

STREET BEATS



The Venus Beads, which emerged from musical obscurity with its first release, "Transfixed," is riding the same hard rocking, sonic vibe on its latest release, "Incession."

Venus Beads press on regardless

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

Call Venus Beads many things, but vain wouldn't be one of them.

"It's really important not to pay too much attention to your press," said singer and guitarist Robert Jones, whose band is releasing its latest LP "Incession" on Emereo. "The worst mistake you can make is to believe your own press."

"You should try to please yourself first. If you don't like what you're doing, you're going to become bored with it."

Such cautious talk is understandable. The Venus Beads have emerged from obscurity R.F.D., posting rave reviews with their first release "Transfixed."

The fickle English press devoured the EP and spewed out complimentary lines like "Patriot missiles." "Sounds" picked the four-track effort as "Single of the Week" and N.M.E. lauded the English quartet as a Top-30 pick.

For four guys from Stoke-on-Trent who only cut a few demos beforehand, such accolades could provide helium for some inflated heads. Jones sounds wary of the instant recognition.

After all, the love 'em and lynch 'em English press has been known to show a critical side to a young band.

Whatever is written or spoken about them, though, the Venus Beads are unphased. "Incession" rides the same hard rocking, sonic vibe provided on "Transfixed."

REFRESHINGLY, the Venus Beads achieve their status as an explosive guitar band without pandering to the neo-psychedelia revival or the dance-music craze sweeping England. There it's not one associated with one of those on the metallic heap either. "Incession" certainly doesn't break new ground in the area of guitar rock. But what the LP lacks in versatility is more than made up with overall verve.

"A lot of bands are trying to incorporate the dance thing into their music," Jones said. "Bands like Charlatans UK, Stone Roses and Inspiral Carpets have been able to do that successfully. I think the smaller ones that are trying to do it are floundering a bit. I don't know why actually."

"I think (rock'n'roll) is the most effective way to be emotional. Dance music doesn't really do that."

That was some wisdom Jones learned from the punk movement of the late '70s. Bands like the Sex Pistols, the Stranglers, the Ramones and Biggie provided the initial inspiration for Jones. Then the second punk wave arrived with the Dead Kennedys and Husker Du after that.

The Venus Beads hardly embrace the nihilism many punk outfits did. Instead, the Beads' lyrics tend to be more introspective.

"I THINK some people had a different idea of the whole (punk) thing really," Jones said. "A lot of people focused on the negative attitude type of bands. There were creative bands as well."

The creative process for Venus Beads is bit peculiar. Jones said drummer Mark Hassall writes the music using an acoustic guitar. He then hums the finished product to Jones to write lyrics.

"Incession" also marks the return of former House of Love guitarist, Terry Vickers, as producer. Vickers provided the right attitude in the studio for a band that is rather young (average age is 21), and perhaps a little unsure of itself.

"Terry, both times, has been really positive," Jones said. "For me, it's his personality as well as his techniques. He's just so positive and enthusiastic. Once he starts going, he's hard to stop."

"Incession" will be released April 30 on Emereo.

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IN CONCERT

WEATHERVANES

The Weather Vanes will perform Monday, April 8, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

PHIL LABLEY & PARADISE VALLEY JAZZ BAND

Phil Labley & the Paradise Valley Jazz Band will perform Monday, April 8, at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, across from Wayne State University, Detroit. For information, call 832-2355.

STATE OF EMERGENCY

State of Emergency will perform Tuesday, April 9, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

ASSEMBLY REQUIRED

Assembly Required will perform Tuesday, April 9, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

JOHN D. LAMB

John D. Lamb will perform Tuesday, April 9, at Key West, 614 S. Main, west of Telegraph, Detroit. For information, call 552-0090.

DEE-LITE

Dee-Lite will perform Monday through Wednesday, April 8-10, at Industry, 15 S. Saginaw, Pontiac. For information, call 334-1988.

CHISEL BROS.

Chisel Bros. will perform Tuesday, April 9, at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, across from WSU, Detroit. For information, call 832-2355.

BOB CANTU AND HIS BIG DEAL BAND

Bob Cantu and his Big Deal Band will perform Wednesday, April 10, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

TRINIDAD TRIPOLI STEEL BAND

Trinidad Tripoli Steel Band will perform Wednesday, April 10, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

SCORPIONS

Scorpions will perform with guests, Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. Thursday, April 11, at The Palace in Auburn Hills. Tickets are \$20. For information, call 377-0100.

PRIMAL SHELLS

Primal Shells will perform with guests, Elch-A-Sketch, Thursday, April 11, at Club Heidelberg, 215 N. Main, Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$4. For information, call 994-3562.

YUDD HIPPIES

Vudu Hippies will perform with guests, Weather Vanes, Thursday, April 11, at Paycheck's Lounge, 2932 Caniff, off Jos Campau, Hamtramck. For information, call 874-0254.

BIG DAVE & THE ULTRASOUNDS/TRACEY SCIENCE

Big Dave & the Ultrasounds will perform 6:30 p.m. Thursday, April 11, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. Tracey Science will perform 9:30 p.m. to close. For information, call 996-8555.

BOP (HARVEY)

Bop (Harvey) will perform Thursday, April 11, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

RALPH & ALAN FRANKLIN & POETS

Ralph & Alan Franklin & Poets will perform in a benefit for VOW (victims of war) Thursday, April 11, at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, across from WSU, Detroit. For information, call 832-2355.

SKINHORSE

Skinhorse will perform with Tonic at Syndrome Thursday, April 11, at 30 Club, 1815 N. Main, north of 12 Mile, Royal Oak. For information, call 589-2344.

FRONT 242

Front 242 will perform Friday, April 12, at the Latin Quarter, 3047 E. Grand, Detroit. Tickets are \$16.50 in advance. For information, call 573-3777.

HARMS WAY

Harms Way will perform with guests, Thursday, Friday, April 12, at Club Heidelberg, 215 N. Main, Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$4. For information, call 994-3562.



Dee-Lite will perform Monday through Wednesday, April 8-10, at Industry in Pontiac.

CUTTING EDGE

Here are 10 albums receiving air play on "The Cutting Edge," which is heard 7 p.m. to 3 a.m. nights on CIMX-FM 88.7.

1. "School of Fish," School of Fish
2. "Real Life," Simple Minds
3. "Out of Time," R.E.M.
4. "International," Material Issue
5. "Tame Yourself," Raw Youth
6. "MCMXCAD," Daigema
7. "Doubt," Jesus Jones
8. "Unreal World," The Godfathers
9. "Coming Down," Daniel Ash
10. "They Eat Their Young," They Eat Their Young



Juanita McCray will perform Friday, April 12, at The Attic in Hamtramck.

BURNING CIRCLE

Burning Circle, featuring Silver Bullet member Drew Abbott, will perform Friday, April 12, at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, across from WSU, Detroit. For information, call 832-2355.

GRADY HAZY

Grady Hazy will perform with Trustfund and Weeping Rachel Friday, April 12, at Paycheck's Lounge, 2932 Caniff, off Jos Campau, Hamtramck. For information, call 874-0254.

MASS REVOLUTION

Mass Revolution will perform with guests, Hungry So Angry, Friday, April 12, at Finney's Pub, 3965 Woodward, near Alexandrine, Detroit. For information, call 831-8076.

URBATIONS

Urbations will perform Friday, April 12, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

TANJENT IMAGE

Tangent Image will perform Friday, April 12, at Lili's, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck. For information, call 875-5555.

TRACEY LEE & THE LEONARDS

Tracey Lee & the Leonards will perform Friday, April 12, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

JAMES WAILIN BLUES BAND

James Wailin Blues Band will perform Friday and Saturday, April 12-13, at Moby Dicks, 5452 Schaefer, Dearborn. For information, call 361-3650.

ALL STAR JAZZ BAND

The Detroit All Star Jazz Band will perform Friday and Saturday, April 12-13, at Bird of Paradise, 307 S. Ashley, Ann Arbor. For information, call 662-8510.

TURTLE ISLAND STRING QUARTET

Turtle Island String Quartet will perform Friday, April 12, at the Majestic Theatre, 4140 Woodward, near Warren Avenue, Detroit. For information, call 813-9700.

JUANITA MCCRAY

Juanita McCray will perform Friday, April 12, at The Attic, 11667 Jos Campau, Hamtramck. For information, call 265-4194.

LUCKY DOGS

Lucky Dogs, Trash Beats and Jimmy Bones & the Grave robbers will perform Friday, April 12, at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, across from WSU, Detroit. For information, call 832-2355.

INSIDE OUT

Inside Out will perform with guests, The Eternities, Saturday, April 13, at Paycheck's Lounge, 2932 Caniff, off Jos Campau, Hamtramck. For information, call 874-0254.

COMMUNITY CONCERT

Earth Community Concert and Coffee House will take place 7:30 p.m. to 2 a.m. Friday, April 12, at the Birmingham Unitarian Church, 651 Woodward, north of Low Pine Road. Performers include Michael Garrett, Atomic Veteran, Charlotte Garner with Cindy Lowrie, acoustic music, Foady Colod, electric folk and psycho rock, Gesture, original instrumental rock, Last Happy Band, rock'n'roll, Harbed Wire Playpen, hardcore rock and poetry. The show is a benefit for Organization for the Advancement of Environmental Health. Admission is \$5. For information, call 541-8852.

STEVE GORNALL & THE BLUE COLLAR BAND

Steve Gornall & the Blue Collar Band will perform Friday and Saturday, April 12-13, at the Other End Lounge, 5855 Monroe, Taylor. For information, call 278-5340.

JR. WELLS

Jr. Wells will perform with The Motor City Blues Project Saturday, April 13, at the Majestic Theatre, 4140 Woodward, near Warren Road, Detroit. For information, call 833-9700.

GANGSTER FUN

Gangster Fun will perform Saturday, April 13, at Saint Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. For information, call 961-MELT.

LOCAL

Here are the Top-10 songs on "Detroit Music Scene," which is heard 4-5 p.m. Sundays on WDTT-FM 90.9.

1. "Can't Go On," Generals
2. "Dead Nuts," Grins
3. "All Fall Down," Park the Karma
4. "The Seed," David Brian
5. "Everyday is a Holiday," Dave Rave
6. "Bag Full of Bones," Grady Hazy
7. "Good Drove Up," Son of Sam
8. "Serenity," Thirty Forest Animals
9. "Children," Ragnar Kavaras
10. "She Said," In Antenna

REVIEWS

OUT OF TIME

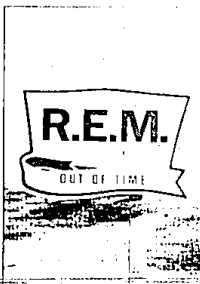
— R.E.M.

To listen to all the pre-release hype, one would've thought R.E.M. had been reincarnated as a polka band. But the so-predicted major change in direction never transpires on "Out of Time," the Athens, Ga. outfit's latest release on Warner Bros.

What R.E.M. has done, though, is produce an album that has brought down the barriers and let the masses in on what has been a musical journey for members only until, this point, gone, or at least toned down, are the murmurs, vague political posturing and repellent guitar hints. Those have been replaced by some gorgeous pop melodies. This is R.E.M.'s finest hour.

There almost seems to be a newfound euphoria in the R.E.M. camp, buoyed by some of Peter Dinklage's most ardent fan letters (and mandolins) in recent memory and Michael Stipe's singing clearly and forcefully. While not veering away from guitar-languid sound, these songs embody a certain vitality.

Part of the reason is due to a new cast. From the onset, things get a bit funky with "Radio Song" and its rap courtesy of KRS. "Shiny Happy Peo-



ple" features one of three Kate Pierson vocal duets, "Happy People" is as close to the Beatles as it gets, soaring to unbelievable lengths and bearing fruit of R.E.M.'s refinement of their pop sensibilities. R.E.M. member Mike Mills even sings on a couple of the numbers.

"Losing My Religion" reveals Stipe inflecting some genuine confusion and disillusionment without resorting to proselytizing. Likewise, "Low" in its beatnik rhythm is on a continual downward spiral and still finds its own crescendo because of Stipe's vocals.

R.E.M. has found its renewal in simplicity. If that's such a radical change, then let there be revolution. — Larry O'Connor

LOOK IN YOUR MIND

— The Incurables

If you suffer from lack of rock and roll injections, the Incurables have a cure for you — their new tape, "Look in Your Mind." The Incurables are a local outfit that specializes in straightforward rock and roll.

The song "Seventeen" kicks off the second side of the tape in the grand tradition of rock and roll. Singing the love blues about a young woman.

In this particular song, the woman in question is, of course, a 17-year-old. Lyrics like "She's just a child, but you know she drives me wild. I'm not going to break away from creative ground, but the song is fun enough so it doesn't seem to really matter."

The second song, "I Don't Know," also sounds pretty retro — but in this case more along the lines of the Zombies. The haunting intro alone makes the song worthwhile. It's a weird mixture of a heartbeats sound, muted, faraway vocals and the like. The vocals on this tune are also notable, plus they're complemented with some fine, barely noticeable vocal harmonies.

"One Nite" begins the first side of the album. It also deals with the problem of getting the girl. It begins with a guy lusting after said girl. Then the girl takes the guy's hand and it appears that things might



work out well.

But it wouldn't be a rock and roll song if getting the girl were that easy, so the girl decides to walk away and the guy is left singing his mournful ode. Too bad. Anyway, lithe guitar flourishes and a touch of the Byrds to the sad tale.

"If She Knew" follows the same guy just isn't scoring with the babes theme. In this case, though, the narrator seems to have had enough of trying to decipher the man and woman problem. He concludes, "Love Stinks," appropriately enough, for someone who has been so unlucky with the chicks.

Luckily for the listener, the music of the Incurables makes their often pretty silly lyrics forgettable. — Jill Hamilton