



Creating the industrial sounds of the techno-band Skin Horse are band founders Andre Royster, 26, bass and vocals; and

Dwayne Williams, 27, guitarist.

Skin Horse: Techno with a beat

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

Skin Horse is four people. At least that's what we counted in the living room the night we met them.

Andre Royster, 26, bass and vocals; Dwayne Williams, 27, guitarist; Mike Ferguson, 27, keyboards and vocals; and Tracy Popp, 17, drums, make up the band.

Skin Horse is industrial. At least that's what we gathered listening to the cut off of "Industrial Chaos," a compilation of techno-bands on Nebula Records.

Skin Horse is human. Which, combined with the other two observations, can be construed as a contradiction of terms.

Industrial music, though pounding and pulsating, is often frenetic. The sound relies on a beat, which can be cold and impersonal.

"That is the thing we wanted," said Royster, his eyes lighting up to the idea. "We wanted something danceable and we still wanted to have that feeling of a band. We didn't want to become too electronic."

"We've gone to see the competition," Royster added later. "By now means are gods, but a lot of

what we've seen is cold. What we want to do is have people participate in this band. We just don't want to be up there just pushing buttons."

SKIN HORSE is one of a new breed of Detroit area bands pushing all the right buttons. The group is one of a growing number of techno, industrial outfits defining a new scene.

Local music promoter Sue Summers is putting together a group of bands, some rock and some techno, on one label, Chaos. Skin Horse, Culture Bandits, Blue Nimbus and the Generals are part of the roster.

The "Industrial Chaos" compilation, which features national talent as well as Detroit area groups, was Summers' first project.

Summers said while a lot of industrial bands are "copying off each other," there is something different about Skin Horse.

"They're making it more danceable and we still wanted to have that feeling of a band. We didn't want to become too electronic."

Live, Skin Horse has performed at Finney's Pub, Majestic Theatre

and the Hamtramck Pub.

The current lineup of Skin Horse has been together for three months. The core dates back much further.

Royster and Williams have known one another for seven years, collaborating musically for a number of years. Originally, both were in a band that performed Gothic "Cure type of music." The pair quit and joined other bands.

FINALLY, THE duo formed Skin Horse three years ago. Beaux Mitchell of Skanking Voodoo Dolls fame, was instrumental in getting the word out about the band.

Members drifted in and out. Then Royster and Williams met up with Ferguson, who was a founding member of both Passion Nouveau and Toxic Beat Syndrome. Popp joined the fray later.

Royster and Ferguson write a good deal of the music; Williams handles the lyrics. Things clicked immediately.

"For one thing, there is a drive here I haven't experienced in any other band," Ferguson said. "It's a desire to be heard. It's a desire to be taken serious as someone to contend with Detroit musically."

Creatively, those Gothic days

Seeing the show

Who: Skin Horse with guests Wrath of Christian

When: Friday, Nov. 23 at 11 p.m.

Where: Finney's Pub, 3965 Woodward, Detroit. Phone 831-6070 for more info. Cover charge: \$4

have not been lost. Skin Horse is merging '80s sound with a futuristic beat.

"I'd like to think we've developed that techno-punk sound with a hard beat like Nitzer Ebb and a hard edge like Gang of Four," Williams said. "It's still evolving."

What makes techno such an alluring genre is the creative freedom, according to Williams. Whereas rock, pop and rhythm & blues are defined in separate categories, Skin Horse uses all of the elements to their advantage.

"It's all really connected," he said.

IN CONCERT

• TALL MIDGETS

Tall Midgets will perform Monday, Nov. 19, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

• FIRST LIGHT

First Light will perform Monday and Tuesday, Nov. 19-20, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

• THE RESIDENTS

The Residents will perform Monday, Nov. 19, at the Michigan Theatre, 603 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$16.50 in advance; \$18.50 at the door. For information, call 99-MUSIC.

• TINY LIGHTS

Tiny Lights from Hoboken, N.J., will perform with guests, Frank Allison and Sam Lapides and John Boyle, at Club Heidelberg, 215 N. Main, Ann Arbor. For information, call 994-3562.

• ASSEMBLY REQUIRED

Assembly Required will perform Tuesday, Nov. 20, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

• RHYTHM CORPS

Rhythm Corps will perform Wednesday, Nov. 21, at The Ritz, 17580 Frazho, Roseville. For information, call 778-8150.

• SECOND SELF

Second Self will perform Wednesday, Nov. 21, at the Latin Quarter, 3067 E. Grand Blvd., Detroit. For information, call 373-3777.

• JUICE

Juice will perform Wednesday, Nov. 21, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

• SCOTT MORGAN

Scott Morgan Band will perform Wednesday, Nov. 21, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

• BOP HARVEY

Bop Harvey will perform Thursday, Nov. 22, at the Majestic Theatre, 4140 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Music starts at 11 p.m. For information, call 833-9700.

• JEANNE AND THE DREAMS

Jeanne and the Dreams will perform Friday, Nov. 23, at Club Heidelberg, 215 N. Main, Ann Arbor. For information, call 994-3562.

• WATERBOYS

Waterboys will perform Friday, Nov. 23, at Royal Oak Music Theatre. Show time is 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$18.50. For information, call 546-7610.

• SKIN HORSE

Skin Horse will perform with guests, Wrath of Christian, Friday, Nov. 23, at Finney's Pub, 3965 Woodward, Detroit. For information, call 831-6070.

• FUNHOUSE

Funhouse will perform with guests, Floor 9 and Freemasons, Friday, Nov. 23, at the Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, off I-75. For information, call 365-9760.

• URBATIIONS

Urbatiions will perform Friday, Nov. 23, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

• TRINIDAD STEEL

Trinidad Tripoli Steel Band will perform Friday and Saturday, Nov. 23-24, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 994-3562.

• GEORGE BEDARD AND THE KINGPINS

George Bedard and the Kingpins will perform Saturday, Nov. 24, at Club Heidelberg, 215 N. Main, Ann Arbor. For information, call 994-3562.

• SLEEPY LABEEL

Sleepy LaBeel will perform Saturday, Nov. 24, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.



Cocteau Twins will perform with Mazzy Star, Saturday, Nov. 24, at the Latin Quarter in Detroit.

TOP HITS

Best-selling records of the week:

- "Ice Ice Baby," Vanilla Ice
- "Love Takes Time," Mariah Carey
- "Giving You the Benefit," Pebbles
- "Pray," M.C. Hammer
- "Black Cat," Janet Jackson
- "More Than Words Can Say," Alias
- "I Don't Have the Heart," James Ingram
- "Suicide Blonde," INXS
- "Groove Is in the Heart," Deee-Lite
- "Knockin' Boots," Candyman

(Source: Cashbox magazine)

COLLEGE

Here are the top 10 songs on "Detroit Music Scene," which is heard 4-5 p.m. Sundays repeated 5:30-6:30 p.m. on WDTN-FM 90.9.

- "How I Met Your Mother," Andy Breckman
- "Crowded Streets," Thirsty Forest Animals
- "Way You Do," Blue Nimbus
- "Real Good Rockin'," Footloose
- "All Fall Down," Initiation of Life
- "In Her Jeans," Mitch Ryder and Robert Gillespie
- "She Don't Care," Byrds
- "Let Love Show," Sladings Pavement
- "Black," Skin Horse
- "Scattered," Phineas Gage

Bragg: Trying to be a regular guy

By Jill Hamilton
special writer

Billy Bragg was just trying to be a regular guy.

Before his recent concert at the State Theater in Kalamazoo, he was out on the street in front of the theater trying to help the driver of his tour van maneuver into a tight parking space.

Just helping 'em park," Bragg said amiably to a passerby. "By now means are gods, but a lot of

hind it. But that was OK, because other than that little traffic mishap, Bragg could otherwise do no wrong that night.

The ornate State Theater was only about half full, but every person there seemed to be a die-hard Bragg fan (Braggists?). From the opening number to the second encore, most of the fans remained on their feet, transfixed by what the Englishman was saying and singing.

Bragg did not disappoint. He sang a couple of songs off of each album to satisfy fans of every phase of his

career. Crowd pleasers included "I Dreamed I Saw Phil Ochs Last Night" off of "The Internationale," "Richard" off of "Life's a Riot with Spy vs. Spy," and "There is Power in a Union" off of "Talking with the Taxman About Poetry."

But the song that most fans seemed to want to hear — judging by their shouted requests for it during pauses in the show was "Waiting for the Great Leap Forward" from "Workers Playtime." Bragg finally got around to it during one of the encores.

INTERSPERSED WITH the older Bragg songs were some new tunes which Bragg said he is working on for his next album. And what did the new songs sound like? Simple guitar songs about politics and love, of course. What else would you expect from Bragg? House music?

During the part of the concert where Bragg wasn't singing (about half the show), he rapped with the audience about everything including a reference to the Sinead O'Connor

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REVIEWS

VOLUME THREE Traveling Wilburys



This band of famous musicians "brothers" snuck up on the music world in 1988 with their first Warner Brothers LP, featuring plenty of tongue-in-cheek, low-key humor. George Harrison, Bob Dylan, Tom Petty, Jeff Lynne and Roy Orbison crafted a relaxed masterpiece that sold millions.

So, what do you do to top such an unexpected success? Particularly when smooth-crooning Orbison has since died and the surprise factor is long gone? Answer: Toughen up the Wilbury sound, change nicknames and call the second album "Volume Three."

It works from start (the toe-tapping single "She's My Baby") to finish, the self-mocking "Wilbury Twist."

Although there are bits and pieces of humor interspersed into the 11-song set, it is "Wilbury Twist" that drives home the point that the fun found on the debut album is back again the second time around.

"Life your other foot up . . . fall on your ass! Get back up . . . put your teeth in a glass," goes one of the verses.

Who knows whether their version

of the "Twist" catches on like Chubby's did. But the Wilburys insist, during the chorus, that folks from Poland to China to the U.S. are jumping around in their underwear and turning around and around like a screw.

Just to be sure, the liner notes are complete with an illustrated, step-by-step dance manual.

There are other typically-Wilbury moments. On the bootleggy "Poor House," Petty ("Buddy") sings about the lament of somebody being taken to the cleaners in a divorce.

Punctuating the track is a Harrison guitar solo that harkens back to the Beatles' 1965 era, when the youngest Beatle (now "Spike") Wilbury laid down plenty of Carl Perkins-like riffs.

Even more so than on the first album, the Wilburys sing the new songs by co-lin House his performed brother to brother as if passing a vocal baton.

That could be a recipe for failure in some groups. But these Wilburys seem to mix and match on a whim. It helps, of course, that the music is nearly impeccable throughout.

Tim Smith

WRONG WAY UP — Brian Eno and John Cale



Brian Eno and John Cale continue to prove their versatility with "Wrong Way Up" (Opal), a collection of complex but accessible pop tunes. Long involved in the art-rock and avant-garde music scenes, Eno and Cale step out on another limb with this collaboration. Obscure and unusual instruments — the rhythm bed, Shinto bell and dumbek, for example — are blended with guitars, drums and keyboards to form intricately crafted songs that represent a broad range of styles.

Hazy at times, and sprinkled with distracting nonsense rhymes, the album's lyrics travel the globe. In "One Word," a wanderer uses non sequiturs to describe a life of happy impermanence: "These are the ones I found in Rome/Very few things I keep for long/When does your plane leave for Cologne?"

But their best journeys are internal. In "Spinning Away," a man tells of sitting on a hill "as the day dissolves" with "pencil" "turning moments into life" and watching the sky and stars. Brooding, swept up in dreams, he reflects on his state:

"High on a hill, under a raven sky/I have no idea exactly what I've drawn/Some kind of change, some kind of spinning away/With every single line moving further out in time." In "Footsteps," Cale sings of Tokyo and Zurich, of tragedy and unhappiness, but looks inside to find, "All is clear/I can see for miles and miles/I can hear/Your footsteps in my heart."

"Wrong Way Up," though likely to receive a fraction of the attention paid to the latest stop by Madonna or Guns N' Roses, is a must for Eno and Cale fans — and for those whose brains MTV hasn't turned to mush.

— Matt Jachman

RHYTHM OF THE SAINTS — Paul Simon



"Rhythm of the Saints" (Warner Bros.), Simon's foray into Latin American rhythms, at first seems as dense and remote as the Brazilian rain forest. Repeated listenings, however, reveal its charms.

While somewhat unfair, comparisons between this album and "Graceland," Simon's 1986 masterpiece, are inevitable. This time out, Simon submerges himself even further into the native rhythms of South America than he did on his earlier exploration into the rhythms of South Africa.

His quirky, low key sense of humor is also less evident — though not entirely absent. In "The Obvious Child," for instance, his sings of a son, named Sonny, whose disposition gets sunnier day by day.

Despite that, Simon seems more content to let the music do the talking. In "The Obvious Child," for instance, his sings of a son, named Sonny, whose disposition gets sunnier day by day.

Like "Graceland," this is also a

political album. With destruction of the rain forest a major global political issue — not to mention long standing concerns about U.S. policy in Latin America — merely recording an album in the region amounts to a political act.

As with "Graceland," too, Simon leaves himself open to charges of being a musical exploiter — mining the native culture for gold records the way conquistadors once mined the local landscape for gold.

"Reach in the dark" Simon sings on the album's title track, but that's not entirely the focus here. Rather than groping blindly, Simon seems more intent on shining his musical light.

— Wayne Peal