

# STREET BEATS

## Danish offers variety

By Larry O'Connor  
staff writer

Mary's Danish may be lauded for revealing a wide variety of musical styles on their release "Circa." There are inflections of Jefferson Starship power psychedelia, B-52s jolly pop fuzz and the bare bones country yearnings procured by X.

Then again, 17 1/2 songs on one disc should reveal some variety.

"When we went into the studio, we had 35 songs," said vocalist Julie Ritter, whose band performs Tuesday, Nov. 12, at St. Andrew's Hall. "We sat around the table and voted on what songs should go on the album. Certain songs just ended up on the album naturally. We needed that many songs."

Mary's Danish unabashedly wears their vast influences like a pollster dons candidate badges during an election year. To deny them would be inappropriate, band members figure.

This can be their finest attribute and Achilles heel at the same time. Undoubtedly, not every cut on "Circa" will immediately appeal to the listener. Some may find the effort too unfocused, getting the feeling the band is trying to find the right switch in a darkened room during its art-funk moments.

But that would be nit picking and ignores the musical vision of this Los Angeles six-member outfit that constantly explores and seeks better definitions than those already offered.

**BAND FOUNDERS** and vocalists Gretchen Seager and Ritter write confessional lyrics. At times, they chronicle the turbulence Mary's Danish has endured in their four-year history that has included legal battles, a record deal gone awry and Seager leaving the band for a short period of time.

Seager's and Ritter's songwriting and vocal styles may be compared and contrasted. Ritter's recorded numbers such as "7-Deadly Sins" and "Cover Your Face." Both songs are saturated with self-doubt and anger.

Ritter's number, "Beat Me Up," focuses on the mental pounding one faces in a relationship gone bad. "It could be a man speaking. It could be a woman speaking," said Ritter, who met Seager at the Uni-



Members of Mary's Danish include Louis Gutierrez (top row, from left), David King, Julie Ritter, Chris "Wag" Wagner, James Bradley Jr. (front row from left) and Gretchen Seager.

versity of California-Berkeley. "Anybody can take it to read and apply to their own life."

The life of the band appears to be falling in order. Along with Seager and Ritter, Mary's Danish features David King on guitar, Louis Gutierrez on guitar, Chris "Wag" Wagner of bass and James Bradley Jr. on drums.

Mary's Danish emerged in the L.A. alternative scene, mainly thanks to radio airplay of an eight-track demo "Don't Crash the Car Tonight" on KROQ-FM. The song's popularity necessitated an album, making "There Goes the Wondertruck" (Chameleon) a somewhat hastily pressed debut.

**THINGS QUICKLY** grew difficult. Nerves became frayed after ensu-

ing proved fruitless. In-band bickering led Seager to leave Mary's Danish only to return at her own will.

"I was torn, too," Ritter said. "She didn't really want to leave the band. She was frustrated and I felt frustrated for her. I could speak to her as a friend or on a business level."

Also, Mary's Danish recorded "Circa" last year but Chameleon didn't have a distribution deal. The album's release waited until Morgan Creek stepped in. In the meantime, the band did release a live EP, "Experience."

All of the past turmoil has made the band members more determined to carry on. "Circa" has reaped critical acclaim and publicity, partly due to Seager's scathing tribute to the

Guns N' Roses lead singer in "Axl Rose Is Love."

If anything, the outfit has found strength in the diversity that nearly tore them apart. The only thing that could destroy Mary's Danish now would be uniformity.

"I think if one person had complete control it wouldn't be Mary's Danish. If it were my band, it would sound different. If it was Gretchen's band, it would sound different," Ritter said. "There's a good system of checks and balances in this band."

Mary's Danish will perform with Eleven Tuesday, Nov. 12, at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. For information, call 961-MELT.

## IN CONCERT

● **PHIL LABLEY & THE PARADISE VALLEY JAZZ JAM SESSION**  
Monday, Nov. 11 — Phil Labley & the Paradise Valley Jazz Jam Session will perform at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, across from Wayne State University, Detroit. For information, call 832-2355.

● **TERRY AND THE PIRATES**  
Monday, Nov. 11 — Terry and the Pirates will perform at Cross Street Station, 511 W. Cross, Ypsilanti. For information, call 485-5050.

● **GOING PUBLIC**  
Monday, Nov. 11 — Going Public will perform at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● **MARY'S DANISH**  
Tuesday, Nov. 12 — Mary's Danish will perform with guests, Eleven, at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. For information, call 961-MELT.

● **M.O.D.**  
Tuesday, Nov. 12 — M.O.D. will perform at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● **WALKABOUTS**  
Tuesday, Nov. 12 — Walkabouts will perform at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● **CHISEL BROTHERS**  
Tuesday, Nov. 12 — Chisel Brothers will perform at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, across from Wayne State University, Detroit. For information, call 832-2355.

● **RICKIE LEE JONES**  
Wednesday, Nov. 13 — Rickie Lee Jones will perform 8 p.m. at Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Reserved seats are \$15.50. For information, call 99-MUSIC.

● **ANSON FUNDERBURG AND THE ROCKETS**  
Wednesday, Nov. 13, Thursday and Friday, Nov. 14-15 — Anson Funderburg and the Rockets will perform at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747. The band also performs Thursday and Friday at Sully's, Greenfield Road, north of Michigan Avenue, Dearborn. For information, call 816-5377.

● **BORAX**  
Wednesday, Nov. 13 — Borax will perform at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● **PARK THE KARMA**  
Thursday, Nov. 14 — Park the Karma will perform at 3-D Club, corner of 12 Mile and Main, Royal Oak. For information, call 589-3344.

● **SAMARITANS**  
Thursday, Nov. 14 — Samaritans will perform at Cross Street Station, 511 W. Cross, Ypsilanti. For information, call 485-5050.

● **RUSH**  
Wednesday and Thursday, Nov. 13-14 — Rush will perform with guest, Eric Johnson, at The Palace, Two Championship Drive, off I-75, Auburn Hills. Tickets are \$22.50. For information, call 377-0100.

● **ASSEMBLY REQUIRED**  
Thursday, Nov. 14 — Assembly Required will perform with Oroboros at Al-

vin's, 5756 Cass, across from Wayne State University, Detroit. For information, call 832-2355.

● **CAPTAIN DAVE AND THE PSYCHEDELIC LOUNGE CATS**  
Thursday, Nov. 14 — Captain Dave and the Psychedelic Lounge Cats will perform at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● **RAIN DANCE**  
Thursday, Nov. 14 — Rain Dance will perform at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● **BLACK MALL**  
Friday, Nov. 15 — Black Mall will perform with guests, Ugly Stick, at Finney's Pub, 3965 Woodward, Detroit. For information, call 831-8070.

● **DEAD LETTER OFFICE**  
Friday, Nov. 15 — Dead Letter Office will perform with guests, Incubables and the Yes Men, at the Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Canfield, off I-75. For information, call 353-2829.

● **BRUCE COCKBURN**  
Friday, Nov. 15 — Bruce Cockburn will perform with guest, Sam Phillips, at the Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$15.50 and \$12. For information, call 99-MUSIC.

● **MC 900 FOOT JESUS**  
Friday, Nov. 15 — MC 900 Foot Jesus will perform at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. For information, call 961-MELT.

● **HOLY COWS**  
Friday, Nov. 15 — Holy Cows will perform at Cross Street Station, 511 W. Cross, Ypsilanti. For information, call 485-5050.

● **PARK THE KARMA**  
Friday, Nov. 15 — Park the Karma will have a CD release party at Lili's 21, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck. For information, call 975-6555.

● **SUN SOUNDS ORCHESTRA**  
Friday, Nov. 15 — Sun Sounds Orchestra will perform at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, across from Wayne State University, Detroit. For information, call 832-2355.

● **JERRY SPRAGUE**  
Friday, Nov. 15 — Jerry Sprague will perform at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● **ROBERT PENN**  
Friday and Saturday, Nov. 15-16 — Robert Penn will perform at Mobey Dick's, 5452 Schaefer, between Ford Road and Michigan Avenue, Dearborn. For information, call 581-3650.

● **JOHNNY O'NEAL**  
Friday and Saturday, Nov. 15-16 — Johnny O'Neal will perform at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● **THE DYNATONES**  
Friday, Nov. 15 — The Dynatones will perform at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● **COMMUNITY CONCERT SERIES**  
Saturday, Nov. 16 — Jeff Taylor, Kim Hunter, Mutant Press, Brickyard, The Blanks and Zulu Drake Torque Society will perform 9 p.m. to 4 a.m. as part of the Community Concert Series at Art Center Music School, 3975 Cass, near Alexandria, Detroit. Proceeds benefit the Art Center Music School. For information, call 631-2585 or 832-1712.

## LIVE REVIEW

### Mural of Reality Benefit (Dusk, Slot, Brothers from Another Planet, His Name Is Alive, Gangster Fun and Majesty Crush) — Industry, Pontiac

This was a night for the Picassos and Van Goghs with guitars and drum kits. Six bands, all of whom apparently take their music very seriously, graced the stage at the art gallery known as Industry in a benefit for a new arts magazine, 78 RPM.

For the most part, thankfully, pre-tension was limited to some of the audience members who came haughtily dressed in enough '70s retro wear to make one wonder if the Bee Gees were conducting a used clothes sale in the parking lot.

The real fashion heroes included a bass player for Majesty Crush with a battered green parka draped over his slumbered shoulders, a pencil thin lead singer of Gangster Fun attired in a white turtle neck and floofs revealing some prominent white sock and a guy in Brothers from Another Planet who has a yellow, green and red top hat large enough to guide 747s onto runways.

Aside from threads, these guys can play. The three aforementioned bands were in exceptional musical form with His Name Is Alive also putting forth a mesmerizing 30-minute set as well.

Majesty Crush capped off the five-band music with a virulent, dissonant set that was simply riveting. Lead singer David Stroughter set the tone, spewing street argot with a stare that was menacing and demands and his your attention.

Stroughter's seizure-like contortings, mixed with Mary Segal's guitar-induced psychic fallout and Mickey Echlin's hypnotic bass lines, provided an uneasy tension — perhaps underscoring a taut, urban neurosis that seems to be at the core of Majesty Crush's music.

The band's material — songs such as "Sunny Pie" and "Ciccolina" — were unnerving yet possessed a distinctive groove to make one sway headily in tribute while a vintage band rendition of Lou Reed's "Walk on the Wildside" was pure psychotic bliss. Majesty Crush

proved themselves preeminent among alternative bands.

Especially when following the likes of Gangster Fun, whose set resembled something of a nine-man Las Vegas ska review. Undoubtedly, this outfit feeds off the dance-induced frenzy of its own audience and certainly that was the case with bodies flying across the floor.

David Bunkley led the skank charge, sliding down both banisters adjacent to the industry stage and dancing non-stop for the entire set. Gangster Fun has become visually appealing as well as musically and has garnered enough brassiness in their five-year history to pull off a ska version of ZZ Top's "La Grange" with particularly aplomb and humorous results with Bunkley sound like he gurgled the Rio Grande on a few "how, how, hows."

Whimsical is the last word to describe His Name Is Alive, who performed an intriguing set of brilliantly orchestrated sounds put forth by Warren Defever and co-collaborators Jymn Auge and Melissa Elliot that delve deep into the consciousness. At least to those who listened closely.

An acoustic interlude, "The Charnier," with lead vocalist Karin Oliver singing softly without a microphone was marred by audience chatter and a decay — apparently thinking the set was over — interrupting to say there were free CDs available. Embarrassing, and a bit ironic since this benefit was a celebration of the arts.

Then again, His Name Is Alive may be a bit guilty of their own "artiness." Oliver's voice is ever so lovely and resonant, but her plerocysties and sick moves on stage took largely contrived and better left for the detention room at a dance school.

Stage presence is what Brothers from Another Planet certainly possesses.

— Larry O'Connor



photos by BILL HANSEN



Wearing a stylized top hat, James Page (top photo) performs with Brothers from Another Planet bass player Gordon Spencer as part of a stage benefit for the new magazine, 78RPM. Also performing was Billy Rivkin and Sue Lott, members of Slot.



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