

STREET BEATS

Folks: Still folksy inspite of . . .

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

To prove his point, David N. Folks pulls out a Chicago entertainment newspaper. "Look here," said Folks, guiding his finger along the page of folk club listings.

Chances are the Birmingham Seaborn graduate could bring a paper from Boston, San Francisco or New York and find the same amount of opportunities for an up-and-coming folk artist. Not so in Detroit.

Folk music is limited to only a handful of clubs, such as the Ark in Ann Arbor and Four Green Fields in Royal Oak. A street music scene is non-existent.

In the face of that, releasing an independent folk cassette wouldn't seem so much like a calculated risk as a bad bet. Folks is not deterred, recently issuing "Childhood's End" on his own Portable Recordings label.

The nine-song tape is a collection of short, personal stories interwoven with a cornucopia of instrumentation. Aside, of course, from the standard acoustic guitar, Folk's music is rich with penny whistles and dulcimers.

Lyrically, the songwriter provides personal images of people met and time spent. "Joshua Maiden" was inspired after Folks performed at a nursing home. As he was singing, a native American resident began to sing as well. The older man's voice was so beautiful, Folks said, he stopped playing.

"GOOD INTENTIONS" came about after Folks ran into someone he knew on the street who was none homeless.

"My attitude about the songs is they're all about people in my psychological world," said Folks, who's working on his doctorate in clinical psychology at the University of Detroit. "I hope when people listen to the tape they will have similar feelings."



The lack of clubs featuring folk music hasn't deterred David N. Folks, who has produced his own nine-song cassette and helped organize the Songwriter's Forum.

But the problem is getting people to know about the tape. Even compared to local rock'n'roll artists, independent folk musicians have difficult time getting known.

The only opportunity to perform live comes on open-mike nights. As a result, artists cannot build a large following.

Folks along with a few others are trying to change that. Along with another songwriter, David Kurtz, Folks has started the Songwriter's Forum.

The forum is a network of artists who want to perform on the folk boom nationally — thanks to Tracy Chapman, Suzanne Vega and Michelle Shocked — by establishing a base here. The group has scheduled performances, including one Friday,

June 8, at Birmingham Unitarian Church.

Also, Folks would like to see more clubs offer folk music and possibly one of the suburbs to start allowing street performers.

"I'm not someone who subscribes to the idea that people are not interested in acoustic music in this area," Folks said. "I think they're hungry for it."

"I THINK the fact there isn't a scene here is a plus. You have that opportunity to bring in something new."

Such optimism led Folks to sink some bucks into his own folk project. Until the release of "Childhood's End," he was producing several demo tapes on his own. He found

they weren't getting results.

The difficult part was choosing nine songs. Folks has several numbers written, but decided to go with those that were favorites in clubs and those he had a personal attachment.

"There are songs I write that I don't play in public," he said. "It's a very emotional process for me. If the song is sincere or I can't get behind it, I abandoned it."

A Songwriter's Forum with David N. Folks, David Kurtz and Jay Webber will take place 7:30 p.m. Friday, June 8, at Birmingham Unitarian Church, 306 Pine Road and Woodward Avenue. Tickets are \$5. For information, call 546-5153 or 693-7183.

IN CONCERT

● FAITHALERS

Faithalers will perform on Monday, June 4, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● HOME WRECKERS

Home Wreckers will perform on Tuesday, June 5, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● INDEPENDENT LABEL

Independent Label will perform on Tuesday, June 5, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● AQUANETTAS

I.R.S./Nettwerk recording artists Aquanettas will perform on Wednesday, June 6, at Saint Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. For information, call 961-MELT.

● NO RIGHT NO WRONG

No Right No Wrong will perform on Wednesday, June 6, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● SUNGLASSES AFTER DARK

Sunglasses After Dark will perform on Wednesday, June 6, at Key West, 24230 W. Six Mile, Detroit. For information, call 592-0030.

● BIM-SKALA-BIM

Bim-Skala-Bim will perform on Wednesday, June 6, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● RENDEZVOUS

Rendezvous will perform Thursday through Saturday, June 7-9, at Key West, 24230 W. Six Mile, Detroit. For information, call 592-0030.

● PEDESTRIANS

Pedestrians will perform on Thursday, June 7, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● OPOSSUMS

The Opossums will perform on Thursday, June 7, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● STEVE MILLER

Steve Miller will perform with guest, Lou Gramm, on Friday, June 8, at the Pine Knob Music Theatre in Clarkston. Tickets are \$20 for pavilion and \$15 for lawn. For information, call 625-0511.

● TRINIDAD TRIPOLI STEEL BAND

Trinidad Tripoli Steel Band will perform on Friday and Saturday, June 8-9, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● THE SPLITTERS

The Splitters will perform with Suncliffers After Dark on Friday, June 8, at the Hamtramck Pub, Caniff, east of I-75.

● JEANNE AND THE DREAMS

Jeanne and the Dreams will perform on Friday, June 8, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● MIDNIGHT OIL

Midnight Oil will perform with guests, Hunters and Collectors, on Saturday, June 9, at the Pine Knob Music Theatre. Tickets are \$20 for pavilion and \$15 for lawn. For information, call 625-0511.

● CYNTHIA DEWBERRY

Cynthia Dewberry will perform on Friday and Saturday, June 8-9, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● CRIME CONTROL

Crime Control will perform with guests, Stratus, on Saturday, June 9, at the Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, east of I-75.

● LENE LOVICH

Lené Lovich will perform with guests, Tami Waxen, on Saturday, June 9, at Saint Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. Tickets are \$10.50 in advance. For information, call 961-MELT.

● CHESTERFIELD KINGS

Chesterfield Kings will perform with guests, Mockness Lobster and Colorful Trauma, on Saturday, June 9, at Paycheck's Lounge, 2732 Caniff, Hamtramck. For information, call 872-8934.

● JOANNA CONNOR

Joanna Connor will perform on Saturday, June 9, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.



Chesterfield Kings will perform with Mockness Lobster and Colorful Trauma Saturday, June 9, at Paycheck's Lounge in Hamtramck.

Aquanettas: Making it with the .R.S.

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

Mention I.R.S. and most people shudder. The initials have Stephanie Seymour in nirvana.

The New York-raised ("New Yawk") drummer and back-up vocalist of the all-girl Aquanettas can't think of a better place to be than in the I.R.S. (as in record label, not tax collector) offices talking about her band's debut album, "Love With the Proper Stranger."

After all, this is a woman who was weaned on the Police and raised on the Go-Gos in the early 1980s. Both groups were on the I.R.S. label founded by Miles Copeland.

"Can I say something?" Seymour asked in a voice that more than reveals her upbringing. "The coolest thing was when I saw an I.R.S. man on my album. I said, 'Thank you, very much.'"

LABEL LOVE aside, the Aquanettas are drawing raves for their raw, 80-ish, pop-rock sound. Unlike most all-girl groups, one doesn't chew gum to the Aquanettas.

The album features an undertone of scraping, cityscape dwelling somewhat reminiscent of the early '80s New York punk scene led by the Ramones.



The Aquanettas — Jill Richmond, Claudine Troise, Stephanie Seymour and Deborah Schwartz — are right where they want to be with a new release and tour.

The pop-rock outfit is embarking on its first-ever national tour in support of "Love With the Proper Stranger." The group visits Wednesday, June 6, at Saint Andrew's Hall.

THE WHOLE notion of a national record deal (the album is co-released on Nettwerk Records out of Vancouver, B.C., Canada) and a tour has Seymour and her mates swimming

in euphoria.

Last year at this time, the Aquanettas were an unsigned group and performing only in the New York area.

After a representative from Nettwerk Records caught the group performing live at the New Music Seminar last year in July, he signed the band. The album was recorded in

November in Vancouver ("The same place where K.d. lang recorded," Seymour said).

THE BAND evolved in as short of a time. Vocalist Debby Schwartz and guitarist Jill Richmond knew each other from their days in Los Angeles. Eventually, both found their way to New York, where they met up with bassist Claudine Troise.

Seymour joined the outfit last June, her first "real" band.

"I had known Claudine from school, sort of," Schwartz and Richmond wrote all the material on "Love With the Proper Stranger." Next time around, things may be different.

"WITH THE NEXT album, we'll all write. We've had a lot of stuff in the works that we haven't had any time to work on. Maybe we can work on it when we get back from the tour."

Of course, all-girl groups have the life expectancy of a sparkler in a wind tunnel. The Bangles and Go-Gos are classic examples.

Not to worry, assures Seymour. "We totally get along as the best of friends. When we were in Vancouver, we were together in this little hotel room for four weeks. We got along fine. I'm not worried about being in a band together."

REVIEWS

REPRESENTING THE MAMBO

— Little Feat

It's safe to say that Little Feat's "Texas Twister," the lead-off track from the group's new "Representing the Mambo" album, is taking the country by storm. A searing toe-patter, "Twister" shot right up to the summit of AOR play lists.

But the rest of the 11-track Warner Brothers LP comes and goes like a scattered shower — hit and miss.

That doesn't mean "Representing the Mambo" is a musical wallflower. It just doesn't quite match the weight of Feat's 1988 comeback, "Let It Roll."

First, the good news. This LP is chock full of witty, clever lyrics.

On the rockabilly "Woman in Love," Paul Barrere sings about a woman who is as "hot as a smokin' gun." A Saturday Night Special she packs plenty of fun/She got me sweatin' bullets, on a cold winter night/I got one in the chamber, with the safety off.

And "there's nothing but chain link and barbed wire definin' the confusion" on "Teenage Warrior," the urbane, slow rocking story about a rebel that closes alone.

Musically, listeners can choose from the deliberate "Daddy Grind," the shuffling live track, Steely Dan-like "Silver Screen" and country bar blues numbers such as "That's Her, She's Mine" and "Those Feat'll Steer



Ya Wrong Sometimes."

Throughout are such tasty ingredients as Barrere's sometimes-subtle, sometimes-stinging lead guitar, the pounding rhythm section of bassist Kenny Gradner and guitarist Fred Tackett, the swirling keyboard work of Bill Payne and war drumming from Richie Hayward.

Now for the bad news. Unfortunately, those highlights occasionally get lost through over-production. The lyrical content also is sometimes hurt by excess. On "Those Feat'll Steer Ya Wrong Sometimes," Craig Fuller, in one sentence, spews out the names of 22 cities the band once visited on a tour.

But those flaws don't trip up "Mambo" in the long run.

— Tim Smith

WEDDING PRESENT

— Wedding Present

— Wedding Present

From England, Wedding Present have been around for a number of years and only now are making waves on this side of the pond.

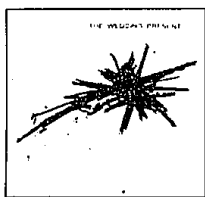
Take the guitar-filled sound of New Jersey's Feelsies, throw in a couple of feet of The Fall, add a few drops of cynical English wit and some outrageously frantic guitar playing and you're on the Wedding Present honeymoon.

Aggressive rhythm guitar playing and tongue-in-cheek "Morrissey-esque" lyrics bemoaning the insouciousness of relationships are their calling card.

With a marvelously deadpan vocal delivery, the opening track sets us up for what is to come: "You changed around the posters on your wall, I finished all but one glass of your wine." Wedding Present laments, "I can't get mad at you no matter how I try."

We are assaulted by an infectious barrage of guitars, in one instance for more than nine minutes, and I defy anyone to stop their bodies from bopping or their minds from wondering how Wedding Present keeps it going for that length of time at that speed.

Their lyrics are in a humorous, first and second-party conversation style. Forgive this long example but



tell me who hasn't had a conversation similar to the following:

"About what I said just before/ You know, your clothes on the floor/ I never meant to hurt you/I got carried away/I guess I've had a long day/I could sooner die than lose you over something like that/Oh please, next time just shoot back, I didn't say I hate you . . . why can't I ever say what I mean . . . I'm not being unfair/OK, I am but who cares/well now at least we're talking."

The insecurity shows through on practically all of the songs in their lyrics but never in their music. It's giant, aggressive and frantic. They've got bloody big guitars.

— Cormac Wright

PACKED

— The Pretenders

— The Pretenders

On "Packed," perhaps the Pretenders' bazillionth record, Chrissie Hynde explores the problems of being a strong woman but still wishing for her knight in shining armor to come and overpower her.

This is all done in the usual Pretenders style — best defined as "how the Pretenders usually sound." Oh, come on, you know how the Pretenders usually sound. You've heard "Brass in Pocket." Well, imagine that song done in every variation possible — slow, fast and midtempo — you've pretty much figured out how every Pretenders song sounds — a rearrangement of "Brass in Pocket." This is not a bad thing. "Brass in Pocket" is a good song. Besides, it makes a Pretenders album a fairly predictable commodity — something you can count on to remain the same in an ever-changing world.

Nearly every song on the album is a plea to a man to see the fragile woman behind Hynde's tough facade and to come and save the woman. In "Sense of Purpose," Hynde starts off swagging, "Everybody chokes/when they see someone out down in their prime/It may not show when you look at me/But I know I'm in mine/I'm potent baby I'm potent." Her boasting quickly turns into a plea: "Don't you wanna take me home?/Give me a sense of purpose/



a real sense of purpose."

In "Let's Make a Pact," Hynde wants a promise that love will last: "Fill me up with glimpses of you/and let the music begin . . . take me to the altar." The refrain, "Let's make a pact/one we'll never take back/let me prove that I'm true/let's make a pact" is filled with yearning. Hynde's badly honed lyrics are almost uncomfortable to listen to because they are so plainly vulnerable.

On "Hold a Candle to This," Hynde tackles a different sort of man-woman issue — sailors using native women. "There's a new generation from Osaka, Bann and Saigon/The sailor mired it on the shore/They were making love and making war."

In "Downtown (Akron)," Hynde sings of, that's right, good ol' Akron, Ohio, with a rousing chorus of "d-d-d-downtown Akron/d-d-d-downtown Akron." A Pretenders-ified version of Jimi Hendrix's obscure tune, "May This Be Love" rounds out the album.

In the final analysis, "Packed" is a must for Pretenders fans.

— Jill Hamilton