

# StreetSCENE

## REVIEWS

### Currie cultivates exotic sound with 'Ultraconformist'

BY JAMES RADEBAUGH  
STAFF WRITER

One of the banalities of the times is the complaint that nobody writes good songs anymore. The truth, for those willing to look, is that some of the best songwriters ever are right now producing shining work. Nicholas Currie is among them.

Currie, a 32-year-old Londoner fascinated by human folly, is, more or less, the band Momus. My dictionary tells me that Momus is the Greek god of blame and ridicule. How appropriate in this dismal age of Bush, Clinton and Pearl Jam!

Though Momus has been producing records since the mid-1980s, it (he) has made a splash by releasing three full-length compact discs in the past year and a half. The second of these, "The Ultraconformist," was recorded before a cabaret audience in 1910 and was rediscovered only recently in the vaults of Richmond Records — or so we're told.

It begins with "Sinister Themes," a cabaret-like collection of comically dire one-liners and a warning of what's to come: "Angels caught up in their own puppet strings/Sinister themes in the songs that I sing."

Currie uses a collection of electric sounds, anchored by a keyboard or an acoustic guitar, to give the disc a dark and exotic mood. Through the darkness, though, come the catchy tunes of the songs that employ him. Although the song includes images of prewar London, it's about the current sorry state of labor and the ruling class' not-so-polite way of avoiding honest discussion of the economy.

Before the narrator gets the



knife, he is enticed by his masters: "But," he says, "I wasn't listening carefully/I had other things on my mind/The failure of the union/The future of mankind."

The misogynistic brutality of "The Ladies Understand" will make many listeners wince. Currie spits out the words in a cockney voice as the narrator, a pimp, imagines with fatherly affection his son testing a blade by slashing it across a woman's face. The narrator is quite comfortable with his hatred: "Remember that every offender is his own mother's son/ Here is the song that I have always sung."

"La Catrina" tells the story of a woman who comes back from the grave to reclaim lost opportunity: "La Catrina is dancing in her skeleton/La Catrina with a moldy dress and boots still on/On her skull a single strand of hair/Between her pelvic bones thin air/ And then she opens up like a die..."

"Spy on the Moon," the last song on "The Ultraconformist," offers a strange juxtaposition: euphoric rhythm and melody with lyrics as dark as any on the disc. Currie himself, it seems, is the spy on the moon, and observation seems his alternative to despair: "There is spy on the moon/And he's spying on the earth/Taking note of everything we do/I heard him say he's afraid, he says he's pretty glad/Till we're down here and he's up on the moon."



Good show: Andy Bell and Vince Clark, better known as the British pop duo Erasure, didn't disappoint when they brought what might be the campiest tour in recent rock history to Detroit recently.

## Erasure: Phantasmagorically fun



BY DANIEL CLEM  
STAFF WRITER

Combine the sounds of Abba, gay discos and Judy Garland, then throw in glitzy costumes that would've made Liberace blink twice.

Raise the stage curtain on an ever-changing set that resembles an enchanted forest, the Old West, a brightly illuminated galaxy and a mean city street.

Bring on Andy Bell and Vince Clark, better known as the British pop duo Erasure, and watch 1,700 adoring fans dance for two hours during the campiest tour in recent rock history.

Dubbed "A Phantasmagorical Entertainment," the Erasure show stopped at Detroit's Music Hall Oct. 17-19 for a seamless, virtually flawless extravaganza that — in terms of pure energy —

They were campy, vampy, even a bit trampy, but the one thing Erasure wasn't was a disappointment. The British pop duo was literally the "belles of the ball" when they brought their tour to Detroit's Music Hall.

rivalled the best B'52s or Talking Heads concert.

Backed by two stunning female singers and six tireless dancers, Erasure put on an unforgettable show that captivated longtime fans and recruited new ones. Even those who paid the top ticket price of \$28.50 didn't go away feeling cheated.

His flamboyance in full swing, Bell rode onto the stage in a swan-cycle, wearing what resembled a glittery turquoise women's bathing suit. Don't forget that feather bon.

At one point he professed that when he's feeling down, "I take me-self down to the local gay disco."

Embalmed by comparison, Clark rode onstage in an electronic buggy with headlights, and sat inside to master the keyboards

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and computers. His contribution was, at once, less flashy than Bell's but equally impressive — well, almost.

By the time Erasure blasted into its third song, "Chorus," Music Hall had been transformed into Dance Hall, and there was no turning back. That held true especially when the duo performed three of its Abba remakes, including "Take a Chance on Me." So true was Erasure's tribute that the first "B" in the flashing Abba sign was backwards.

Fans could have been disappointed that Bell and Clark didn't don the Abba wig they wear in their videos, but it wasn't enough to spoil the fun. Besides, attention could be diverted to Bell's

thigh-high silver boots, which would've been the envy of Judy Jetson.

Delivering its best, Erasure performed songs such as "Oh L'Amour" that brought the duo fame, and the recent hit, "I Love to Hate You," that widened its audience.

To demonstrate versatility, Bell sang a rousing, campy rendition of Tammy Wynette's "Stand By Your Man." And he donned the biggest red high heels for his best Judy Garland on "Somewhere Over the Rainbow," which he dedicated to the "homophobic, racist b-----" of the world.

Luckily for the audience, Bell didn't disappear when he clicked his red heels.

## For Halloween, I think I'll be . . .



JILL HAMILTON

In celebration of Halloween, I'm disguised as another columnist, Bob Talbert. I had to search all over town for these extra ellipses.

... The voice introducing WDIV's news spots always says that they

have news "every hour on the hour," then the anchorman starts the news break by saying "It's 12:08" or "1:04" or any other time that's not "on the hour." Maybe they should change their slogan from "objective, accurate news" to "objective news, with a whole lot of accuracy."

I was reading the ingredients list on my bottle of Diet Squirt (yes, I am a loser) and was surprised to discover that wood rosin and vegetable oil were included. Now that I know they're in there, I feel like I can taste them. ("Mmm, that's good wood rosin.")

... There are directions on shampoo.

... The directions — lather, rinse, repeat — are on there because if you "repeat" you unnecessarily use twice as much shampoo. If you followed the directions exactly as they are written, you would have to keep "repeating" after each "lather, rinse" for eternity.

... It was recently announced that Twenty Bird is a boy.

... Euphemism of the week —

sprawling industrial complexes are always called industrial "parks." Usually, industrial parks (and also suburban subdivisions, for that matter) are named for what sort of natural thing developers kicked out of the place in order to build on it. In other words, the name "Cherry Forest Apartments" means a lot of cherry trees were cut down to make way for some apartments. This theory also holds true for things named after Native Americans.

... A local record store reports that these CDs still sell well even though not too many people would probably admit to buying them — records by 1980s one-hit wonders Go West and A Flock of Seagulls, the soundtrack to "Grease" and "Frampton Comes Alive" by Peter Frampton.

... Nickelodeon is making a huge mistake by firing "Ren and Stimpy" creator John K. Their rationale was that Mr. K. was talking too long to produce new cartoons and that his ideas were too offensive. Well, now the cartoons will be on time, but what's the point, since they aren't going to be "real" Ren and Stimpy shows anyway. Plus, they should have been happy that some of the cartoons were offensive — that's the reason they were popular in the first place.

But the saddest thing of all about this firing business is that John K. did the extremely tense voice of Ren. Perhaps the person who does the voice of Snuggles, the cuddly fabric softener bear, could do the job.

Monday, Oct. 26

**PARADISE VALLEY JAZZ JAM**  
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit.  
823-2355  
**THE JESSE GUY**  
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.  
996-2748  
**THE SHAMEN**  
With Utah Saints  
at Industry, 15 S. Saginaw, Pontiac.  
334-1999  
**CHRIS DUARTE**  
Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, Dearborn.  
846-1920

Tuesday, Oct. 27

**MATERIAL ISSUE**  
With Mighty Lemon Drops and Too Much Joy at Industry, 15 S. Saginaw, Pontiac.  
334-1999  
**CHISEL BROTHERS WITH THORNTON DAVIS**  
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit.  
823-2355  
**HIP HOP**  
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.  
996-2748  
**THE KID**  
Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.  
996-8555  
**CATHY WINTER**  
The Ark, 637½ S. Main, Ann Arbor.  
761-1451  
**RAY MANZAREK AND BOB MCCLURE**  
Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, Dearborn.  
846-1920

Wednesday, Oct. 28

**RAMONES**  
With Social Distortion at State Theatre.  
2115 Woodward, Detroit.  
961-5450  
**LYLE LOVETT**  
Fox Theatre, Woodward Avenue, Detroit.  
567-7000  
**DR. JOHN AND THE DIRTY DOZEN BAND**  
Majestic Theatre, 4140 Woodward, Detroit.



Performing: *The Shamen*, prime instigators of the rave movement, perform tonight at Industry in Pontiac. Utah Saints open. For ticket information, call 334-1999.

**99-MUSIC**  
**SOMETIMES WHY**  
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.  
996-2748  
**THE WEATHERVANS**  
Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.  
996-8555  
**VELOCITY JONES**  
Griff's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac.  
334-9292  
**SENSIBLE FOOTWEAR & ANI DIFRANCO**  
The Ark, 637½ S. Main, Ann Arbor.  
761-1451  
**DR. JOHN AND THE DIRTY DOZEN BAND**  
The Majestic, 4140 Woodward, Detroit.  
833-9700

Thursday, Oct. 29

**GRAXIS**  
Griff's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac.

**334-9292**  
**BLUE DOGS**  
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit.  
823-2355  
**WEATHERVANS**  
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.  
996-2748  
**ALEX DE GRASSI**  
The Ark, 637½ Main St., Ann Arbor.  
761-1451  
**THE MATRIEX**  
Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.  
996-8555  
**THROWING MUSES**  
St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit.  
961-MELT  
**MYK RISE & MARY MCQUIRE**  
With Touch Freak at Finney's Pub, 3965 Woodward, Detroit.  
831-8070  
**ETHOS**  
With Plasma Bats at Paychecks, 2930 Canfield, Detroit.  
874-0254

Friday, Oct. 30

**SLEEP CAPSULE**  
With Touch Freak at Finney's Pub, 3965 Woodward, Detroit.  
831-8070  
**FRANK ALLISON**  
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.  
996-2748  
**ELVIS HITLER**  
Sully's, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck.  
875-6555  
**DISCIPLINE**  
With Confuse a Cat at Griff's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac.  
334-9292  
**GROOVEPOON**  
Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.  
996-8555  
**RFD BOYS**  
The Ark, 637½ S. Main, Ann Arbor.  
761-1451  
**JESUS & MARY CHAIN**  
With Cavo at State Theatre, 2115 Woodward, Detroit.  
961-5450

**MYK RISE & MARY MCQUIRE**  
Hoops in Auburn Hills.  
386-7430  
**TOWER OF POWER**  
The Majestic, 4140 Woodward, Detroit.  
833-9700  
**ROY ROGERS**  
Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, Dearborn.  
846-1920  
**X-POREURS**  
With Hyponics and Dynacide at Paychecks, 2930 Canfield, Detroit.  
874-0254

Saturday, Oct. 31

**THE MIND**  
Sully's, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck.  
875-6555  
**DISAPPEAR SISTER**  
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit.  
823-2355  
**BOURMAN EASPERYANE**  
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.  
996-2748  
**BIG DAVE AND THE ULTRASONICS**  
Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.  
996-8555  
**LOU & PETER BERRYMAN**  
The Ark, 637½ S. Main, Ann Arbor.  
761-1451  
**BOB HARVEY**  
With Royal Crest Mob at the Majestic.  
4120 Woodward, Detroit.  
833-9850  
**MYK RISE & MARY MCQUIRE**  
Hoops in Auburn Hills.  
386-7430  
**ROY ROGERS**  
Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, Dearborn.  
846-1920  
**TOXIC BEAT SYNDROME**  
With Passion Nouveau at Paychecks, 2930 Canfield, Detroit.  
874-0254  
**MUTANT BALL**  
Featuring Black Moli, Mental Landscape and Skinhorse at Art Center Music School, 3975 Cass at Alexander.  
832-0483