Culture Shock, will take place Wednesday, April 18, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.
- **Ash Can VanGogh**
Ash Can VanGogh will perform on Wednesday, April 18, at the Jukebox, 4616 Woodward, Royal Oak. For information, call 549-2233.
- **Rifle Sport**
Rifle Sport will perform with guests, The Faithhealers, on Thursday, April 19, at Club Heidelberg, 215 N. Main, Ann Arbor. For information, call 663-7758.
- **Frank Allison & the Odd Sox**
Frank Allison & the Odd Sox will perform with guests, Mr. Largebeat Existence, on Thursday, April 19, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.
- **Mott Juice**
Mott Juice will perform on Thursday, April 19, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.
- **Slim Boys Inc.**
Slim Boys Inc. will perform on Thursday, April 19, at Key West, 170 W. Wyandotte, one block east of Ouellette, Windsor. For information, call (519) 254-5131.
- **Robb Roy**
Robb Roy will perform with guests, Babylon Hotel, on Thursday, April 19, at Key West, 170 W. Wyandotte, Windsor. For information, call 592-0090.
- **Covingtons**
Covingtons will perform with guests, Nerve Beats, will perform on Friday, April 20, at Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, off I-75. For information, call 365-9760.
- **Ichabod Stowe**
Ichabod Stowe will perform with guests, Frank Allison & the Odd Sox, on Friday, April 20, at Finney's Pub, 3065 Woodward, Detroit. For information, call 831-8070.
- **Paul Keller-Cary Kocher Quartet**
Paul Keller-Cary Kocher Quartet will perform on Friday and Saturday, April 20-21, at Bird of Paradise, 307 S. Ashley, Ann Arbor. For information, call 662-8310.
- **The Suspects**
The Suspects will perform on Friday, April 20, at Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, Dearborn. For information, call 324-9292.
- **The Road House**
The Road House will perform on Friday, April 20, at Skylight, 49 Saginaw, Pontiac. For information, call 324-9292.
- **Iodine Raincoats**
Iodine Raincoats will perform on Friday, April 20, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.
- **Difference**
Difference will perform on Friday, April 20, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.
- **Jesus Lizard**
Jesus Lizard will perform with guests, Mol Triffid, on Friday, April 20, at Club Heidelberg, 215 N. Main, Ann Arbor. For information, call 663-7758.
- **October**
October will perform with guests, ATR, on Saturday, April 21, at Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, off I-75. For information, call 365-9760.
- **Gratulation**
Gratulation will perform on Saturday, April 21, at Psyche's Lounge, 2322 Caniff, Hamtramck. For information, call 874-0254.
- **J.J. Cale**
J.J. Cale will perform on Saturday, April 21, at Saint Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. For information, call 961-MELT.
- **Seduce**
Seduce will perform on Saturday, April 21, at Blondie's, 21139 W. Seven Mile, Detroit. For information, call 535-8108.
- **Rob Tyner**
Rob Tyner will perform on Saturday, April 21, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.
- **Chisel Brothers**
Chisel Brothers will perform on Saturday, April 21, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

COLLEGE

Here are the top 10 albums receiving airplay on WHFR-FM 89.3, campus station of Henry Ford Community College in Dearborn.

1. "Flood," They Might Be Giants.
2. "Violator," DePêche Mode.
3. "Nites End," Nites End.
4. "Deep," Peter Murphy.
5. "Extricate," The Fall.
6. "Blow," Red Lorry Yellow Lorry.
7. "Blind," The Gears.
8. "Pretty Hate Machine," Nine Inch Nails.
9. "Whack, Ding," See Dick Run.
10. "I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got," Siobhán O'Connor.

LOCAL

Here are the top 10 songs receiving airplay on WHFR-FM's "Contamination and Corrosion," which is heard 7-8:30 p.m. at terminating Thursdays.

1. "Knuckie Sandwich," Orange Roughies.
2. "Just Like an Aborigine," Up.
3. "Better Things to Do," Intolerance.
4. "Epsilon on the Horizon," Booe Machine.
5. "Looking at You," Viv Akaaldeen.
6. "The Mad Scientist," Laughing Hacks.
7. "Carhouse," Gratulation.
8. "Get Down and Double Check," Big Chief.
9. "Let Me Down," The Colors.
10. "LaLa Land," Happy Deathmen.

DREAMING IN DETAIL

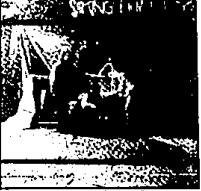
— Shaking Family

Does anyone remember a band called Lone Justice, which featured the wonderful vocals of Maria McKee? They opened for U2 on one of their U.S. tours, had one moderately successful LP and played a whoop-it-up brand of country-tinged rock, or rock-touched country, if you like. Well, they split up in favor of Maria McKee's superb solo career, and here we have a band stepping in to claim their vacant spot. Shaking Family's LP on Elektra is stealing down the Lone Justice road.

The Family's genre is a mish-mash of aggressive, guitar-driven songs with brash and sassy vocals from Barbara Carter, who is also one of the main songwriters, collaborating mainly with guitarist Vince Emmet. Carter's vocals are somewhat reminiscent of Nanci Wilson of Heart: lame around the period of their first album.

Despite this general appeal, the quality of songwriting and overall sound is somewhat unmemorable.

Lyrically, the Family are fairly obtuse. For example, "Gathering the bones of the hanged, pandering to



the chanting of the damned, staggered to a black slab of land, scattering the dust-blood of man/streets of hot coils: will your feet not burn? Heart up in smokes: will your breast not burn? Deliver me from Power and Glory/Deliver me from the Pale horse and rider Source of decaying desire."

What? Did I miss something? Maybe Ozzy Osbourne writes their lyrics. I just cannot picture anybody singing along in the shower!

To be fair, this is probably the worst example of their lyrics although the best extends to "No contemplation, no hesitation, I come to you in simple supplication, and I stand tall. Beside you in that hall, leading to that place where we share it all." Not exactly a broad range.

So despite the initial attractiveness of the sound, with the mundane songs and banal lyrics, "Dreaming in Detail" has to get a thumbs down, Gene. Until next time, save the aisle seats. . .

— Cormac Wright