

## Young: Honesty before success

A storm cloud of serenity, a gushing wind of disparity. Steve Young's music is not about taming the mind or the soul. It's not necessarily entertaining," Young said. "I'm not here to make you feel better for two minutes. I'm here to be honest with you. . . . That's where my heart lies."

Such an ethos separates artist from entertainer, craftsman from mere performer. In Young's case, it may also separate recognition from a career.

Young is perhaps the best known unknown songwriter in the business. Luminaries recording his songs include The Eagles, Waylon Jennings and Hank Williams Jr.

Yet Young hasn't found his place yet. Or, more than anything, a place hasn't been found for him.

Possible reasons? First, his southern roots was perhaps deemed "uncool" in the protest singer era of the early 1960s. Nick Tosches wrote in his book "Country: The Biggest Music in America" how Joan Baez "was repulsed by the presence of a white southern man" in her home at the wedding of Richard and Mimi Farrow.

Then there was his foray into the country rock movement, which later led him to be lumped in with the outlaws such as Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson. He gravitated away from that without ever cashing in.

There were his own problems with alcohol, which hampered his career in the early-mid 1970s.

Then there is Young's refusal to play the record industry game.

"THE BOTTOM line is there is something deep inside that may be afraid of success," he said. "I think deep down I didn't want to be successful. I wanted to be hidden away, be more obscure."

Obscurity, perhaps, but it has been obscurity on his own terms. Young has released only eight albums during a 20-plus year career — all critically acclaimed and spanning a wide variety of styles from folk to country.

"Seven Bridges Road" is his watermark LP, mainly because it plucked the interest in the Nashville set and because many felt he was leading the way to a new country sound. Jennings later recorded "Lonesome On'y & Mean" off of "Seven Bridges Road" LP. RCA jumped on the bandwagon. Young released "Renegade Picker" and "No Place to Fall" on the label — his tag of a country outlaw further enhanced.

Young and his music, though, was never totally at home with the whiskey rattle-rattling crowd. He lived it, but didn't necessarily believe in it.

"To some extent, that's all very true," said Young about the outlaw image. "To another extent, it wasn't true."

"I felt my ideas were more universal. . . . I didn't believe I was fully being myself. I felt I was living behind this mask — Boozie being this mask."

Also, Young feels the rogue image was partly a creation of RCA. Surprisingly, he's not bitter at the record industry.



Steve Young has released only eight albums during a career that spans more than 20 years, all critically acclaimed and spanning a wide variety of styles.

ANY ANGER and resentment goes deeper, Young said. He was born in Georgia and raised in rural poverty where he had a "dark childhood with a lot of pain and sensitivity."

His father came and went, finally leaving the family when Young was 9. He recalls his dad as a man with some unusual ideas, one of them being a self-proclaimed atheist in the Bible belt.

In his youth, he remembers the street singers who performed in town. They sang a soul-stirring blend of gospel and blues, possessing a spirituality that has always burned at the core of Young's music.

Perhaps Young is a performer's performer simply because he doesn't walk a bridge over his past and feelings. Rather, he digs tunnels into them.

"I don't think there's an escape from anything. . . . there is no shortcuts," he said. "It still scares me, all this stuff. I can't see how it can be accepted. It's powerful."

"Sometimes, I'm reluctant to bring to the stage. I'm doing it slowly."

### SEEING THE SHOW

Who: Steve Young

Where: Birmingham Unitarian Church, 651 N. Woodward Ave., Bloomfield Hills  
Tickets are \$20 at the door but advanced tickets are recommended. Phone 540-9031 for more info.

When: Monday, Dec. 31. Show starts at 9 p.m.

## IN CONCERT

### ● FRANK ALLISON & THE ODD SOX

Frank Allison & the Odd Sox will perform New Year's Eve Monday, Dec. 31, at Club Heidelberg, 215 N. Main, Ann Arbor. For information, call 994-3552.

### ● GEORGE BEDARD AND THE KINGPINS

George Bedard and the Kingpins will perform Monday, Dec. 31, at the Blind Pig, 202 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 994-8555.

### ● NINE INCH NAILS

Nine Inch Nails will perform Monday, Dec. 31, at the Latin Quarter, 3067 E. Grand Blvd., Detroit. Tickets are \$20 in advance. For information, call 99-MUSIC.

### ● MOXXY

Moxy will perform with along with Legal Tender Monday, Dec. 31, at the Studio Lounge, Wayne Road, just south of Warren Road, Westland. For information, call 729-2540.

### ● ANITA BAKER

Anita Baker will perform Monday, Dec. 31, at the Fox Theatre in Detroit. For information, call 567-7000.

### ● THE ROMANTICS

The Romantics will perform Monday, Dec. 31, at The Ritz, 17580 Pra-

zio, Roseville. For information, call 778-8150.

### ● GOOBER AND THE PEAS

Goober and the Peas will perform Monday, Dec. 31, at Saint Andrew's Hall, 451 E. Congress, Detroit. Also performing will be the Junk Monkeys, Orange Roughies and Phun-bogg. For information, call 961-NELT.

### ● OUTSIDE OF NOWHERE

Outside of Nowhere will perform with guests, Heart Beats, Monday, Dec. 31, at Jameson's, 1812 N. Main, Royal Oak. For information, call 547-6470.

### ● DC DRIVE

DC Drive will perform New Year's Eve Monday, Dec. 31, at Key West, 24230 W. Six Mile, Detroit. For information, call 592-0900.

### ● STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

Strange Bedfellows will perform 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. Monday, Dec. 31, at Elwood Diner, Woodward Avenue, across from Cleveland, Detroit. For information, call 961-7485.

### ● HEART BEATS

Heart Beats will perform Friday and Saturday, Jan. 4-5, at Jameson's, 1812 N. Main, Royal Oak. For information, call 547-6470.



Frank Allison & the Odd Sox will perform New Year's Eve Monday, Dec. 31, at Club Heidelberg in Ann Arbor.

## CRITIC'S PICKS

Here are Cormac Wright's top 10 releases (no particular order) of 1990.

1. "Goodbye Jumbo," World Party
2. "Bosanova," Pixies
3. "Meet John Doe," John Doe
4. "Stick Together With God's Glue," Something Happens
5. "Chemistry," That Petrol Emission
6. "Vegetarians of Love," Bob Geldof
7. "I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got," Sinead O'Connor
8. "Black Sheets of Rain," Bob Moeld
9. "Singles Moments," John Hall
10. "Swagger," Blue Aeroplanes

Here are Larry O'Connor's Top-10 releases of 1990.

1. "Reading, Writing, Arithmetic," Sordas
2. "Some Friendly," Charlatans UK
3. "Lloyd Cole," Lloyd Cole
4. "To Enter Bands Had to Submit a Two-Song Tape. Out of the 157 entries, 18 finalists were selected to perform live at the Studio Lounge.
5. "One Simple Word," The Connells
6. "Goodbye Jumbo," World Party
7. "Brick by Brick," Iggy Pop
8. "Livin' on His Name is Alive
9. "From Can't to Can't," Hanaobals
10. "Riverside," Lake Bloom

Here is John Cortez's top 10 releases (no particular order) of 1990.

1. "Black Sheets of Rain," Bob Moeld
2. "Ragged Glory," Neil Young
3. "Lloyd Cole," Lloyd Cole
4. "MacDougal Blues," Kevin Kinney
5. "Bosanova," Pixies
6. "Goodbye Jumbo," World Party
7. "All Shook Down," Replacements
8. "This is Our Music," Galactic 500
9. "Stick Together With God's Glue," Something Happens
10. "Meet John Doe," John Doe

Here are Jill Hamilton's top 10 releases for 1990.

1. "Song for Another Season," David J
2. "I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got," Sinead O'Connor
3. "Southgoing Zak," Southgoing Zak
4. "Black Sheets of Rain," Bob Moeld
5. "Eye," Robyn Hitchcock
6. "Red Hot + Blue," various artists
7. "Hindu Love Gods," Hindu Love Gods
8. "Gold Afternoon Pic," The Church
9. "Stray," Astec Camera
10. "Rubiast," various artists

## Local band granted 'Whiplash' wish



By Larry O'Connor  
staff writer

A local band opening up for Motor City Madman Ted Nugent before a packed house on New Year's Eve at Cobo Arena. Wishful thinking, perhaps?

Not for Heaven's Wish. The hard rocking fivesome will provide the perfect segue for the bear-hunting, gonzo guitarist. Heaven's Wish opens for Nugent tonight in the second installment of the annual "Whiplash Bash" at Cobo. Showtime is 9 p.m.

This is not some outfit picked randomly off the street, mind you. Heaven's Wish emerged the logical choice after competing in a field of 157 groups for "Michigan's Best Rock Band Competition" sponsored by Al Nalli Music and the Studio Lounge in Westland.

To enter, bands had to submit a two-song tape. Out of the 157 entries, 18 finalists were selected to perform live at the Studio Lounge.

Heaven's Wish was one of finalists performing on successive nights in October, beating out A.Z.U.R. in the

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## REVIEWS

### IF THIS HAD BEEN AN ACTUAL EMERGENCY — The Blanks

One of the elements that made The Clash truly one of the great bands of its era was an inner-struggle of its two creators. With Mick Jones, there was a knack for writing an indelible pop song. With Joe Strummer, we had a driving political orator. Together, they were dynamite — as in the explosive, not Big Audio Dynamite.

The reason to rehash The Clash here is the same might be said for The Blanks on their latest seven-song effort "If This Had Been an Actual Emergency." Lyrically, The Blanks continually underline the class struggle that exists in today's make-a-buck, run amuck society. Musically, the band displays a willingness to put forth a melodic sound at times while not compromising on the issue at hand.

A salvo against the establishment is fired on the first note. "Be False to Your School" is a raucous twist on the old Beach Boys' chestnut.

To their credit, The Blanks don't parody the Beach Boys sound. Instead they attack the theme of the song in a virulent guitar manifesto. "They want you to be true/They want you to obey/They like the way things are/And they want to keep them that way."

### the Blanks



And political oratories can run around and become rather spastic, especially in the venom spewing "Government Shutdown." The diatribe has a lot to say but doesn't say it.

By contrast "Flying Lessons" is a metaphorical, bittersweet romp through the playground. The childlike escape is climaxed by a chiming guitar break by Steve Blitto.

"For Phil (Ochs) And Others" possesses a similar endearing melody, paying tribute to an apparent hero.

"Stray Shadows" is nothing less than intriguing. If not a bit ominous. Guitars slither on the surface while Bill Boyer unleashes some bite at the multi-dimensional talents that are amply filled in by The Blanks.

— Larry O'Connor

### O'ZONE: NOISE OF A SUB-CULTURE — various artists

This compilation was made as the sound track to a surf video called "O'Zone." The video features stuff like pictures of people surfing and interviews with famous surfing dudes. Whether or not you actually intend on seeing the video, you'll still want to give its soundtrack a listen.

The record's sound lies somewhere in between the "party tape" you'd make if you had the time and a brief listen to your local high school or college radio station.

"O'Zone" (I.R.S.) manages to mix reggae, rap and hard rock into one big, energetic romp. All of the different styles of music on this have one important thing in common — they're not made for slittin' to. Imagine a mix of the Red Hot Chili Peppers' "Punk Crises" followed by Ed Brains' "With the Quickness" and Lee-T's "Hit the Deck" and the English Beat's "Twist and Crawl." Those are just the first four songs on "O'Zone." Later, Jane's Addiction's "Standing in the Shower" comes screaming in as does Concrete Blonde's "Days and Days."

All of these songs are old news, but they sound fresh again when all put together in this particular arrangement. There are no slow songs here, so the whole mix is sort of a high-energy, breathless blur. It's, like, surfing music dude.



Other good reggae/rap stuff on the compilation are Patto Banton's "Use World (Not Three)," Manu Negra's "The Rebel Spell" and Consolidated's "Message to the People." Like we were saying, it's a weird mix of tunes, but it works.

Besides all of the righteous surf tunes, the album comes with an extra bonus — groovy fluorescent slashes of orange on the cover. Try it under a black light for maximum coolness.

All in all, "O'Zone" can be equally whether you're a surfer, would be surfer or a person who prefers the land-locked life.

— Jill Hamilton

### THE BEAUTIFUL — The Beautiful

Structurally, this band breaks all the rules. The Beautiful steer clear of the "verse, chorus, verse" song structure. Yet, they are the perfect persona of the great American garage band.

This band is born on the busy streets of New York City. Their music is somewhat of a jumble of a neo '70s revival mixture.

They are a three-piece band. This debut album consists of five of their songs. Out of the five, the one word honorable mention is called "Apart of Time." It is a slow, semi-melodic song. It sounds a little like the Rolling Stones when they try to pull off something amorous with the strident vocal of Keith Richards.

Another song called "Fine Science of Chaos" is just that, more chaotic than melodic. Their music is raw, unpolished and unstructured. But then, that is what they want it to be.

"We're not scared," says the band's guitarist/vocalist Jonathon Lacey. "We're not afraid to take risks that other people might not try because it's safe."

Lacey explained the band stays away from "4/4 hard rock time," and many times the bass will play the melody in addition to holding the right.

All this considered, it still comes across as hardly new or innovative. Lacey is the group's primary member as he plays guitar, sings



and does all the song writing. Perry Botke plays bass and the newly-added Frank Ferrer is on drums.

Upon adding Ferrer to the band, they fired their singer and manager. In one week, they bran of learning a set's worth of material to go on the road. One week? Maybe that's part of the problem.

There, but is some talent in this threesome, but the music is typical if not slightly outdated.

Although I agree with the claim that their music is loosely structured. Loose structure alone, does not a good song make.

— J.S. Hoffmann