

Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/953-2105



IF-6BXO5B

Thursday, June 20, 1991 O&E



Senators and the presidential campaign committee surround the vice-presidential candidate, played by Sam Jungerman, in "Of Thee I Sing" through Saturday, July 20, at the Henry Ford Museum Theatre in Dearborn. Cast members include Stephen Kiersey (left), John Riley, Rick Hudson of West Bloomfield, Gary Sturm of Livonia and Bill Rumley. For more information, call 271-1620.

upcoming things to do

- MEADOW BROOK**
 Alternative rock musician Morrissey, former Smith's lead singer, and Phranc will open Meadow Brook Music Festival's third week at 8 p.m. Wednesday, June 26, at Baldwin Pavilion on the Oakland University campus in Rochester Hills. (Tickets: \$27.50, \$27 and \$12.50) Mr. Dressup, Canadian television star, will appear with puppets Casey and Finnegan in a children's concert at 11 a.m. Saturday, June 29. This is Casey and Finnegan's farewell tour because puppeteer Judith Lawrence is retiring. (Tickets: \$7, \$9 and \$5.) Ticket information and 1991 season brochures are available by calling the Meadow Brook box office at 377-2010.
- PALACE SUMMERFEST**
 The Palace's south parking lot will be transformed into a giant festival featuring non-stop grandstand entertainment, a midway, the Royal Hanneford Circus and Thrill Show, laser and fireworks displays, and Detroit Pistons Rookie League games, for the first Summerfest, Tuesday-Sunday, July 16-21, in Auburn Hills. Summerfest features a single daily admission price of \$13, for parking, all shows, unlimited rides and attractions. Grandstand entertainment includes pop and rock favorites HEO Speedwagon, Air Supply, Wings, Mr. Big, Rhythm Corps, the Commodores, Mitch Ryder, and Edgar Winter; country stars Vince Gill, Ronnie McDowell, Gene Watson.

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Little Green Men

Offbeat band spaced out on jazz

By Stewart Francke
Special writer

YOU KNOW it's not your average musical act that lands a generous profile in *Omní*, a magazine largely devoted to science as its subject. Yet that's just where Little Green Men, a Minneapolis avant garde jazz group with metro-Detroit ties, wound up last December.

Little Green Men was formed in 1988 by former Farmington Hills resident Steve Sklar and his wife Johanna Morrow. Its two cassettes — "Jazz from Mars" and "Out of This World" — are self-defining in relation to the band's music.

By combining its love of astronomy and cosmic awareness with the wild improvisation of traditional jazz, Sklar and Morrow, together with band mates Jason Orbit, Marting Stovall and John Lavin, hope to do more than merely gain an audience. "Music has a more mystical tradition for us," Sklar says. "The music that you play has a profound effect on people by slightly altering the vibration of their energy fields. We're out to stimulate people, not lull them."

The son of Mr. and Mrs. William Sklar of Farmington Hills is a graduate of North Farmington High School. After initially majoring in music at Wayne State University in Detroit, Sklar left for Minnesota disillusioned that "I'd be spending three years memorizing Bach chorales before getting to what I wanted to do."

HIS PERSONAL search ultimately led him to Morrow, whom he met through a musical want ad, and Indian music, an influence which winds noticeably through the music of Little Green Men. "I'm primarily attracted to the Northern Indian, or Hindustani, school of music," Sklar explains. "It has a great appeal to me because it starts very subtly melodically. It then has a great organic growth process to it. You really get to explore the rhythmic and melodic possibilities. Whereas in Western symphony music, melodic development is sacrificed greatly. We take a lot of things from both the East and West — and beyond."

The "beyond" is what places Little Green Men outside of the John Cage/Steve Reich school of the experimental avant garde. In performance, Little Green Men combines its music



Former Farmington Hills resident Steve Sklar is the force behind Little Green Men.

'The music that you play has a profound effect on people by slightly altering the vibration of their energy fields.'

— Steve Sklar musician

with photographic displays of natural and astronomical images.

While its pure improvisational tracks can be unending and indulgent, its prearranged material, such as "Nihil Chandra," is beautifully dynamic: Morrow's flute or ocarina chases Sklar's chorused electric guitar, splintered percussion beds propel Orbit's fretless bass lines; the melodies are abstract and ethereal. This is truly how space would sound.

Sklar is currently working on a new piece based on the chordal

chanting of Tibetan Buddhist monks. "It's an interesting musical technique," he says. "They'll do very simple rhythmic chants that blend in a way that generates all of these harmonics."

Though it is difficult to get the chordal chanting of Tibetan monks on the Billboard Hot 100, Little Green Men has enjoyed substantial recognition. It was the 1989 winners of the Minnesota Music Award for best jazz recording, and recently provided the soundtrack for a visual

performance by Galactic artist Shawn Paris at the Museum of New Art in Miami.

ITS NEW direction may well follow the songwriting talents of Sklar's wife Morrow. While her husband is "more classically trained," she did first develop her skill at Interlochen in Northern Michigan. Sklar says, "We have enough material together for our next three releases. It's a combination of prearranged and improvisational material. There are also several lovely vocal tunes featuring Johanna."

Yet for now, the aspirations of Little Green Men is simple — to continue combining the experimental groundworks of Miles Davis and John Coltrane with the creation of its own culture clashing "space jazz." "I don't expect wealth and major fame," Sklar says, "but we'd like to travel, play festivals, see the world — take our music out there and see how people respond to it."

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