

STREET SCENE

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The JudyBats, the six-member collection of mostly University of Tennessee students, have come out with their second release, "Down in the Shacks Where the Satellite Dishes Grow."

Crossed signals

JudyBats muddle their music on 'Shacks'

By Larry O'Connor
Staff writer

On their 1991 debut, "Native Son," the JudyBats dispensed an "abundant amount of musical madness, forming a delightful synthesis of pop, folk and dance rhythms."

More so, the Sire Records release revealed a group with a clear, cohesive vision in genre too often beset by banality.

What happened?
"Down in the Shacks Where the Satellite Dishes Grow," the follow-up from Knoxville, Tenn., seems muddled by comparison. On this release, the JudyBats sound like a band torn asunder. Further than the barren eclectic outfit showcased on "Native Son," the nine word album title only mirrors the confusion.

The usual cliché could apply here: The six-member collection of mostly University of Tennessee students had a whole life to make the first album, and then a year to prepare its second.

VOCALIST AND songwriter Jeff Heiskell doesn't buy it.

"We had enough time I think," said Heiskell, whose band performed Friday, March 20, at Todd's. "In the business, people probably have a better idea. We had 34 days in the studio. I wouldn't have wanted any more."

Heiskell writes a majority of the lyrics. He bounces down in his basement for two weeks, coming out with a wide array of brooding, melancholic themes.

When that he realized the words spoke volumes about himself far more than he intended or would've liked.

"It made me feel a little bit exposed," Heiskell said.

Vulnerability echoes through several numbers on "Down in the Shacks Where the Satellite Dishes Grow," which herein will be referred to as the second release.

This disarming approach may be the LP's lone saving grace and may lend further credence to the JudyBats' commitment to their craft. Heiskell said the album documents "a lot of things," but adds the death of a friend sparked a tumult of emotions within himself for more than a year. In retrospect, those feelings of mourning found their way into his songwriting.

"Saturday," the band's first single off the second release, is an example of Heiskell's detached commentary on the human condition compiled in folders he keeps around. He wrote the song a few weeks after visiting an old friend in Florida.

"HEISENBERG was working the same job at some supermarket for six or seven years, living in a small cinderblock house with his wife. He was happy," Heiskell said. "Doing this kind of work, you're cut off from the real world."

The JudyBats in a sense have always been cut off, even initially from the Knoxville scene that would later embrace them.

The band, whose name is derived from a bat-wielding puppet in the Punch & Judy show, formed in 1986, a coalition of guitarist Ed Winters and Heiskell with neighbors Peggy Hambrick, who performs on keyboards, violins and vocals; Timothy Stutz, a bassist; and Johnny Sughrie, acoustic guitarist.

The latter three were joyous purveyors of a "thrash sound," according to Heiskell, while he and Winters possessed a folk sensibility. Together,

a dynamic was created that would sustain a creative thrust, unleashing a meld of rock, folk, jazz and pop upon somewhat puzzled thrash-saturated audiences in Knoxville.

"I was really paranoid when we started out," said Heiskell, noting the Knoxville area's thriving hard core scene at the time. "I was the only guy around who sang on key. . . . We didn't have any cutting edge axes to grind. We took a lot of flack in the beginning."

SOON, KNOXVILLE took to the band as well as Sire Records, which promptly released a maxi-single "When Southern Bells Ring" after signing The JudyBats. "Native Son" drew immediate praise from critics and ended up on Billboard's Top-10 list.

With the same producer, Richard Gottschier (Hammes, Marshall Crenshaw, Blondie), the band returned to Beersville Studios in order to try and recreate the magic.

"I wasn't aware we were going for something different when we went into the studio," Heiskell said. "The production was sparse this time. That was our doing. We all agreed the first record was overproduced."

Production aside, Heiskell maintains knowledge of what makes a good pop song.

"A good song will come out in the first three minutes you're goofing around with it. You just sense it."

The JudyBats will perform with guests, Paleface, on Friday, March 20, at Todd's, Seven Mile Road, two blocks east of Van Dyke Road, Detroit. Tickets are \$5.50 in advance. For information, call 366-9533.

IN CONCERT

Monday, March 16

- **Full Moon Rising**
Rick's American Pub, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.
996-2747
- **Paradise Valley Jazz Jam**
With Larry Smith at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, across from Wayne State University, Detroit.
832-2355

Tuesday, March 17

- **The Attic**
With The Bartonians at Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.
996-8555
- **Frank Allison & the Odd Sox**
Rick's American Pub, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.
996-2747
- **Robert Jones and Mike Stevens**
The Ark, 637 1/2 S. Main, Ann Arbor.
761-1451
- **Chisel Brothers with Thornetta Davis**
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, across from Wayne State University, Detroit.
832-2355
- **McGuinness**
The Blitz, 10 1/2 Mile and Gratiot, Roseville. Tickets are \$1.01.
778-6404

Wednesday, March 18

- **Vudu Hipsies**
Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.
996-8555
- **The Prodigals**
Rick's American Pub, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.
996-2747
- **Lush**
St. Andrew's Hall, 451 E. Congress, Detroit. Advance tickets are \$7.50.
961-NELT

Thursday, March 19

- **David Allen**
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, across from Wayne State University, Detroit.
832-2355
- **Crossed Wire**
Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.
996-8555
- **3rd Estate**
Rick's American Pub, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.
996-2747
- **Second Opinion**
The Ark, 637 1/2 S. Main, Ann Arbor.
761-1451

Friday, March 20

- **Majesty Crush**
With Hope Orchestra and Weather Vane at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, across from Wayne State University, Detroit.
832-2355
- **Chisel Brothers featuring Thornetta Davis**
Murdock's, 2086 Crooks Road, north of M-59, Rochester Hills.
852-0550
- **The Hannibals**

Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.

- 996-8555
- **Bop Harvey**
Rick's American Pub, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.
996-2747
- **Johnny 'Yard Dog' Jones**
Moby Dick's, 1452 Schaefer, north of Michigan Avenue, Dearborn.
541-2650
- **Culture Bandits**
With the Skandrels and Fockewill at Finney's Pub, 3963 Woodward, Detroit.
831-8070
- **Boys of the Lough**
The Ark, 637 1/2 S. Main, Ann Arbor.
761-1451
- **Missionary Slow**
With Fear of Falling at Lili's, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck.
875-6555
- **Restroom Poets**
Cross Street Station, 511 W. Cross, Ypsilanti.
455-5050
- **Incurables**
With 17 Reasons Why at Hamtramck Pub, 2846 Caniff, off I-75.
465-3929

Saturday, March 21

- **Bryan Adams**
With The Storm at The Palace, Two Championship Drive, off I-75. Tickets are \$22.50.
777-0100
- **Brothers from Another Planet**
With Chutes and Ladders and Yellow No. 5 at Finney's Pub, 3963 Woodward, Detroit.
831-8070
- **7th Fire**
Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.
996-8555
- **Kinsey Report with Big Daddy Kinsey**
Rick's American Pub, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.
996-2747
- **Chisel Brothers featuring Thornetta Davis**
Murdock's, 2086 Crooks Road, north of M-59, Rochester Hills.
852-0550
- **Tom Paxton**
The Ark, 637 1/2 S. Main, Ann Arbor.
761-1451
- **Bop Harvey**
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, across from Wayne State University, Detroit.
832-2355
- **Black Mail**
Cross Street Station, 511 W. Cross, Ypsilanti.
455-5050
- **Mimi Harris**
Moby Dick's, 1452 Schaefer, north of Michigan Avenue, Dearborn.
541-2650
- **3D Invisibles**
Hamtramck Pub, 2846 Caniff, off I-75.
465-3929
- **White Trash**
The Blitz, 10 1/2 Mile and Gratiot, Roseville. Tickets are \$5 in advance; \$7 day of the show.
778-6404

Fanzines: U2, 'Star Trek' and more

This column has mentioned topics like environmental degradation, Rush Limbaugh and the proliferation of strip malls, but the thing that got readers most riled up was a comment on the lack of fanzines around these days.

Not too surprisingly, everyone who was asked about the subject happened to produce a fanzine of his own. So, in the interest of keeping the peace, here's a look at some of the zines produced in our neighborhood.

For those who don't know what the heck we're talking about here, a little review is in order. Fanzines are tiny magazines, usually printed with a dot-matrix machine, that are written by fans with a yen for publishing. It's a little extra time on their hands. If you'd like a full list of fanzines from around the world, write to Factsheet Five, 6 Arizona St., Rensselaer, N.Y. 12164-4502.

U2 and Born Again (\$1 to Amy Johnson, 14154 Hubbard, Livonia 48154). As you may have guessed this small booklet is dedicated to extolling the virtues of U2. But, since U2 wasn't doing anything for the past several years, Johnson fills her pages with other details of info like a reader survey. The style is perky stream-of-consciousness. In Johnson's letter to "Left of Center," she complimented this column, saying "I sort of really enjoyed it." Gee,



left of center

Jill Hamilton

thanks, I guess.

Protect Yourself — A Woman's Survival Guide on Campus: (\$1 to Allen Salyer, P.O. Box 1551, Royal Oak 48068). Kudos to any man who can put out such a serious anti-rape zine. This earnest booklet advises women now to avoid rape with a slew of tips and article clippings. The motto is "Read this. Copy it. Pass it along to a friend. Protect yourself. If it offends you — too bad."

Infantaria (\$1 to 501 Avis Drive, Suite 1, Box 130, Ann Arbor 48104). Every part of this zine is sure to offend someone. It trends the line between funny and disgusting. The style is the rantings and ravings of a madman. The troublesome thing is, the author seems to be serious.

Hailing Frequency (U.S.S. Intrepid, P.O. Box 1084, Dearborn 48121). This isn't really a fanzine, but it's the newsletter for a local Star Trek club. Lorraine Hefner describes the club as an "alternative life style that we hope will lead to peace, caring for humanity, scientific discovery, advances in education and wholesome

social interactions." Sentient beings who believe that Star Trek is not just a TV show but rather a set of guidelines to living one's life should contact the address above.

Several months ago, State Rep. Perry Bullard introduced legislation to establish a Michigan Registry of Botherome Practices. The tongue-in-cheek resolutions would allow folks who are bothered by things like junk mail and those little subscription cards that fall out of magazines to get them officially registered with the state.

Here are some suggestions of bothersome things for the registry:

- (1) Unfunny comic strips like "Garfield" and "Funky Winkerbean." The Hall of Famer in this category is "Nancy."
- (2) CD maxi-singles with 7 remakes of the same song. Listening to the same song seven times in a row is not healthy.
- (3) The cost of food at the movies.

It works like this: The "two junior drink" is two bucks, the large drink

is \$2.50. So, you opt for the good value and end up with the obscenely huge bucket o' pop or the hungry man, family-size barrel o' popcorn. What a bargain.

(4) Infotainment TV shows. I'm hoping that these shows peter out from lack of material. After all, there are presumably a limited number of brutal crimes involving strippers.

(5) Local TV News. The hair-do's, the egoes, and the lack of any actual news are bothersome enough, but the worst part of these shows is their preoccupation with violent crimes. If on a given day, they don't meet their quota of local violent crime, they will show footage of violent crimes that happened in other cities.

THE OTHER thing is their copycat mentality. A few months ago, there was a plane that almost crashed at Metro Airport. It didn't crash or anything, but since the last news crews were already down there, they kept covering the non-event.

Every 15 minutes or so, they'd break into regular programming to say something like: "We're at the scene of the plane where that plane almost crashed. The plane is still there, and everyone is still uninjured."

To beef up this kind of thorough news coverage, they interviewed bystanders who had witnessed that, indeed, the plane did not crash.



Bookie's bust

A special show commemorating the 14th anniversary of one of this area's most prominent new music spots, the former Bookie's Club in Detroit, will take place 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. Saturday, March 21, at Todd's, Seven Mile Road, two blocks east of Van Dyke, Detroit. Featured performers include The Dave Rave Conspiracy (above), The Gillies, Flirt, Cinecye, Motor City Rockers and The Hypnotics, with special appearances by Bootsey X and Scott Campbell. Admission is \$5. For information, call 366-8633.