

STREET BEATS

Oh, Boyea!

Music is a tapestry of pop and folk sounds

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

For a singer/songwriter who has a sure thing, Joel Boyea doesn't sound so sure.

"They're going to tear me up," said Boyea, between sips of a Coca-Cola. "The British tabloid press reviews all of Utility's records. I'm interested in what they have to say, but I'm scared."

Boyea is somewhat frightened only because his songs are truly his. Like a diary, they're personal feelings Boyea has captured in music.

Music that the Livonia Bentley High School graduate plans to share with all of Europe. If all goes to schedule, Boyea's first album will be released sometime in the fall on Utility Records, the independent label founded by British political folkie Billy Bragg.

The yet-to-be titled LP will be distributed to all of Europe. Ideally, a major independent stateside will follow suit here.

All the songs are completed, just some remaining needs to be finished. Boyea enlisted the services of Hippodrome cohorts, guitarist Chris Richards and drummer Doyle Dean, on the nine-song project, which was recorded at Dave Fecny's Tempermill Studios.

The music itself is a rich tapestry of electric folk and pop, ushered along with well-written lyrics that at times bleed hurt and uncertainty. The dubbed tape of a rough mix Boyea passes along is simply brilliant.

But back to this Billy Bragg thing. Who, what, where and why? Even Boyea is a bit amazed at what has transpired in the past year.

THE STORY goes like this. Boyea played briefly in high school with a rock'n'roll outfit. He then went to college at Western Michigan University and, for the most part, gave up performing.

With the emergence of Suzanne Vega and Tracy Chapman, though, Boyea got the hankering to play again. He picked up his guitar for the first time in two years and began writing songs.

Later, Boyea wanted to put together a demo tape. He chose three numbers of his own and another a cover version of a Billy Bragg song. On a whim, he sent the tape to England for Bragg to have a listen.

Then a telegram followed. Bragg's managers wanted Boyea to call them immediately.

"I thought they were going to sue me," Boyea said. "I couldn't sleep the night before. I was really scared."

"I talked to Peter Jenner (Bragg's manager). He said (Boyea in an Englishman's voice) 'No, we're not going to sue you. We like the tape and we want to know if you'll play some shows with us.'"

As it turned out, Boyea was only able to perform one gig with Bragg in Cleveland. But Bragg and Boyea hit it off immediately, sharing a laugh about the parody documentary "Spinal Tap."

In his one gig, Bragg liked what he heard and told Boyea his label would release an album of his work. End of story?

Not quite.

ALONG WITH knocking the album into shape, Boyea is tackling that ever elusive skill of performing live. That aspect of being a singer is a new arena for him. He recently made his Detroit debut, performing at the Hamtramck Pub. The show went well, but left Boyea with a task list of needed improvements.

Slowly, he's gaining confidence in his music that certainly will be a sound for sore ears on the hard rock heavy local scene.

"For a long time I thought, 'God these songs will never stand up as

powerful as other bands because of the volume.' But they do. They're clean and they're easy to listen to."

Easy to understand, perhaps, but for Boyea they were very difficult to write. His most poignant numbers center around two failed romantic relationships: lovers, friends and relationships while attending college. In both cases, the women moved away to attend colleges elsewhere.

Without sounding like self-indulgent melancholy, Boyea expresses his feelings metaphorically as in the numbers "Table for One" or "Pour-

ing Flain." The sound is crisp and almost frenetic, but flows with ease.

With college out of the way (Boyea recently graduated with a bachelor's degree in education from WMU), his major inspiration for songs (tenuous relationships: lovers, friends and otherwise) could well have dried up. Boyea, though, sees himself dabbling in the overt political musings such as those of his musical hero Billy Bragg — a devout socialist.

"His music is very serious, but he has this funny side to him. He's got a subtle sense of humor," Boyea said.



Joel Boyea has captured his personal feelings in his music and it's music he's sharing with all of Europe with his new release through Utility Records.

IN CONCERT

● HUNTRESS

Huntress will perform on Monday, June 18, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● ASSEMBLY REQUIRED

Assembly Required will perform on Tuesday, June 19, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● MIND OVER 4

Mind Over 4 will perform on Tuesday, June 19, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● JONATHAN RICHMOND

Jonathan Richmond will perform on Tuesday, June 19, at the Ark, 637 E. Main, Ann Arbor. For information, call 761-1451.

● SIMPLY YOU SHOW

Simply You Show will perform on Wednesday, June 20, at Club Heidelberg, 215 N. Main, Ann Arbor. For information, call 663-7758.

● UNIVERSAL SPECTRUM

Universal Spectrum will perform on Wednesday, June 20, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● SUNGLASSES AFTER DARK

Sunglasses After Dark will perform on Wednesday, June 20, at Key West, 24230 W. Six Mile, Detroit. For information, call 592-0099.

● PYLON

Pylon will perform on Thursday, June 21, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● THE HANNIBALS

The Hannibals will perform on Thursday, June 21, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● LUNACY

Lunacy will perform with guests, Thought Industry, on Thursday, June 21, at Club Heidelberg, 215 N. Main, Ann Arbor. For information, call 663-7758.

● BURNING CIRCLE

Burning Circle will perform on Thursday, June 21, at Key West, 24230 W. Six Mile, Detroit. For information, call 592-0099.

● PEST

Pest, Virus B 23 and December's Children will perform on Thursday, June 21, at 3-D, 1815 N. Main, near 12 Mile, Royal Oak. For information, call 589-3344.

● GOOBER & THE PEAS

Goobar & the Peas, Enemy Squad and the Freemasons will perform on Friday, June 22, at the Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Canfield, off I-75. The bands' performances will be recorded for an upcoming compilation release on Boomba Records. For information, call 365-9760.

● EDDIE RUGS TRIO

Eddie Rugs Trio will perform on Friday and Saturday, June 22-23, at the Bird of Paradise, 207 S. Ashley, Ann Arbor.

TOP HITS

Best-selling singles of the week:

1. "Vogue," Madonna.
2. "Hold On," Wilson Phillips
3. "All I Wanna Do," Heart
4. "Poison," Bell Biv DeVoe
5. "Alright," Janet Jackson
6. "It Must Have Been Love," Roxette
7. "I Can't Touch This," M.C. Hammer
8. "Sending All My Love," Lhasar
9. "Dob La La," Perfect Gentlemen
10. "Nothing Compares 2 U," Sinéad O'Connor

(Source: Cashbox magazine)

For information, call 662-8310.

● WHITESNAKE

Whitesnake will perform with guests, Bad English, on Friday, June 22, at Pine Knob Music Theatre, Southfield Road, off I-75. For information, call 625-0511.

● CAPTAIN DAVE

Captain Dave and the Psychedelic Lounge Cats will perform on Friday, June 22, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● CULTURE SHOCK

Culture Shock will perform with guests, Harm's Way, on Friday, June 22, at Club Heidelberg, 215 N. Main, Ann Arbor. For information, call 663-7758.

● THE KNAVES

The Knaves will perform on Friday, June 22, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● D.C. DRIVE

D.C. Drive will perform on Friday and Saturday, June 22-23, at Key West, 24230 W. Six Mile, Detroit. For information, call 592-0099.

● NIGHT CRAWLERS

Night Crawlers will perform on Friday and Saturday, June 22-23, at Skylights, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac. For information, call 334-9292.

● SHELTER

Shelter with special guests, Quik Sand and 2 p.m., will perform on Saturday, June 23, at Bloodies, 21139 W. Seven Mile, east of Telegraph, Detroit. For information, call 335-8108.

● MISSIONARY STEW

Missionary Stew will perform with guests, Mochness Monster, on Saturday, June 23, at Garden Bowl, 4154 Woodward, Detroit. For information, call 833-8700.

● THE BLANKS

The Blanks will perform along with Hippodrome on Saturday, June 23, at the Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Canfield, off I-75. The bands' performances will be recorded for an upcoming compilation LP on Boomba Records. For information, call 365-9760.

● STEVE NARDELLA

Steve Nardella Rock'n'roll Trio will perform on Saturday, June 23, at Club Heidelberg, 215 N. Main, Ann Arbor. For information, call 663-7758.

● DARK CARNAVAL

Dark Carnival, featuring ex-members of the Stooges, will perform on Saturday, June 23, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● J.D. LAMB

J.D. Lamb will perform on Saturday, June 23, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● COMMANDER CODY

Commander Cody will perform two shows, 8 and 11:30 p.m., on Saturday, June 23, at Alvin's, 4756 Cass, Detroit. For information, call 832-2355.

LOCAL

Here are the top 10 songs receiving air play on "Detroit Music Scene," which is heard 6-8 p.m. Sundays (repeated 5:30-6:30 p.m. Tuesdays) on WDET-FM 90.9.

1. "Loser's Blues," Generals.
2. "Dead Man Running," Virus B23.
3. "Serenity," Thrifty Forest Animals.
4. "Unaffected," Chain Reaction 13.
5. "Colours," Babyline Hotel.
6. "Immigrant Song," Decay of Western Civilization.
7. "Tomorrow Is Tomorrow," Shooting Club.
8. "Little Heads," Hannibals.
9. "Out No More," Jimmy Bones and the Graverobbers.
10. "Paula," Waynets.

REVIEWS

WALK ON WATER

— Jerry Harrison,
Casual Gods

The Talking Heads have talent to spare. While David Byrne is busy ripping off Brazilian rhythms, some of the leftover members used the spare time to put out an album by a little outfit that they call the Tom Tom Club. Jerry Harrison, keyboardist and guitarist for the Heads, has been keeping occupied by recording the follow-up to his mildly successful last offering, "Casual Gods."

With "Walk on Water," Harrison proves once again that Byrne is not the only talented member of the Heads. "Walk on Water" is the work of a whole artist; not one who is only a sideman. "Walk on Water" is what you might call a "mature" album.

Although Byrne's influence is obvious, Harrison is not merely a paler and smaller suited version of his badmate. Sure, on some of the vocals Harrison sounds like he's doing a Byrne imitation, but those two have been together more than a decade — how could their styles not rub off on each other?

Soon into the record, Harrison develops his own vocal style. His voice ends up sounding closer to Robbie Robertson's than Byrne's. It's not an



amazing voice, but it's quite serviceable.

The prominent theme of "Walk on Water" is environmentalism, politics, war and all that other stuff that is so unpleasant about life on earth.

In "I Cry For Iran," Harrison sings, "I cry for love/I cry for man/I cry for woman/And I don't understand." In the hypnotic tribute to the artist, "Cowboy's Got to Stop," Harrison quotes liberally from Jeffrey Potter's book, "To a Violent Grave: An Oral Biography of Jackson Pollock." For this effort, Harrison recruited Heads helper Adrian Belew to play guitar on several tracks and vocalist Joyce Bowen whose smooth voice is a lovely asset to the ballad, "If The Rains Return."

"Walking On Water" is an original mix of textures, cultures, styles and sounds — a fine effort.

— Jill Hamilton

HELL TO PAY

— The Jeff
Healey Band

The flavor of Jeff Healey's second Arista offering is enhanced with a sprinkling of superstar seasoning from George Harrison and Mark Knopfler. But the band does enough on its own to bring this tasty set to a rock-and-blues boil regardless.

Well-crafted from start to finish, the blind guitarist shines on a reverent cover of Harrison's "While My Guitar Gently Weeps" that includes precise backing vocals from the ex-Beatle.

Healey also kicks out the string-bending blues with Knopfler on "I Think I Love You Too Much." The track concludes with a hot guitar duel that conjures up images of the pair blasting away in concert.

That such legends would help out Healey is a strong indication of the well-earned clout he has gained, relatively quickly, in music circles.

Reasons for that kind of respect about on "Hell to Pay," which combines rock muscle with pop sensibilities.



Healey and band mates Joe Rockman and Tom Stephen rock straight ahead on "Full Circle," the title track and "Let It All Go," written by John Hiatt.

For fans who remember last year's "Angel Eyes," Healey serves up the heartfelt (but never sappy) ballad "How Long Can a Man Be Strong."

And "I Can't Get My Hands On You" provides a strong hint that Healey's art was influenced by Eric Clapton. The guitar intro is suspiciously similar to Cream's "Tales of Brave Ulysses."

Although Healey leans on a few legends here, they are by no means used as a crutch. In fact, with more outings like "Hell to Pay," it shouldn't be too long before this guitarist, singer and songwriter himself joins the ranks of rock's elite.

— Tim Smith

THE GENERALS

— The Generals

The Generals are a loud, raucous party band — nothing more, nothing less.

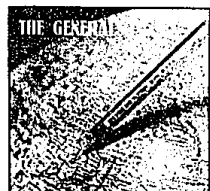
So, in that sense, the Detroit outfit's debut album offers few surprises. A grungy guitar sound provided by Kevin James and howling vocals courtesy of Tony Cole race against one another throughout the eight-song package.

The Generals' full throttle sound is borne out of the since departed, yet nonetheless highly-revered punk scene of the early 1980s. This has both its blessings and curses.

The kick-start guitar gives the Generals' music considerable verve. But, by the same token, it's a well-worn path taken previously by many bands of their ilk.

For one, the lyrics don't require much thought. Heard in "Watering Hole" is such prose as "If you dig my dirt/Up from the ground/Don't you know you'll find me/Lying down in it/If you turn this soil/Sort out the stones/Plant no seeds/Feed them to the crows/Baby, I don't care what you think/Just bring me another drink."

"Watering Hole" is only one of three numbers where lyrics are actually provided. The liner notes then



tell us to figure the rest out for ourselves.

The Generals' finer moments come when they deviate from the damn ban pure punk kick. "She's Sleeping," certainly offers a change up, featuring an acoustic ballad bemoaning a woman whose noddie off in a dreamless sleep. "I asked her to tell me about her dreams/She said, 'I don't got none.' (No, Spunky Anderson didn't write that song.)"

On a similar note, Scott Anderson's harmonica on "Tim Different Now" breathes a bit of the blues into otherwise guitar-frenzied numbers. Likewise, the sax on "Young Man" and piano on "Never Say Goodbye" also help spice up the package.

And, perhaps, they offer a hint of resources the Generals might consider tapping into in the future.

— Larry O'Connor