

Street SCENE

Mondlock carves out folksy niche

Buddy Mondlock could be a name dropper, rattling off an impressive list of musicians he has worked with or garnered praise from, but the folk artist prefers to let his songs speak for him.

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER



Buddy Mondlock went to the 1986 Kerrville Folk Festival

...and a little apprehensive. Then some people gave him a Lone Star welcome. An aspiring folk artist was working as a festival volunteer while performing at campfires in the evening. "She was the first person I met," said Mondlock, who performs Friday, Aug. 14, at the LaChusa Folk Music Series in Birmingham. "She took my money, handed me my ticket and gave me a big smile to get things off on a good foot."

The bearer of the friendly grin? Michelle Shocked.

But a more well-known name at the time heard Mondlock's penetrating musical prose on stage. Taken aback, the Texas songwriting statesman asked for a tape and later called the Chicago-based native to bestow a heap of praise.

Guy Clark has been raving about Buddy Mondlock since.

Mondlock could drop other names, a list of people he's worked with or peers he's received accolades from, such as Guthrie Brooks, Janis Ian or Townes Van Zandt. Such would only serve to distort the image of an artist whose own images are crafted so delicately in song.

Using an impressionistic blend of words and whispers, Mondlock creates landscapes that almost become greater than the numbers from which they originate.

Mondlock often finds inspiration through the connection of two disparate ideas and turns songs such as "El Cerrito" and "Shelter" (a number about a suicide of a homeless person) into metaphors on frailty of the human condition.

At the core of his art, though, is a keen storyteller's eye and the ability to formulate those images into profound statements revealed in a subtle manner.

"A lot of my stuff is dark," Mondlock said, "but I don't consider myself an unhappy person. I guess it's easier to write dark songs instead of happy songs because if you write something happy you're afraid you might end up writing something that sounds corny."

His numbers have been described as anything but trite since emerging as winner of the "New Folk Award" at Kerrville Festival in 1987. He began his singer-songwriting career in Chicago, performing in the burgeoning folk scene there.

At Clark's urging, Mondlock moved to Nashville and went about releasing his own album. "On the



Dark side: Buddy Mondlock creates landscapes in his music. Most are dark songs although he doesn't consider himself an unhappy person. He worries that writing about something happy may end up sounding "corny."

■ 'A lot of it (songwriting) comes from a spark — an image, a feeling or even just an emotional tone. Maybe just a few words will come out and that will be the seed.'

Buddy Mondlock

Lone." He's busy working on a second LP.

He's also worked with Alice Randall on music for a film screenplay called "Mama Dixie." The collaboration has produced a number, "Detroit, Alabama," depicting a neighborhood of transplanted Southerners in the city.

His vast references to urban and pastoral settings is characteristic of Mondlock's well-traveled musical path. In "Amsterdam," a willowy folk number written with Janis Ian, he took a couple of wayward images and provided them with an address. "I've been there," he said. "The song wasn't initially inspired by the

city. Janis and I were writing and the first few images that came to mind inspired the song... She said where is this place? Then someone said 'Amsterdam.' We both had been there and both our faces lit up."

"A lot of it (songwriting) comes from a spark — an image, a feeling or even just an emotional tone," he added. "Maybe just a few words will come out and that will be the seed."

Buddy Mondlock will perform at 8:30 p.m. Friday, Aug. 14, at Birmingham Unitarian Church, 651 N. Woodward at Lone Pine Road. Tickets are \$12 at the door (\$10 in advance). For information, call 646-4950.

IN CONCERT

Monday, Aug. 10

VERVE PIPE
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Detroit.
996-2747
PARADISE JAZZ JAM
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit.
832-2355
CLUMPS
Cross Street Station, 511 W. Cross, Ypsilanti.
485-5050

Tuesday, Aug. 11

CHISEL BROTHERS WITH THORNETTA DAVIS
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit.
832-2355

Wednesday, Aug. 12

MARY MCQUIRE AND MYK RISE
Gayle's Chocolates, 417 S. Washington, Royal Oak.
398-0001
GLEN ARMSTRONG
With Dirty Clergy at Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.
996-8555
GOING PUBLIC
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Detroit.
996-2747

Thursday, Aug. 13

PARK THE KARMA
With Brothers From Another Planet at 3D, 1815 N. Main, Royal Oak.
589-3344
KING DAVID
Cross Street Station, 511 W. Cross, Ypsilanti.
485-5050
PEDESTRIANS
Griff's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac.
334-9292
CUPPA JOE
Java Way Bar, 23130 Woodward, Farmington Hills.
541-9870
MARY MCQUIRE AND MYK RISE
Java Way Bar, 23130 Woodward, Farmington Hills.
541-9870
TOM COLLINS & THE COCKTAIL SHAKERS
Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.
996-8555
MAITRES
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Detroit.
996-2747
WEATHERVAINES
With Six Bang Bomb and Ten Foot Pole at Paychecks Lounge, 2932 Canfield, Hamtramck.
874-0254

Friday, Aug. 14

JIMMY CLIFF
With Burning Spear and Mayek Daxx at Chene Park, Chene and East Jefferson, Detroit.
393-0066
BLACK PLANET
With Slug Bug, Hoodloppers and Die Blue Couch at The Majestic, 4140 Woodward, Detroit.
833-9850
SOUL SATION
Cross Street Station, 511 W. Cross, Ypsilanti.
485-5050
ERIC CLAPTON
With Curtis Stigers at The Palace of Auburn Hills. Tickets are \$25.
377-0100
M-BAY
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Detroit.
996-2747
THE ALLIGATORS
Soup Kitchen, 1585 Franklin St., Detroit.
259-1374
SCOTT CAMPBELL
Coconut Jos', 225 Jos. Campau, Detroit.
259-2075
INVERSIONS
New Way Bar, 23130 Woodward, Farmington Hills.
541-9870
SCOTT MORGAN
Detroit Bar, 655 Beaubien, Detroit.
963-3355



Earthfest '92: The Butler Twins will be among a number of groups performing at Earthfest '92 at the Michigan State Fairgrounds Saturday, Aug. 15.

MARY MCQUIRE AND MYK RISE
Gotham City Cafe in Ferndale.
398-7430
KILLDOZER
Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.
996-8555
KISS ME SCREAMING
With Cylanderhead at Lili's 21, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck.
875-6252
ORIENTAL SPAS
Third Dimension, Pontiac Trail, Walled Lake.
624-0120
SCOTT STERN & THE TRUST
Griff's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac.
334-9292
CATHOUSE
With First Word at Finney's Pub, 3965 Woodward, Detroit.
831-8070
ELAN RAME
With Mother Superior and Kiss the Clown at Paychecks Lounge, 2932 Canfield, Hamtramck.
874-0254
JOHANNA CONNER
Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, Dearborn.
846-1920

Saturday, Aug. 15

EARTHFEST '92
With Loudhouse, Butler Twins, Missionary Stew, Halloween, Grady Hazy, Inside Out, D.C. Drive, Sunhorse, Cylanderhead, Forehead Slew, the Exceptions and the Civilians at the Michigan State Fairgrounds. Tickets are \$5.
746-4391
LOS LOBOS
With Peter Case at The Majestic, 4120 Woodward, Detroit. Tickets are \$13.50 in advance.
99-MUSIC
TRASH BRATS
The Ritz, 17580 Frayne, Roseville.
778-6401
TEN HIGH
Cross Street Station, 511 W. Cross, Ypsilanti.
485-5050
REGULAR BOYS
Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, Dearborn.
846-1920
CHISEL BROTHERS WITH THORNETTA
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Detroit.
996-2747
BEASTIE BOYS
With L7 at the Phoenix Plaza Amphitheatre, 10 Water St., Pontiac.
334-1999
BLIND DOG BLUES BAND
Soup Kitchen, 1585 Franklin St., Detroit.
259-2075
SCOTT CAMPBELL
Coconut Jos', 225 Jos. Campau, Detroit.
259-2075
INVERSIONS
New Way Bar, 23130 Woodward, Farmington Hills.
541-9870

L7 stays true to punk style

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Taut, drawn to the point where one little pin-prick would send you engulfed in an inferno of rage — L7 knows the feeling all too well.

Many of the songs on the Hollywood-based outfit's Slash release "Bricks Are Heavy" are the result of being pushed to the edge. Delivered in a raw, noisy guitar and groove bass manifesto, L7 numbers such as "One More Time" and "S...tist" aptly depict those emotions of just being plain fed up.

But the song, "Diet Pill," which revolves around a woman seeking revenge on her abusive boyfriend ("Calgon couldn't take me away from the things I've done today"), is the most definitive statement in this regard.

According to band bassist and vocalist Jennifer Finch, the number was inspired by a TV interview with country star Willie Nelson in which

he recalled how one of his old girlfriends — presumably at her breaking point — cooked him on the head with a frying pan while asleep.

That explosive anger is what fermenting at the core of many L7 works. "When I'm in love, walking on the beach in a happy mood, I don't write," said Finch. "When I'm pissed, I write." That's Donita Sparks, guitarist/vocalist quote.

However, the song drawing the most attention in these parts is "Pretend We're Dead," which is receiving ample airplay on CIMX-FM. In the hatch of heavy rockers, the languid dissonant sounding cut is the most hook ridden on the LP.

Otherwise, L7 stay true to their hardcore/punk roots. Influences? The list could leave you contorted, recalling early American punk from the Blasters and Social Distortion to the current Seattle sound crash of Mudhoney and Helmet. Some of it grooves some of it bludgeons.

L7 formed in the void between both waves, emerging from LA's virulent hardcore scene in 1987 with a self-titled album on Epitaph Records. The band went about touring this country as well as the UK and released an EP on Sub Pop, "Smell the Magic," in 1990.

L7 has garnered its reputation solely through music. The fact it's an all-woman ensemble is made superfluous by an uncompromising grunge/groove attack.

"We have no agenda other than to play," Finch said. "We come from the hardcore scene and there were always women in that, so it's no big deal."

"It's lame because it ghettoizes us. It classifies us by gender and not by our music. I'd prefer to get off the subject, really."

L7 opens for the Beastie Boys Saturday, Aug. 15, at the Phoenix Plaza Amphitheatre, 10 Water St., Pontiac. For information, call 334-1999.



Punk roots: Holding true to their hardcore/punk roots are L7 band members Jennifer Finch (from left), Suzi Gardner, Donita Sparks and Dee Plakas.