

STREET SCENE

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Allen: Strong vision, sound

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

Johnny Allen already has his album of "Desperate Years." The singer is quick to add he's still desperate. While in this state of perpetual frenzy — toiling night after night in smoky nightclubs around the area and investing every last cent into a fleeting dream — count on Allen to keep chronicling this enduring pursuit for rock'n'roll prosperity.

"Change the World," the eight-song follow up to the 1988 release "Desperate Years," is not an anthem cry into the vast, indifferent world. Rather, the black-leather jacket clad singer finds himself exploring the seeds of discontentment as opposed to bemoaning the constant struggle.

"There's times when I'm broke. All my money is invested in my equipment. The career chooses you," said Allen sanguinely while sipping a soft drink in a Detroit pub. "I think I have a real strong vision and I'm stubborn enough to keep my sights set on what I want."

There's no real riddle to what Allen wants. Anyone who's witnessed one of his sweat-drenched testimonials to the rock'n'roll dream in one of many countless clubs know.

SO DO those who've listened to "Desperate Years," a musical document whose release was in itself an achievement. He's bought into the belief of the spiritual, intrinsic powers of rock'n'roll with no questions asked.

Allen would like the usual things: to get signed to a record contract and have the artistic respect associated with such endeavors. However, the drive in Allen as evidenced in live shows and in recording seems to transcend such cursory goals.

Allen's uncompromising in this pursuit. He mentions he's let go those in his band he doesn't feel share in the same commitment. A suggestion such a regimen might make him difficult to work with draws a bit of laugh.

"It might," he said. "I think it's



Johnny Allen covers a variety of emotions in his new release, "Change the World," many resonant from his experiences of constantly being in the public domain.

got its good side. It gets things done. If I want to get something done, I achieve it."

Allen may be a task master, but not an ogre. In fact, he's grateful for those who've lent inspiration and perspiration to his cause. "Change the World" is filled with a list of musicians, bands, clubs, promoters and journalists who merited a "special thanks."

The album itself is a stripped-down gauntlet of rock'n'roll. The lyrics

are personal but, as Allen hastens to add with bemusement, "embellished."

A realm of emotions are covered — lust, deceit, upheaval and, of course, personal yearning — many resonant from his experiences of constantly being in the public domain. He's asked if such personal musings leave him a bit exposed.

"A LITTLE BIT, but that's where the fun is," he said. "It's exciting to

open yourself up in front of an audience. It's gutsy."

Johnny Allen and his band will perform Wednesday, March 25, at the Studio Lounge, 6921 Wayne Road, south of Warren Road, Westland. For information, call 729-2540. Also, he will perform Friday, March 27, at The Tap Room, 14915 Charlevoix, east of Allen, Detroit. For information, call 331-6164.

IN CONCERT

Monday, March 23

- **YMI**
Rick's American Pub, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.
896-2747
- **Paradise Valley Jazz Jam**
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, across of Wayne State University, Detroit.
832-2355

Tuesday, March 24

- **L7**
Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.
996-8555
- **Jerry Sprague**
Rick's American Pub, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.
896-2747
- **Rare Air**
The Ark, 637 1/2 S. Main, Ann Arbor.
761-1451
- **Chisel Brothers with Thornetta Davis**
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, across of Wayne State University, Detroit.
832-2355

Wednesday, March 25

- **Matthew Sweet**
Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.
996-8555
- **Big Dave and the Ultrasonics**
Rick's American Pub, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.
896-2747
- **Motor City Music Cartel**
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, across of Wayne State University, Detroit.
832-2355

Thursday, March 26

- **Frank Allison & the Odd Sox**
Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.
996-8555
- **The Attic**
Rick's American Pub, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.
896-2747
- **Bill Staines**
The Ark, 637 1/2 S. Main, Ann Arbor.
761-1451
- **Acoustic Corps**
With members of Rhythm Corps at Lil's, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck.
875-6555

Friday, March 27

- **Diamond Dekkar and the Aces**
With Scottlaw and Gangster Fun at the Majestic Theatre, 4140 Woodward, Detroit. Tickets are \$10.50 in advance; \$14 at the door.
832-9700
- **U2**
With the Pixies at The Palace in Auburn Hills. Show is sold out.
377-0160
- **Mr. Bungle**
With Grotus at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. All ages. Tickets are \$7.50 in advance.
961-1451
- **Flyin' Saucers**
With Bunker Soundcheck at Finney's Pub, 3865 Woodward, Detroit.
831-6070
- **Thunder Harp Choir**
With the Remains at Hamtramck Pub, 581-3650
- **2018 Caniff, off I-75.**
385-3625
- **The Mellowes**
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, across of Wayne State University, Detroit.
832-2355
- **Frank Allison & the Odd Sox**
Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.
996-8555
- **Rhythm Corps**
Rick's American Pub, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.
896-2747
- **Norman and Nancy Blake**
The Ark, 637 1/2 S. Main, Ann Arbor.
761-1451
- **Jazz Nards**
Cross Street Station, 511 W. Cross, Ypsilanti.
465-5650
- **Sun Messengers**
Murdock's, 2086 Crooks Road, Rochester Hills.
852-4550
- **Detroit Blues Band**
Moby Dicks, 5452 Schaefer, Dearborn.
581-3650
- **Neruo Beala**
248 and Stu's Band at Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, off I-75.
- **Bushmasters**
With the Jamersons at Paychecka Lounge, 2932 Caniff, Hamtramck.
874-0254
- **Hopie Orchestra**
With the Opague at Griffr's Grill, 49 N Saginaw, Pontiac.
314-0202
- **Second Fall**
With Forehead Slew and The Brotherhood Recipe at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. Doors open at 8 p.m. Cover is \$5.
961-1451
- **X-Posure**
With Voodoo Chill at Finney's Pub, 3865 Woodward, Detroit.
831-6070
- **13 Engines**
Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.
996-8555
- **Southgoing Zak**
Rick's American Pub, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.
896-2747
- **Mr. B's Blues Series**
With Snooky Prior and Steve Freund at The Ark, 637 1/2 S. Main, Ann Arbor.
761-1451
- **Polish Muslims**
Lil's, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck.
875-6555
- **Third Estate**
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, across of Wayne State University, Detroit.
832-2355
- **Crackbox**
Cross Street Station, 511 W. Cross, Ypsilanti.
465-5650
- **Sun Messengers**
Murdock's, 2086 Crooks Road, Rochester Hills.
852-4550
- **Detroit Blues Band**
Moby Dicks, 5452 Schaefer, Detroit.
581-3650

REVIEWS

CAUGHT IN THE CURRENT — Crossed Wire

Bought with conviction and sold with acoustic-driven passion, Crossed Wire's "Caught in the Current" means business from the get-go.

Singer and guitarist Chris Moore chews off the end of his lyrics like they were gristle in the way of expressing his next point on this buoyant 11-song effort. He growls incessantly. Even the backup vocals are wrought to the point of raw throat gurgling.

His rhythm section of bassist and former Beer on the Penguin member Cary Marsh and drummer Bud Bureau pound out a furious pace, lighting one end of this effort and watching it burn through to the other side.

So quick does this release consume itself in its

rolling presentation, another listen is immediately required.

While many outfits tear through such releases, one stripped away there is little substance behind the unbridled zeal. Crossed Wire has something more than just a core of energy.

It takes a certain amount of savvy to milk a vocal line, leaving one exposed as Moore does in the heartfelt renderings of "Far Away Places" or the musical dexterity to drastically change the mood of the release as they do in the chestnut "Reflection" and in the jaunty musings of the title track "Caught in the Current." Such adroitness sustains this effort overall.

The lyrical quotient of "Caught in the Current"

reflects the taut, tenuous feeling throughout. There's no room for compromise here even when expressing a sense of vulnerability as in "I'm Yours."

Sings Moore, "Sewn up my heart with a delicate touch/I never knew love could be used as a crutch... If you want me, you can have me/I'm yours." It doesn't sound like he's going to wait around for the answer.

Overall, perhaps this release could do with a few less growls. Crossed Wire demand and deserve attention.

— Larry O'Connor



The Civilians will perform with Acoustic Trash Brats Friday, March 27, at Lil's, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck. For information, call 875-6555.

STREET SENSE

Therapy has its success stories



Barbara Schif

Dear Readers,
In my last column I answered a letter that requested information about therapy. The woman who wrote shared with me a traumatic experience and was cynical that she could be helped, least of all by psychotherapy. I answered by telling her how and why I believe psychotherapy could help.

Today's column is the second part of that series. I hope it will give my readers an even deeper understanding.

The following poem and homily were written by two different women, both of whom wanted to express their therapeutic experiences.

I hope others of you will be moved to write on this topic. Your views and opinions would be instructional,

both for myself and for my readers. Barbara

The following is from a grateful patient who wanted to put on paper the words of wisdom learned from her therapy:

If you like things just the way they are, just keep doing what you are doing.

There are three choices when confronted with a situation you cannot accept:

(1) Walk away from it, leave it behind for something new.

(2) Change yourself to be able to accept the situation.

(3) Don't change, don't accept the situation and pay the price.

If you can find and follow your heart of hearts the above choices are always reduced to one. You can

change very little about others (as if you have any right to), and accordingly, beware of the fool's megalomania and self-righteousness.

If you don't value time, you don't value yourself.

For every shameful deed or awful person you have followed in your life, ask what that says about yourself.

Never underestimate your enemies.

Remember, you were born without an awareness of beautifuls nouveau or wind chill. See how far you've come unconsciously; imagine what might be possible with effort.

A change in character requires that you find some. Change is not for cowards, pain on the other hand...

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