

# STREET SCENE

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## Wordsy Wally is ode so tuneful

By Larry O'Connor  
staff writer

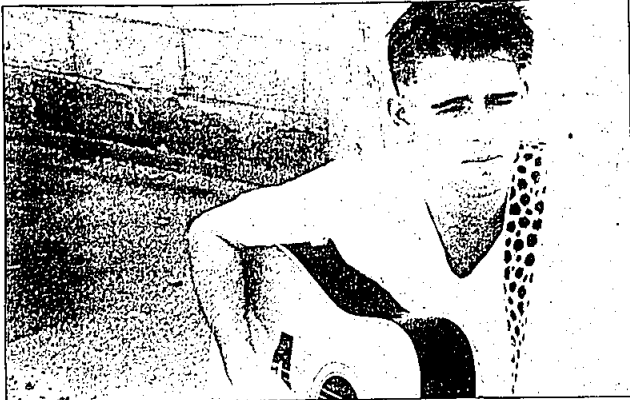
In Wally's world, there's plenty to poke fun about. Easy targets such as farmers, geeks, politically correct hippies, wacky roommates, old girlfriends with acne and cities with less than sterling reputations get lampooned with Wally Pleasant's jagged acoustic strumming and piercing voice.

The 1985 graduate of Birmingham Groves High School doesn't mean to be mean. In fact, he wonders out loud if his "Ode to Detroit" cut on his debut release, "Songs About Stuff," might have gone too far.

"I think in that song about Detroit I was a little mean," said Pleasant, 24, who compares the Motor City to Beirut in one reference. "But I was humored out about that woman (Joanne Was of Farmington Hills) getting beat up in Detroit and when I hear rumors about how the city government doesn't run efficiently, like school board members riding in limousines..."

Pleasant shrugs his shoulders. Too late now as "Songs About Stuff" is already in record stores. And college radio in East Lansing has chosen to play the Michigan State grad's "Ode to Detroit" with particular glee.

Such is the muse of a singer/songwriter whose biting commentary on (in the founder) human condition might rattle a few along his way. Truly Pleasant's songs are his own, humorous ditties carved from



Wally Pleasant has found plenty of things to poke fun at in his music. The brunt of many a joke, the city of Detroit takes a drubbing in "Ode to Detroit" on his debut release, "Songs About Stuff."

real-life images synecopated by catchy little rhymes.

A LARGE PART of his material is strewn bits and morsels from carefree college existence. He yodles about a house mate who skipped out, owing a \$400 phone bill, in "Psycho Roommate" and yearns for those simpler days when a 2.9 GPA was the loftiest goal to be reached in "Restless College Years."

His finer moments are achieved when he turns a tad sentimental, recounting the Innocence and anxiety of a first date in "First Love."

"A lot of times I have a deeper, underlying tone to them," said Pleasant, "I like to use humor as a barometer. When people are laughing, you know they're getting the gist of what you're saying."

Until recently, Pleasant's audi-

ence has primarily been of the collegiate variety. He started out as a solo-acoustic performer four years ago, turning up for open mike nights at an area club. Prior to that, he'd been in a couple of bands and performed in talent shows while at Groves.

Thanks to some solid radio support by WDRM-FM, Pleasant found an immediate following in the East Lansing area. A record store there immediately sold out of 25 copies of "Songs About Stuff."

NOW THE challenge for Pleasant is to expand beyond the campus market. He's perhaps not technically proficient enough to woo the folk crowd. "I would give up musical and vocal technique in order to give the emotion I'm trying to get out. So maybe if I'm excited, my voice will crack." Also, his solo acoustic act might be too obscure to headline at a

rock'n'roll venue.

So far, Pleasant has found a niche, opening up for fellow East Lansing power pop outfit the Hammballs. In the meantime, Pleasant continues to write. He's amassed 40 originals already and is continually evolving as a songwriter, inspired by the story telling capabilities of seminal '60s folk artists Phil Ochs and Arlo Guthrie.

"I think I'm getting more into deeper themes and I like to keep the humor aspect going," Pleasant said. "I'm apt to write a song with humor as a central theme but to fill in the cracks to make sure people are paying attention."

Wally Pleasant will have a record release party 10 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 8, at the Garden Bowl, 4140 Woodward, Detroit. For information, call 833-9700.

## IN CONCERT

Monday, Feb. 3

- **Paradise Valley Jazz Jam**  
Alvin's, 5756 Cass Ave., across from Wayne State University, Detroit. 832-2353
- **Lovers and Madmen**  
Cross Street Station, 511 W. Cross, Ypsilanti. 455-5050
- **The Mallias**  
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. 966-2747
- **Chain Reaction**  
The Hut, 17580 Frazer, 10 1/2 Mile and Gratiot, Roseville. 774-9150

Tuesday, Feb. 4

- **Chisel Brothers with Thornatis Davis**  
Alvin's, 5756 Cass Ave., across from Wayne State University, Detroit. 832-2353
- **Vudu Hippias**  
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. 966-2747
- **Chutes and Ladders**  
Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. 966-8555
- **Bob Gilban**  
The Ark, 637 1/2 Main, Ann Arbor. 761-1451

Wednesday, Feb. 5

- **Born Naked**  
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. 966-2747
- **Frank Allison and the Odd Sox**  
Will perform in a benefit for Presidential candidate Tom Harkin at the Blind Pig, 308 S. First, Ann Arbor. 966-8555
- **Motor City Music Cartel**  
Alvin's, 5756 Cass Ave., across from Wayne State University, Detroit. 832-2353

Thursday, Feb. 6

- **Immunity**  
Cross Street Station, 511 W. Cross, Ypsilanti. 455-5050
- **Harmabe**  
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. 966-2747
- **Odessa**  
Paycheck's Lounge, 2932 Caniff, Hamtramck. 874-0254

- **Kari Newhouse**  
Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. 966-8555
- **Anny Waldman**  
A good with Bob Dylan's Hauling Thunder Heyue at Alvin's, 5756 Cass Ave., across from Wayne State University, Detroit. 832-2353
- **Seu Ghy Gun**  
With Mushroomhead at 3-D, 1815 N. Main, near 12 Mile Road, Royal Oak. 349-3244
- **AI & Emily Controll**  
The Ark, 637 1/2 Main, Ann Arbor. 761-1451
- **Psycholunkapus**  
With Skinhorse at Todd's, 8139 E. Seven Mile Road, Detroit. 266-7000
- **Rudo Allico**  
A tribute to Alice Cooper at The Hut, 17580 Frazer, 10 1/2 Mile and Gratiot, Roseville. 774-9150

Friday, Feb. 7

- **Holy Cows**  
Cross Street Station, 511 W. Cross, Ypsilanti. 455-5050
- **Southern Zak**  
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. 966-2747
- **Trinidad Tripoli Steel Band**  
Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. 966-8555
- **The Holmes Brothers**  
Sully's, 1558 Greenfield, between Michigan Avenue and Ford Road, Dearborn. 466-1920
- **Blue Oyster Cult**  
Todd's, 8139 E. Seven Mile Road, east of Van Dyke, Detroit. 966-7000
- **Reinbirds**  
With Happy as Clams and Hope Orchestra at Paycheck Lounge, 2932 Caniff, Hamtramck. 874-0254
- **Famous Coachman's Blues Festival**  
With Willie D. Warren, Jeff Maylin and others at Alvin's, 5756 Cass Ave., across from Wayne State University, Detroit. 832-2353
- **RFD Boys**  
The Ark, 637 1/2 Main, Ann Arbor. 761-1451
- **The Four Horseman**  
The Hut, 17580 Frazer, 10 1/2 Mile and Gratiot, Roseville. 774-9150
- **Incurables**  
Todd's, 8139 E. Seven Mile Road, east of Van Dyke, Detroit. 966-7000
- **Park the Karma**  
With Imitation of Life at Lil's 21, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck. 875-6555

Saturday, Feb. 8

- **Gangster Fun**  
With Black Mali at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. 963-5021
- **Mallias**  
Cross Street Station, 511 W. Cross, Ypsilanti. 455-5050
- **Holmes Brothers**  
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. 966-2747
- **Attic**  
Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. 966-8555
- **Hope Orchestra**  
Alvin's, 5756 Cass Ave., across from Wayne State University, Detroit. 832-2353
- **Junk Monkeys**  
With Happy Tom Show at Lil's 21, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck. 875-6555

## REVIEWS



## THE ACOUSTIC MOTORBIKE — Luka Bloom

On "Riverside," Luka Bloom's major label debut in 1990, the Irish singer/songwriter spoke of a transfer of an injury to either his or LL Cool J's good name (though Jet's hope he hasn't taken a shine to any Too Live Crew recordings lately).

The same cannot be said, however, for the bluesy rendition of Elvis' "Can't Help Falling in Love." No matter the sincerity, the words of "the King" may be best left in the capable hands of Elvis Shelton and Bill Bixby.

Better, though, is Bloom's connection and ensuing wonderment with nature. A return to his native Eire reveals itself in somewhat Arcadian, but hardly tearful, numbers of vast beauty and pristine tranquility. "Exploring the Blue" bathes in its simplicity and deep yearnings. By contrast, "Acoustic Motorbike," culled from countless cycling excursions on the West Coast of Ireland, seems cluttered with its various animal sounds and extraneous instrumentation (didgeridoo courtesy of Hothouse Flower's Liam O'Maonail).

"Acoustic Motorbike" displays a folk artist who is willing to stretch out beyond the traditional setting. But as Bloom would readily attest, there is no place like home.

— Larry O'Connor



Robyn Hitchcock & The Egyptians will perform 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 12, at the Royal Oak Music Theatre.

## STREET SENSE

# Base your decision what is true at that time

Dear Barbara,  
My husband just finished three weeks of intensive day treatment for marijuana addiction at a local hospital. He has used the drug for more than 20 years (off and on with periods of abstinence), and it has been a problem which has slowly eroded the foundation of our marriage (honesty and trust) for the last 10 years.  
Finally, at the end of June, I caught him using again (the supposedly had been clean for 18 months) and gave him an ultimatum — treatment or divorce.  
Treatment was the lesser of two evils, apparently. The issue was brought out by his counselor in the program that Bill's treatment was mostly a "head trip" (intellectual) rather than a "heart trip." His counselor talked about the emotional repression Bill has, which is probably a lifelong thing. (Bill is 42).  
The program did not get through to him emotionally to any great degree, although he found it "interesting, informative, neat" etc. Now he is beginning a six-month commitment for aftercare, which will involve one group meeting per week plus two NA (Narcotics Anonymous)

meetings per week.  
His attitude about all of this is fairly cooperative although I sense a lot of resentment and a belief on his part that this is something to just be "gotten through." "I'm willing to go along with whatever they said," is what he said.  
I think a lot of his resentment stems from the fact that the main thing he wanted to do is to STOP SMOKING POT, and this, in his opinion, has been done. Now, he says, EVERYONE wants him to make big changes in who he is as a person, i.e., become less artificial and agreeing with everyone, more genuine, more feeling and emotionally available, etc.  
I might mention we are both ACOAs (Adult Children of Alcoholics) and his role was (a) definitely Lost Child. He had no interest in addressing his ACOA issues — feels quite comfortable that the "past is past."  
Anyway, with this background, my question for you is, are there any "guidelines" on what you would hope to see in a "recovering person," both positive and negative?  
After his three weeks, he seems so

burned out on the subject that, right now, the mention of words like "addiction, recovery," etc., cause him to react with instant frustration. Yesterday, he sobbingly explained to me that he is happy with who he is as a person and that he isn't going to be "tortured" to become someone he isn't to fit some mold.  
He is open to the idea of emotional growth, but stresses that he is who he is and has had the exact same personality since he was a small child, i.e., loner, not very social outside his own family, etc.  
Is it possible for a person to really recover and essentially be the same person? I've talked to other recovering people who laugh and say things like "Oh, you would have liked me before..." I wouldn't have liked me before... I'm a totally different person now, more outgoing and honest, able to connect with people," etc.  
This was said by an alcoholic with five years' recovery who really hit rock bottom before he got help. My husband never reached "rock bottom." He has been in a class all his own as an adult, even his counselor agrees. Perfect attendance at work,

all house jobs taken care of, fairly good father, fairly good husband, etc.  
Do big changes go hand-in-hand with a successful recovery? Can he be recovering but not changing? Somehow, I think not. It just seems like change would have to accompany growth.  
I know a lot of this will be answered as the coming six months unfold. In the meantime, I am entering a co-dependent program at Henry Ford Hospital. Because of Nar-Anon, I have realized that I am sick, too, and need help.  
I have so much fear about his recovery, I am giving myself 12 months to make a decision about my future with him. I might mention we have two pre-teen daughters, which complicates any decision I might make.  
I know this letter is lengthy, but I would appreciate your insight into the question of what to expect with recovery. I have come to know you and respect you through your columns in the paper for a few weeks recently. I was concerned that it "went away," so I was glad to see you back this week!

Your sense of caring, wanting to help, along with your willingness to say you're not always perfect either has really given me the sense of a "real person" behind the column, and I hope you can share a little of yourself with me.  
Cheryl  
Dear Cheryl,  
I read your letter and felt how deeply troubled your situation would be for any wife.  
In your letter you present a treatment program for yourself and your husband for the next six months. My immediate response to you would be to take this time to see what happens. Then, base any further decisions on what is true at that time.  
Many individuals who have attended AA meetings have started with attitudes like your husband. Some of them have changed dramatically, like the man you refer to in your letter. Some, as you fear with your husband, have failed.  
Make this a trial of labor, and put 10 percent effort into it. If you do that perhaps you will change in six months and then you will see things clearly and know what to do. As you



Barbara Schiff — are now, you are naturally indecisive. If you change, you may be decisive.  
I hope this helps to some degree. Keep in touch. I know that we will all learn from your experience.  
If you have a question or comment for Barbara Schiff, a trained therapist and experienced counselor, send it to Street Sense at 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.