

## STREET BEATS

## Reggae's pulse has strong beat

By Larry O'Connor  
staff writer

Steel Pulse's David Hinds gets a kick out of telling the story.

A mother takes her daughter to a reggae show featuring Steel Pulse. Daughter's never heard of the band or reggae music for that matter.

After the show, Hinds meets mother and daughter after the concert.

"She says 'I don't like reggae, but I like you!'" said Hinds in a telephone interview. "That's enough for me."

The anecdote, though, sums up the crossover appeal Steel Pulse has garnered since emerging from working class Birmingham, England in the mid-70s. But at what price?

Like recently, Steel Pulse enlisted the services of Stephen Bray to produce a one cut, "Can't Get You (Out of My System)," on the band's latest MCA release "Victims."

Really now, Stephen Bray? This is the producer who has been known to collaborate in the musical neighborhood of Madonna and Breakfast Club.

Then there is the seemingly endless reign of techno gadgetry on "Victims," which veers away from a traditional reggae aesthetic that embraces a purity of being Caribbean roots music.

Elements of pop, hip-hop, rock and rap even stream their way into the group's eighth release. While critics might contend this has rendered some of the band's political overtures benign, Steel Pulse has undeniably bridged gaps to the realm of contemporary pop music only few reggae groups have dared tried.

Guest appearances and high-tech tendencies aside, Steel Pulse is not minus heart and soul. The band's musical perspective is just different.

FORMED BY keyboardist and vocalist Selwyn Brown and Hinds, Steel Pulse found an immediate following on the English punk circuit buoyed by the reggae explosion that would also filter its way into the music of The Clash and The Police.

"Other reggae bands would be listening to other reggae tracks and other reggae bands. We were listening to things that other reggae outfits wouldn't even have in their house. I remember coming home from school and listening to people like Jimi Hendrix and the Climax Blues Band."

Steel Pulse released their first album in 1978, "Handsworth Revolution," named after the district the band is from in Birmingham, England. The LP was hybrid of music influences from the '70s, including funk.

The band continued to evolve, releasing a spate of albums while Hinds continually grappled with the political realism in his lyrics. His vision doesn't only skim the periphery, continuing to write songs like "Free the Land" about



Selwyn Brown (left), David Hinds, Phonzon Martin and Steve Nesbitt believe Steel Pulse's latest MCA release, "Victims," will find an audience beyond the traditional listeners of reggae.

## SEEING THE SHOW

**What:** "Ram Slam Dub Jam" featuring Steel Pulse, Special Bait, Shelly Thunder and Bop (Harvey).

**When:** Monday, July 22, 6 p.m.

**Where:** Meadow Brook Music Festival in Rochester, Pavilion seats are \$22.50. Lawn is \$12.50. Call 99-MUSIC.

apartheid in South Africa while addressing senseless violence in the techno-synth rhythms of "Gang Warfare."

In an inner-city rap comes the lyrics, "Cold

blooded killings don't make no sense to me! We should be civilized and save humanity. Why don't you wake up from your sleep and from your slumber! We've got to stop this madness from taking over."

"I don't sit down and try to construct a song about an issue just because of an interview. I might have heard," Hinds said. "I had to have a theme on something I've witnessed or experienced so I have enough information so I know what I'm talking about."

SUCIT POLITICAL commentary helped earn the band's 1985 Elektra release "Babylon, The Bandit" a Grammy while "Earth Crises" released in 1984 was nominated for the music award. By then, though, Steel Pulse had already turned high-tech in the studio while maintaining the energy to use it through.

"You can't deny it's Steel Pulse," Hinds said.

## SEEING THE SHOW

**Who:** Red C

**When:** Wednesday, July 24

**Where:** Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. Call 832-2355

generating into cockiness. This self-determination reveals itself in declarative statements and unbridled attention to detail in Diaz and Calloway's songwriting.

And though their message was never of the proselytizing variety, Red C members Calloway and Diaz are increasingly more vague about the role their Christianity has in the total mix.

"It's just because there wasn't a

whole lot going on out there," Diaz said. "My personal feeling is if you want to reach the masses with a message, just don't direct it to the inner group."

Added Calloway to the fog. "There has been some rethinking of the philosophy."

Adjustments are not limited to philosophy, however. Guido Milligan of Detroit joined Red C as the band's new bass player in January, replacing Jeff Hoffer. Milligan played for a brief period with Norma Jean Bell's band and was the regular bassist for Blue Room along with doing some session work.

MILLIGAN'S STYLE reveals a hint of a jazz influence, but sounds right at home with Red C's pop-rock offerings.

"I saw incredible songwriting," Milligan said. "That's what I felt

Please turn to Page 4

## IN CONCERT

• **REGGAE BILL**  
Monday, July 22 — Steel Pulse, Special Bait, Shelly Thunder and Bop (Harvey) will perform 6 p.m. at Meadow Brook Music Festival, Oakland University, Rochester. Pavilion seats are \$22.50; lawn is \$12.50. For information, call 99-MUSIC.

• **VINX**  
Monday, July 22 — Vinx will perform at the Magic Bag Theatre, 22918 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. For information, call 544-3030.

• **THE BLUE FIELDS**  
Monday, July 22 — The Blue Fields will perform at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

• **PARADISE VALLEY JAZZ JAM**  
Monday, July 22 — Paradise Valley Jazz Jam will take place at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. For information, call 832-2355.

• **THREE DOG NIGHT AND STEPPENWOLF**  
Tuesday, July 23 — Three Dog Night and John Kay and Steppenwolf will perform with guest, Dave Mason, 8 p.m. at The Pine Knob Music Theatre in Clarkston. Tickets are \$20.50 pavilion, \$17.50 lawn. For information, call 377-8200.

• **INCURABLES**  
Tuesday, July 23 — The Incubables will perform at Key West, Six Mile Road, just west of Telegraph. The band also performs Friday, July 26, at Houser's Keyboard Lounge, Wayne Road, just south of Palmer Road, Westland. For information, call 721-1622.

• **FIRST LIGHT**  
Tuesday and Wednesday, July 23-24 — First Light will perform at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

• **FAITH HEALERS**  
Wednesday, July 24 — Faith Healers will perform at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

• **RED C**  
Wednesday, July 24 — Red C will perform at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. For information, call 832-2355.

• **OROBOROS**  
Thursday, July 25 — Oroboros will perform at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

• **SUN MESSENGERS**  
Thursday, July 25 — Sun Messengers will perform at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

• **VOODOO CHILI**  
Thursday, July 25 — Voodoo Chili will perform with guests, Strange Bedfellows, at 3D, 1815 N. Main, Royal Oak. For information, call 589-3344.

• **THE RIGHTeous BROTHERS**  
Thursday, July 25 — The Righteous Brothers will perform with guests, Gary Puckett, at Meadow Brook Music Festival in Rochester. For information, call 377-8200.

• **THE SELECTER**  
Thursday, July 25 — The Selecter will perform with guest, Gangster Fun and Tony West, Berkeley, at Saint Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. For information, call 961-MELT.

• **THE PALADINS WITH DAVE ALVIN**  
Thursday, July 25 — The Paladins featuring Dave Alvin, will perform at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. For information, call 832-2355.

• **REGULAR BOYS**  
Friday, July 26 — Regular Boys will perform at Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, Dearborn. For information, call 846-1920.

• **BOP HARVEY**  
Friday, July 26 — Bop Harvey will perform at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

• **TOMMIES**  
Friday, July 26 — Tommies will perform with guests, October, at the Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Canfield, off I-75.

• **JIMMY BUFFETT**  
Friday and Saturday, July 26-27 — Jimmy Buffett will perform with guests, Fingers Taylor and the Ladyfingers. Tickets are 8 p.m. at The Pine Knob Music Theatre in Clarkston. Tickets are \$27.50 pavilion and \$20.50 lawn. For information, call 377-8200.

• **THE GENERALS**  
Friday, July 26 — The Generals will perform at Psyche's Lounge, 2332 Canfield, Hamtramck. For information, call 874-0254.

• **JEANNE & THE DREAMS**  
Friday, July 26 — Jeanne & The Dreams will perform at Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

• **GEORGE BEDARD AND THE KINGPINS**  
Friday, July 26 — George Bedard and the Kingpins will perform at Alvin's.

• **WOLVES AT MY DOOR** Call Heroes  
2 "Hades" Entertainment, GUYON  
3 "Black-Eyed Susan," Imitation of Life  
4 "Innocence Lost," Chain Reaction  
5 "Live at the Hamtramck Pub," various artists  
6 "Mary Lou," The Grins  
7 "Rumors of Noses," Country Bob and the Bloodfarmers  
8 "When Paris Rained," Dave Rave  
9 "Serenity," Thirsty Forest Animals  
10 "Work Poisons the Mind," The Gear



Dave Alvin, member of the L.A. rockabilly outfit The Blasters, joins forces The Paladins for a show Thursday, July 25, at Alvin's.

5756 Cass, Detroit. For information, call 832-2355.

• **R.H. FACTOR**  
Friday, July 26 — R.H. Factor will perform on the Bobbi Moonlight Cruise. The boat departs 11 p.m. and returns 1 a.m. For information, call 843-0700 or 843-8800.

• **CHISEL BROTHERS**  
Friday and Saturday, July 26-27 — Chisel Brothers will perform at Tru's Pub, 38 S. Main, Clawson. For information, call 435-4755.

• **LAUGHING HYENAS**  
Friday, July 26 — Laughing Hyenas and Unrune will perform at Club Heidelberg, 215 N. Main, Ann Arbor. For information, call 994-3562.

• **KING MISSILE**  
Friday, July 26 — King Missile will perform with guests, Mopsy Crash, at Majestic Theatre, 4140 Woodward. Ticket prices are \$8.50 in advance and \$10 at the door. For information, call 833-9700.

• **BILL HEID TRIO**  
Friday and Saturday, July 26-27 — Bill Heid Trio will perform at the Bird of Paradise, 207 S. Ashley, Ann Arbor. For information, call 662-8310.

• **CODE BLUE**  
Friday, July 26 — Code Blue will perform at Moby Dick's, 5452 Schaefer, north of Michigan Avenue, Dearborn. For information, call 581-3650.

• **WEATHER VANCES**  
Friday, July 26 — Weather Vances will perform at the Cross Street Station, 511 W. Cross, Ypsilanti. For information, call 485-5050.

• **HUNTUNES**  
Friday, July 26 — Huntunes will perform at Lil's 21, 2630 Jacob, off Jos Campus, Hamtramck. For information, call 875-5555.

• **MISSIONARY STEW**  
Saturday, July 27 — Missionary Stew will perform with guests, Funhouse, at Exit Club, 2461 John R, Madison Heights. For information, call 544-1298.

• **FRANK ALLISON AND THE ODD SOX**  
Saturday, July 27 — Frank Allison and the Odd Sox will perform at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 994-3562.

• **DAVE KOZ WITH PHIL PERRY**  
Saturday, July 27 — Dave Koz with Phil Perry will perform at The Magic Bag Theatre, 22918 Woodward, Ferndale. Tickets are \$12.50 theatre seats, \$15 for cabaret. For information, call 544-3030.

• **PINETOP PERKINS**  
Saturday, July 27 — Pinetop Perkins, veteran member of the Muddy Waters Band, will perform at Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, north of Michigan Avenue, Dearborn. For information, call 846-1920.

• **UNCLE JESSIE WHITE**  
Saturday, July 27 — Uncle Jessie White will perform at the Attic Bar, 1467 Jos Campus, Hamtramck. For information, call 365-0194.

• **TRINIDAD TRIPOLI STEEL BAND**  
Saturday, July 27 — Trinidad Tripoli Steel Band will perform at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

• **JOHNNY 'YARD DOG' JONES**  
Saturday, July 27 — Johnny 'Yard Dog' Jones will perform at Moby Dick's, 5452 Schaefer, Dearborn. For information, call 581-3650.

• **BIG CHIEF**  
Saturday, July 27 — Big Chief will perform with guests, G.I.S.S. and Slot, at Saint Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. For information, call 961-MELT.

• **ION'S ESCORT**  
Saturday, July 27 — Ion's Escort will perform at Alvin's.

Please turn to Page 4

## CUTTING EDGE

Here are 10 releases in power rotation on CIMM-FM's "The Cutting Edge."

- 1 "Electronic," Electronic
- 2 "Vexx," Sundae, Julian Cope
- 3 "Sustained," Sussan & the Band
- 4 "Out of Time," R.E.M.
- 5 "Black-Eyed Susan," The Grins
- 6 "Mighty Like the River," Elvis Costello
- 7 "The La's," The La's
- 8 "Real Life," Simple Minds
- 9 "The Reality of My," Fishbone
- 10 "Life's Too Short," Marshall Crenshaw

## REVIEWS

ELECTRONIC  
— Electronic

This by all intents should be new music's finest hour. The pairing of former Smiths' guitarist Johnny Marr with New Order's Bernard Sumner is perhaps one of the most anticipated collaborations of recent memory.

With Marr there is the breadth of exploding guitar melodies that provided the hallmark of The Smiths' sound. Sumner is the curator of a seemingly endless stream of infectious techno-dance rhythms during "the past" decade with New Order. What could go wrong?

In this case nothing. Expectations are met and exceeded. Electronic's self-titled debut LP on Warner Bros. is a fresh, buoyant collection of songs that manages to explore the new music's neither regions without degenerating into fragmented bombast.

Quite the contrary, Marr and Sumner's work remains remarkably contained within the boundaries of a pop number.

The sum of this can be heard in "Get the Message," the best cut off the release. Marr's accelerated acoustical strumming opens the number with the renewed spirit of a rising sun. The synth oozes in eerie cadence with the plaintive vocals, sprightly punctuated with an indelible piano.



Marr and Sumner's pop craftsmanship reveals itself well in songs like "Tighten Up" and "Patience of a Saint," while numbers such as "Soviet" offer technocratic exploratory surgery at its finest.

In "Tighten Up," Smith's fans will be appalled as the guitarist displays his guitar brilliance on this number that bears the closest resemblance to a Morrissey-Marr collaboration.

Traditional naysayers of the heartless, cold techno-dance compositions could be turned off by Electronic only after a cursory listen. It's their loss. Repeated spins will continually turn up the most peculiar subtleties, be it the ear-catching whistling on "Idiot Country" and the barely audible guitar echo on "Some Distant Memory."

In the final tally, one gets the feeling Marr and Sumner merely scratch the surface here, which will make Electronic's next effort even more fulfilling.

— Larry O'Connor

MELT  
— Straightjacket Fits

For those of the curious nature, Straightjacket Fits are a hard band not to like. Vocals barely hover above a cascading guitar glare and there's plenty of quirks and nuances designed to keep one's interest throughout. They even profess their pop intentions up front on "Melt" (Arista).

So, in that sense, Straightjacket Fits are quite in line with their fellow New Zealand countrymen The Chills. Ah, but if that were the only nail to hang this four-piece band's music on.

By their own doing, Straightjacket Fits delightfully hide behind the obscure and revel in their vagueness. The creative tandem of Shayne Carter and Andrew Brough like to think of themselves as something of a mystery (an image no doubt hammered home by the Arista publicity machine).

But, really, their insular guitar pieces and moody lyrics are quite transparent. Something tells us from the minimalist strumming in the opening cut "Bad Note for a Heart" both Carter and Brough have spun a few Joy Division records. From the same song we get a dose of their



pendant for lyrical ambiguity (ala R.E.M.'s Michael Stipe). "He's got a head like an aching upper hemisphere."

Straightjacket Fits succeed in spite of all of this needless pretension. Undeniably, the New Zealand puts forth some rapturous guitar buzz when following their instincts on such numbers as "Such a Daze" and "Down in Splendor."

The layered guitar effect on "Skin to Wear" is hypnotic as much as it is sensual while the murky textures of "Held in Mine" belies the soft whisper of the vocals. Even the lead guitar break on the last number is palatable, despite being a bit self-indulgent.

Straightjacket Fits finds its niche on "Melt."

— Larry O'Connor