

STREET BEATS



Detroit rocker Mitch Ryder, after making a comeback in 1983 with "Never Kick a Sleeping Dog," is in the process of trying to get signed with an American record company.

Mitch Ryder: Tuning in a comeback

By Jill Hamilton
special writer

Mitch Ryder is legendary around these parts. He's the original local boy who made good.

In the mid-1960s when America was in the throes of the British invasion, Ryder and his band, the Detroit Wheels, helped keep American rock on the charts with a string of top-10 hits like "Devil With a Blue Dress On/Good Golly Miss Molly," "Jenny Take a Ride" and "Sock It to Me—Baby!"

After Ryder decided to go solo, his career suffered until 1983 and the release of "Never Kick a Sleeping Dog," which included an infectious cover of Prince's "When You Were Mine." He's currently in the process of trying to get signed with an American record company.

In a telephone conversation, Ryder talked about his current mini-tour, his past and his thoughts on music.

What have you been up to lately?
"Well, we've had about five releases in Europe (since "Never Kick a Sleeping Dog.") We just returned from a tour there. This is our off-season right now. I've got some new material and I've been working on that."

"We don't have a deal yet. I passed out seven demos about seven months ago, and haven't heard anything yet, but that's just part of the game."

"When we did it, we all lived with mom so we could just be wild men."

— Mitch Ryder

Do you get angry radio stations play your older songs all the time but won't listen to your newer music?

"It's frustrating."

Your album "How I Spent My Vacation" was very personal. Do you think it was too far ahead of its time?
"I'm not sure. It wasn't on a major label (many of the songs dealt with sex between men). It took it was a magnificent effort."

Any plans to re-release it?
"No. It needs to be treated like a diary—something that's looked back on occasionally."

John Cougar produced "Never Kick a Sleeping Dog." Are you going to work with him again?
"John is going to be a film star. I talked to his brother, and he said that John's working a movie he's been making for years. He's also an artist of some repute now—he paints pictures. So if you want to see John, you'll have to look for him in a museum."

You rose from the Detroit local scene. It's different now.
"It seems like there are enough

clubs, but there are more bands that want to play. It's harder for a group now. When we did it, we all lived with mom so we could just be wild men. But people who need to have an income will have a really hard time trying to be a band in Detroit."

"Our economy is always different in Detroit than the national average. When the rest of the country's in a recession, we're in a depression. When the rest of the country is having good times, we're in a recession. One thing about Detroit is that it's more charitable than other places. People here are more giving, there's more reaching out. It's a marked difference from the national average. Maybe we're more familiar with how not to sell off feelings."

What are your audiences like?
"There's a good variety. A large amount of young people. They've probably heard about me from their grandparents."

What will you play at your upcoming show at the Blind Pig?
"Good stuff. Very stylish. What people would expect to hear from me, a good mix of old and

new. We don't get dressed in any particular way."

No spandex pants?
"I do own a pair, but I don't wear them. They fit, that's the important thing. We usually dress in black. The color black is a good rock'n'roll color. It conveys darkness."

What do you think of the music today?
"I like it. I listen to it on the radio every day. It's very familiar, not alien to me. What does sound alien is new age music. I like it, but it's alien. Toads croaking, the sound of waves. The people who listen to it probably work in vitamin stores and run 25 million miles a day."

Your probably are not a healthnut then?

"Well, I had to become that way. There was too much self-indulgence and obsessive behavior left over from the 60s. It took its toll on my psychology."

You're into clean living then?
"Publicly, yes."

Mitch Ryder will perform Saturday, Jan. 20, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. Show times are 8 and 11 p.m. Tickets are \$10 in advance and available at the TicketMaster outlets. To charge by phone, call 643-0000.

IN CONCERT

● SANCTUARY

Sanctuary will perform with guests, Hisspater, Monday, Jan. 21, at Key West, 24230 W. Six Mile, near Telegraph, Detroit. An all-ages show. For information, call 592-0090.

● APPLE/TRINIDAD TRIPOLI STEEL BAND

Apple will perform an all-ages show 6-9 p.m. Monday, Jan. 21, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. Trinidad Tripoli Steel Band will perform 9:30 to close. For information, call 996-8555.

● MOD

Mod will perform Tuesday, Jan. 22, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● MIKE KATON AND WILD A'S

Mike Katon and the Wild A's will perform Tuesday, Jan. 22, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● PRECIOUS METAL

Precious Metal will perform with guests Barracuda, at Key West, 24230 W. Six Mile, Detroit. Doors at 8 p.m. All-ages show. For information, call 592-0090.

● JUICE

Juice will perform Wednesday, Jan. 23, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● PONTIAC

Pontiac will perform with guests, Catbans, Wednesday, Jan. 23, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● GENERALS/STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

Generals and Strange Bedfellows will perform Thursday, Jan. 24, at 3-D Dance Club, 1815 N. Main, north of 12 Mile Road, Royal Oak. For information, call 589-3344.

● SKA NIGHT

Ska bands Goom Squad and Elch 'A' Sketch will perform Thursday, Jan. 24, at Club Heidelberg, 215 N. Main, Ann Arbor. For information, call 994-3562.

● KNAVES

Knaves will perform Thursday, Jan. 24, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● JAX MYTH/DIFFERENCE

Jax Myth will perform a no-door-charge show 6-9 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 24, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. The Difference will perform 9:30 p.m. to close. For information, call 996-8555.

● THE SHY

The Shy will perform Friday, Jan. 25, at Lib's 21, 2930 Jacob, off Jon Campus, Hamtramck. For information, call 875-6555.

● SPEAKERS CORNER

Speakers Corner will perform Friday, Jan. 25, at Cross Street Station, 311 Cross St., Ypsilanti. For information, call 485-5050.

● CULTURE SHOCK

Culture Shock will perform with guests Lashar, Friday, Jan. 25, at Club Heidelberg, 215 N. Main, Ann Arbor. For information, call 994-3562.

LOCAL

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. Tuesday on WDTM-FM 90.9.

1. Stay Here, Missionary New
2. Only a Picture, Knaves
3. My Life Is Ruined, Detroit Blues Band
4. Desperation, The Gear
5. Time Will Tell, Jimmy Bones and the Gravestones
6. Alexander Elison, Rgnar Kvaran
7. Luck in the Laughing, Hlanibals
8. Vampire's Dance, Dark Theater
9. Sad Me, Blue Stitches
10. The Cancer Song, Andy Breckman



Matt Waltraba of Plymouth will be one of artists performing in the 14th annual Ann Arbor Folk Festival Saturday, Jan. 26, at Hill Auditorium.

information, call 994-3562.

● NOIZE THAT HURTZ

Noize That Hurtz will perform with guests, Faith Healers and Culture Shock, Friday, Jan. 25, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● CANDLE MASS

Candle Mass will perform with Albeut, Butler End, Repulsion and Harma's Way, Friday, Jan. 25, at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. Doors open 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$12.50 in advance. All-ages show. For information, call 961-MELT.

● LIVING COLOUR

Living Colour will perform with Urban Dance Squad 8 p.m. Friday, Jan. 25, at Hill Auditorium, Thayer and North University streets, Ann Arbor. Reserved tickets are \$14.50 and \$17.50. For information, call 99-MUSIC.

● ARS

ARS (formerly Atlanta Rhythm Section) will perform Friday, Jan. 25, at Key West, 24230 W. Six Mile, Detroit. Doors open at 8 p.m. For information, call 592-0090.

● THE DEADBEATS

The Deadbeats will perform Friday, Jan. 25, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● TREMOR REVIEW

The Tremor Review will take place Saturday, Jan. 26, at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. Show starts at 7:30 p.m. Bands scheduled to perform: Sex Jack Run, Orange Roughies, Art Lyzak's Lucky Dogs, 3-D Invisibles, Cine-cide, Strange Bedfellows, Inside Out, Bushmasters, Happy Accidents, Cuppa Joe, Va Voem and Shooting Club. For information, call 961-MELT.

● SKINHORSE

Skinhorse will perform with guests, Wrath of Christian, Highway Convention and Toxic Shock, Saturday, Jan. 26, at Club East, 29461 John R., at the corner of 11 Mile Road, Madison Heights. For information, call 544-1298.

CUTTING EDGE

Here are 10 albums (no particular order) in heavy rotation on "The Cutting Edge," which is heard 8 p.m. to 3 a.m. nightly on CIMX-FM 88.7.

1. Vision Thing, Sisters of Mercy
2. Pills 'N' Thrills, Happy Mondays
3. Some Friendly, Charlatans UK
4. One Simple Word, The Connells
5. Hell's Kitchen, The Pogues
6. Bona Drag, Morrissey
7. Cake, Trash Can Sinatras
8. Heart-Shaped World, Chris Isaak
9. Mixed Up, The Cure
10. X, INXS

REVIEWS

STANDING LIKE SHADOWS — The Ragnar Kvaran Group

With "Standing Like Shadows," the Ragnar Kvaran Group shows the results of more than a decade of inventive music making. This band is fronted by Kvaran who writes many of the songs, sings vocals and plays the guitar.

Kvaran is a native of Ireland and also attended high school in India (he's now based in comparatively non-exotic Ann Arbor). He uses his experiences in these countries as the basis of many of his well-written songs.

His song, "Children," for example, has lyrics that manages to be at once masterful, strange and touching—quite simply, they'll blow you away. In the epic, Kvaran describes the "hills to the north" where he talks with a boy and a girl who died in a fire in the hills in 1945. "To the best of my knowledge, no one else sees them. This must have to do with the fact that I was born on that day. Something was passed along," Kvaran sings/talks.

What do they talk about? "Metaphysics is a waste of time with them, however. Gassing on about the meaning of life and death confuses them. They ask me if I go to the movies, if I like spaghetti, if I can dance. They know they're lost. I

RAGNAR KVARAN



don't think they know they're dead." With lyrics like these, you can spend some enjoyable time just reading the words without even putting the record on the turntable. But do listen to the record, because its well worth your while.

There are no obvious comparisons to other groups on the album. Instead, little wisps of recognizable influences drift in and out of the songs. Sometimes you hear a little bit of Tom Petty, there's parts that sound something like Neil Young and even some Stan Hodge (of Wall of Voodoo fame). The three different guitar players guarantee some fancy playing.

Vocals are shared by Kvaran, Kurt Browne and Terry Vogel, so the songs sound different depending on who's singing. If you don't like one cut, listen to the next because it's sure to sound different.

It all adds up to an eclectic, intensely creative mix.

— Jill Hamilton

NOWHERE — Ride

Ride is somewhat of a rock'n'roll retrospective, grasping at those fuzzy psychedelic guitar melodies of the 1960s and dressing it up in a 1990s perspective (suits belt buttons and platform shoes, we hope).

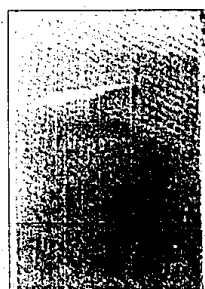
Amid their contemporaries Stones, Beatles, UK and Inspiral Carpets, Ride might be the artist of the bunch.

Such a conclusion can easily be drawn from the fact the band was formed in British Art School, a place where the Rolling Stones and the Kinks were initially launched. A curd sordid legend to "Nowhere" (Sire) puts this beyond the scope of guilt by association.

Let's say Ride's music is a tad impressionistic. Mark Gardener's vocals and guitars swirl in grand strokes designed to be mind altering as well as engaging. In essence, Ride tries to capture the moment on musical canvas.

The vibe is there, man! Dig? Body, mind and spirit are working as one, even if Gardener is left repeating nonsensically the word "paralyzed" to numbing lengths in one number. Peace, cool daddy!

Of course, aimless lyrics are only part of the equation. Numbers on "Nowhere" are also about with protruded guitar lines that are dizzying and dazzling in their pinnacles. At their worst, Ride executes what



can be described as guitar masturbation.

The extremes of this are borne out in the song "Dreams Burn Down." A gorgeous, cascading guitar melody is rudely crashed into by the worst Sonic Youth feedback drone heard this side of the Holland Tunnel. Trying to merge the past with the future apparently has its drawbacks.

Oh, and yes, the touch of the violin at the end of "Vapour Trail" further enhances the image of these moody Brits as artists.

A tad cynical? This latest parade of musical archivists have become as wearisome as an unsightly bunch of nose hairs. They need to be clipped.

Larry O'Connor

REVERBERATION — Echo & The Bunnymen

With a new lineup, some "exotic" musical instruments and more than a touch of neo-psychedelia, Echo & The Bunnymen has put together its first album since frontman Ian McCulloch left the band to pursue a solo career.

"Reverberation" is an interesting, though lightweight, effort. The album's lyrics are a well-intentioned attempt at continuing in the McCulloch vein—dark, violent, utterly scornful of society's destructive, materialistic side.

Consider these lines from "Thick Skinned World": "A thick-skinned world will feign concern for reasons we have yet to learn. Preserve the world for baby's sake, for baby must accumulate."

Missing, however, are the literary references, the conviction and the haunted aura of old-time Bunnymen gems. Newcomer Noel Burke does a good job technically on vocals, but somehow lacks passion, as when he



takes on wife-abusing lager louts in "King of Your Castle," "King Rat," god of the barstool, hold your court, / So self-centered, so deluded, so self-taught."

Missing, too, is the desperate, driving Bunnymen sound—crashing guitars and drums that build to a climax. Instead, the swirls of the melotron and the farfisa organ match those of the reflecting ink on the cassette's cover and the star—prominent on several songs—provides a definite late Beatles feel.

"Reverberation," dedicated to the late Pete Dinklage—the band's original (human) drummer—is a worthwhile post-McCulloch effort but will probably disappoint hard-core Bunnymen fans.

— Matt Jachman