

STREET SCENE

The Observer & Eccentric® Newspapers

O&E Monday, January 13, 1992

Dustbin is true to punk

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

Although too young to have experienced it and they sure don't sound like it, the punk ethic lives with Ned's Atomic Dustbin.

Too often, we get caught up in whirlwind images and sounds of the late 1970s era of music. Sid Vicious, safety pins through the nose and bodies and saliva flying with equal trajectory quickly come to mind as does the scratchy and snarling guitars and vocals to match with lyrics of angst and anarchy.

What tends to get overlooked is the insurrection that took place from within. For a brief period, music had been taken over by the masses — those who seemingly didn't know the difference between a guitar chord and an extension cord.

Those fledgling outfits persevered on the simplest and purest of inspiration: make and celebrate joyous noise.

Frankly, the history lesson is lost on Ned's Atomic Dustbin guitarist Garath "Hat" Pring a decade later.

"I don't think (punk) influenced us at all, really," said Pring, 21, from his home in Birmingham, England. "We were between the ages of 6 and 9. We listened to a little bit of it after."

"When we started we couldn't afford good equipment, so it sounded raw. It was sounded like we were punk. Basically, we are a pop band."

Though the band's upbringing is similar to a tradition forged by the Sex Pistols, Social Distortion and countless other bands, by no means is Ned's Atomic Dustbin a punk cliché.

SINGER JONATHAN "Jonn" Penney, bassists (yes, there's two) Alex Griffin and Matt Sweet, drummer Daniel Worton along with Pring formed Ned's Atomic Dustbin in college. Musicians they weren't.

Rather the band learned their craft bludgeoning Ramones records. They soon went out on the road, not bothering to turn up for class for two months and were eventually dropped out of school.

Maintaining a yeoman's schedule of gigs, they ended up on successive tours with fellow West Midland bands Wonder Stuff and Pop Will Eat Itself.

Undoubtedly, performing live only added more virulence to Ned's Atomic Dustbin's cataclysmic sound, which is largely careening melodic pop ditties driven by psychedelic buzz guitar. Lyrically, songwriter Jonn has an ardent sense of the absurd.

The rawness is detectable on both the band's debut EP, "The Ingredients," and its ensuing LP "God Fodder" on Columbia. Both are adequate representations of their music. It's their belief, though, that the stage is the ultimate confessional for a band's commitment and passion.



There's Mat (from left) and Rat and Dan Dan the Fast Drummin' Man and Alex and John.

Yep, everyone's accounted for in Ned's Atomic Dustbin.

"We built our reputation by playing live," said Pring, whose nickname "Hat" was given to him at age 2 by his mother. "We do over a 100 gigs a year where we've only been in the studio for about say 10 weeks during our whole career."

"IT WEARS on you. Personally, I think it's the best thing about being in a band. The enjoyment still there and there's still a high when you

come off the stage if the gig has been brilliant. You get a kick out of it."

The game has changed from the heady days of punk. Alternative music is no longer alternative, increasingly dominated by major labels who use the term as a ruse for a farm system.

"A couple of years ago, if you were an alternative band in England you were alternative and you stayed there major or not. Now, there's no

such bands like that anymore."

But, as Ned's Atomic Dustbin certainly prove, "The majors haven't hurt it one way or the other," Pring said.

Ned's Atomic Dustbin will perform Monday, Jan. 13, at Industry, 15 S. Saginaw, Pontiac. Doors open at 8 p.m. Cover is \$5. For information, call 334-1999.

IN CONCERT

Monday

● PARADISE VALLEY JAZZ

JAM
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, across from Wayne State University, Detroit. 823-2355

● **NED'S ATOMIC DUSTBIN**
Industry, 15 S. Saginaw, Pontiac. 8 p.m. Cover is \$5. 334-1999

● **ROLAND B AND RAINDANCE**
Cross Street Station, 511 W. Cross, Ypsilanti. 485-5050

● **GOING PUBLIC**
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. 996-2747

● **ANDROMADA**
With Black Ocean Drowning and Guilty Party at Todd's, 8139 E. Seven Mile, Detroit. 366-TODD

Tuesday

● **CHISEL BROS. FEATURING THORNETTA DAVIS**
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, across from Wayne State University, Detroit. 823-2355

● **HOLY COWS**
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. 996-2747

● **DON HENRY**
The Ark, 637 1/2 S. Main, Ann Arbor. 761-1451

Wednesday

● **BIM SKALA BIM**
Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. 996-8555

● **CROWBAR HOTEL**
Sully's, 4748 Greenfield, Dearborn. 486-1920

● **DIFFERENCE**
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. 996-2747

Thursday

● **TRACY SCIENCE**
With the Janglers at Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. 996-8555

● **HAPPY ACCIDENTS**
S.D., 1850 Main Street, Royal Oak. 589-3344

● **KING APPARATUS**
Cross Street Station, 511 W. Cross, Ypsilanti. 485-5050

● **TRINIDAD TRIPOLI**
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. 996-2747

Friday

● **CHUNKY SEEDS**
With Spanking Bozo at Finney's.

Pub, 3995 Woodward, Detroit. 831-8070

● **BIM SKALA BIM**
With Gangster Fun at Majestic Theatre, 4140 Woodward, Detroit. Tickets are \$8. 833-9700

● **PARK THE KARMA**
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, across from Wayne State University, Detroit. 823-2355

● **BEER ON THE PENGUIN**
With Gray Havens at Lili's 21, 2930 Jacob, at Jos. Campau, Hamtramck. 875-6555

● **KATY MOFFATT, TOM RUSSELL AND ANDREW HARDIN**
Birmingham Unitarian Church, 631 N. Woodward. Tickets are \$10 advance, \$12 at the door. 646-4950

● **TRACY LEE AND THE LEONARDS**
Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. 996-8555

● **DETROIT BLUES BAND**
Teds Pub, 39 S. Main, Clawson. 435-4755

● **HAPPY ACCIDENTS**
Cross Street Station, 511 W. Cross, Ypsilanti. 485-5050

● **HEAVEN'S WISH**
The Ritz, 17500 Fraxho, 10 1/2 Mile and Gratiot, Roseville. 778-8150

● **FLY AWAY HAIR**
With Nervous Beats at Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Canfield, off of I-75. 365-3829

● **BORAX**
Cross Street Station, 511 W. Cross, Ypsilanti. 485-5050

● **TRINIDAD TRIPOLI STEEL BAND**
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. 996-2747

● **NRQB**
Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, between Michigan Avenue and Ford Road, Dearborn. 846-1920

● **MIMI & THE SNAKES**
Detroit Bar, 655 Deaubien, at the corner of Fort Street, Detroit. 563-3355

● **MUSTARD'S RETREAT**
The Ark, 637 1/2 S. Main St., Ann Arbor. 761-1451

● **GUNS N' ROSES**
With Soundgarden at The Palace, Two Championship Drive, off I-75, Auburn Hills. Tickets are \$22.50. 377-0100

Saturday

● **FRANK ALLISON & THE ODD SOX**
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, across from Wayne State University, Detroit. 823-2355

REVIEWS



IDYLLS — Missionary Stew

Yes, they wear their hearts, souls and spirituality on their tattered sleeves of discontent. And, perhaps, they can be a tad masochist. Missionary Stew may be forgiven for such transgressions, though.

Their pop sensibilities and musical craftsmanship — albeit some borrowed — more than sees them through on "Idylls," the local band's second release.

Missionary Stew has never been a band to use vague imagery and mixed metaphors to speak their case. Rather the five-man outfit uses the stringent confines of a pop song to explore contradiction and confusion within. The quest for spiritual solitude is often hard-fought battle in the Missionary Stew camp, never complete and always questioned.

From that end, this band neither proselytizes or panders to those of the Christian persuasion as evidence in the lyrics. "I said I would be true to you/ You needn't ask if I've been good/ I can't go

back on what I said," sings Dion Roddy from the confessional number "Can't Go Back" in a flawless voice tailor-made for pop music.

To hone in solely on this band's belief in "Him" and hastily categorize them as Christian rockers would be sorely missing the point and not accurate. Then again, not acknowledging the guiding light that drives this outfit would be an oversight. You just consider it part of the overall package.

Tight arrangements and sterling musicianship allow for that. Spanish trumpets open "Mystery." EMP-sounding keyboards segue way into personal solace in "Peace Like a River."

"No One's Cried for Me" is the band's sole blemish here, no check that a splattered blot. This resembles a lounge-lizard's opus, complete with piano sounding like the keys were soaked in gin and down-and-out lyrics sung with vocals choking on stale smoke. This song, in particular, sounds out of character for a band of this talent. Perhaps one could surmise it was a joke.

Otherwise, "Idylls" is quite an accomplishment from a band that continues to evolve musically.

— Larry O'Connor

STREET SENSE

Option of free will is not available to abused

Ms. Schiff,

Thank you for letting the abuse speak out, if only in written words. I'm enclosing a poem I wrote one day while reflecting on the abuse taken by my mother.

I'm old beyond my years.

I'm fearful and confused.

I walk alone, I'm no longer woman.

I'm a dark image of a body.

The loneliness has taken over.

Disoriented I cannot find my way.

This shadow is my inseparable companion.

I cannot lift my soul up to the light.

I'm lost forever.

I'm only a Shadow of a Woman.

As a child, I could not understand nor could my mother tell me why she let this go on. The destruction it caused my siblings and myself for a while was overwhelming.

I thank God everyday for the love he has sent me. The man I married is also from an abusive family. Together

er we have had analysis and come to understand this chain behavior. We have found true love and a relationship with great meaning. The chain of abuse can be broken and I thank God we are two of the lucky ones. There is no excuse for abuse.

Grateful! It's over

Dear Readers,
For the past few months we have heard from women who have experienced being victims in abusive relationships. They speak eloquently.

I would like to be able to say that this is not a gender-distinct problem and that men also feel stuck in such relationships. However, no man has written. I am hoping that some male reader will write to fill the void.

With the missing of knowing that this is a topic worthy of volumes, I will attempt to sum up.

The themes I hear in these letters is that women in abusive relationships feel helpless. Each feels they have no options. Because they cannot leave, then, the reasoning goes, the men must change for the relationship to be different. If neither partner can change, then it becomes the responsibility of our social institutions to enforce laws, or provide support that will stop the abuse.

The first issue — the woman's lack of choice — is a question of the viability of free will. Are people self-determining? It seems that some are and some are not.

I assume that the women who have written to me on this topic are only the tip of the iceberg. If this many have written, then there must be many more, certainly enough that they cannot be considered outside the realm of normalcy.

There are then many for whom the option of free will is sadly not available. These women lack a self-capable of being alone.

If you are reading this and having trouble understanding it because you are a person with a strong sense of self, then imagine yourself dancing, if you have no rhythm, or singing, if you are tone deaf.

No matter how hard you will it,

you couldn't make it happen. Maybe after a lot of teaching you could achieve some success, but without an amount of will could make you an adequate singer or dancer.

Could independence and/or a problem solving ability be something like that? My column that generated these responses asked whether or not it was luck, as a woman from Haven said, that led to a woman being in an abusive relationship.

I took the position that each one of us must take responsibility for ourselves. I said it was not luck. I do not feel as sure of that stand now. Is it the luck inherent in genetics which makes it possible for us to sing on key, dance to the music, solve problems or be independent?

As I have said, that is an issue worthy of volumes and still there would not be an answer to some of the worst problems.

Continuing with our original line of logic, the man should change for the abuse to stop. But must we not say the same of him as we have said

of the woman? If we cannot expect her to have the free will to choose, how can we expect the man to?

If we accept that the behavior is determined, rather than chosen for her, then this line of reasoning is for him, too. If he were a strong man, he wouldn't be abusing other people.

And so we come to the responsibility of civilized society to protect the handicapped — whether that handicap be physical or mental. Recently, I received a Haven newsletter in the mail. In it there are articles describing support systems for victims. The counseling enables victims to become "self-empowered survivors."

There is also news of the State Domestic Violence Board and early intervention for juvenile sex offenders. These programs are helping to educate and to arbitrate these difficult issues. Our legal system lags far behind.

Haven is an Oakland County shelter. I hope this kind of help is available in other communities. In a very few cases, some women have found



Barbara Schiff

a way to become independent. They are indeed the lucky ones. I can only hope that they will be an inspiration to these less fortunate.

In pondering this problem, I have become more aware of the large role luck plays in all of our lives. Again, thanks to all the women who have helped me better understand this problem.

Barbara