

MONDAY, JANUARY 17, 1994

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STREET CRACKS



Two timer: Bill Thomas has the best of two worlds as a talk radio DJ and stand-up comic.

Bill Thomas stands up to radio, clubs

By BOB SADLER
SPECIAL WRITER

Bill Thomas, a veteran of the Detroit comedy scene for more than a decade, is not the first stand-up comedian to try his hand on radio, but usually funny people are paid to be silly as part of some morning team. That makes sense, doesn't it?

Thomas, on the other hand, has found a home on talk radio where things are taken a bit more seriously. He does a three-hour shift Sunday evenings on WXYT (1270 AM) and often fills in for weekday talk stalwarts like Tommy McIntyre and David Newman.

And, by the way, he loves being serious. "People who listen to talk radio are involved on a daily basis and very intelligent," Thomas said. "No one's interested in the Bobbitt on talk radio. They want to hear about Clinton and Whitewater. I really have the best of both worlds. I can go into a club and talk about the Bobbitt, and then I can go on the radio and talk about the issues." The talk radio format, driven by the popularity of personalities like Rush Limbaugh and Howard Stern, has taken the country by storm. Even politicians in the 1992 elections had to take notice of its power, largely found in its ability to quickly reach the voters and gauge public sentiment at the same time.

"It's fun to be able to talk to people and let them express themselves," Thomas said. "People need that opportunity. They can't just call up Tom Brokaw, Dan Rather and Bill Bonds. It's like having a political discussion around the kitchen table with a pot of coffee."

While Thomas does enjoy his stints at the mike in a radio studio, he has not totally abandoned his original livelihood — performing at the mike in

See THOMAS, 5A

AT THE MIKE

They're No Dummies... Ahh, the fine art of ventiloquism! Willie Tyler & Lester have been at it for years, providing many uproariously funny moments. To get some laughs of your own, check out the dynamic duo at Chaplin's East in Clinton Township Tuesday through Saturday. Call (810) 792-1902 for reservations.

Not Just for "Comics only"... Fans of cable's Comedy Central should know Paul Provenza. As host of the network's "Comics Only" series, he regularly talks shop with the best stand-ups in the business. See what he can do on stage at Mark Ridley's Comedy Club Jan. 27-29. Call (810) 642-9900 for reservations.

Living "The Good Life"... He signed a Tim Allen-esque deal with Touchstone Television two years after Allen. Now, Chicago's John Caponera is beamed into the homes of America as John Bowman, the dad on NBC's "The Good Life." If you haven't seen the show on Tuesday nights, check it out (it's scheduled to be on immediately following the Super Bowl, too). If you'd like to see the show's star, he's appearing at the MainStreet Comedy Showcase in Ann Arbor Jan. 28-29. Call (313) 996-9080 for reservations.

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Street Scene next week:

- Christina Fuoco takes a look at The Who's rock opera "Tommy."
- John Monaghan's look at the latest in alternative movies.

Chisel Bros. cover like no other

■ The Chisel Bros. aren't the typical cover band. Thornetta Davis, backed by rock veterans, belts out tunes much in the same vein as Sarah Vaughan or Aretha Franklin, making the Tuesday night jam sessions at Alvin's in Detroit special.

By MARK E. GALLO
SPECIAL WRITER



Twenty years after my last visit to Alvin's Twilight Bar, that eternal bastion of bohemia on the fringes of the Wayne State campus, it looks and feels much the same.

John Coltrane's "Giant Steps" is playing on the sound system and 26 years of history seep from the black and white photo-covered walls thick with moments of those who have played — Eek-A-Mouse to Gil Scott-Heron, to those that the management sees in its dreams, like Buddy Holly.

STREET BEATS

It's a classic, often repeated motif, but it works particularly well here. Up front, in the brightly lit cafe, with its herbal teas and warm, inviting soups, the conversations are brisk, intense and, one imagines, full of politics and philosophy.

Deeper into the heart of the music room, past the bar and into relative darkness, musicians greet each other with remembrances of the last time they jammed together, puffing excitedly on cigarettes and sipping at what may be the only beer they'll be able to afford all night.

The Tuesday rhythm and blues jam nights are not a strip-mall version of a blues jam. This is the real deal. Some of the hopeful participants look like moonlighting gangsters. Some like misplaced Nebraska farm boys sporting their first goatee or Jean Shrimpton clones lost in a time warp. Most of the audience, as is the usual case at any jam session worth its salt, is comprised of players who have come to press the urgency of their story on their house band for this weekly rite — the Chisel Bros. and their truly



Bluesy: The Chisel Bros. — Brian "Roscoe Paradise," Tim Duvalier, Ron Pangborn and Gary Indiana — has a pedigree that just won't stop and vocalist Thornetta Davis draws the attention.

spectacular vocalist, Thornetta Davis.

The Chisel Bros. are the very epitome of flexibility, though a bluesy rhythm and blues band is the closest you'll get to an accurate description of their sound. They sidestep any easy categorization. Like the Sun Messengers, the late and great Urbanotons and a few other hands around whom the foundation of Detroit's reputation as one of the musical capitals of the world as built, the Chisel Bros. are an amalgam of city sounds and conscious urban influences. As lead guitarist and former Buzztones, Rob Tyner's MC5 and Was (Not Was) man Brian "Roscoe Paradise" said a few years ago, "This music holds up, because we're not playing at anything. This is just what we sound like."

The centerpiece of the Chisel Bros., since a year after their formation in 1989, is Thornetta Davis. There's no way around Roscoe's

slash and burn guitar work or the Keith Richards look-alike basswork turned in by Tim Duvalier, the extraordinary drumming by Ron Pangborn, who's played with the Buzztones, Mitch Ryder, Was (Not Was), Mary Wells and Matthew Sweet, or the Steely Dan/funky sounding guitarist/vocalist (and veteran of work with the Brides of Funkenstein and the Buzztones) Gary Indiana.

This is a band with chops aplenty and a pedigree that just won't stop, but it's Davis who draws the attention. Not because she's the only woman here. Not because she's "the singer." Davis is a major force of nature who blows most of the combined Top 40 out of the water.

Her range begs comparisons to Aretha Franklin, her control to Sarah Vaughan. Her passion is for the full-blown classic rhythm and blues, ala Chaka Khan and Etta James, whose "Damn Your Eyes" she covers with the fellows.

Everyone from Otis Redding to Ronnie Earl, the Temptations, Ray Head, the Kinsey Report, Elvis Presley, James Brown and Delbert McClinton gets covered by this rump-rumping band, and there aren't many "cover" bands on the planet that I would recommend like I will continue to do this one. Check them out and bring the dancing shoes.

The Chisel Bros., featuring Thornetta Davis host the weekly Tuesday night jam session at Alvin's, 5766 Cass, Detroit. Call (313) 832-1328 for more information. The group will also perform at Mr. Lou's Rhythm & Blues Cafe, 16117 Mack Avenue, west of Outer Drive, Sunday, Jan. 23. The show, a benefit for the Autism Society of Michigan and the Wayne County Society for Autistic Citizens, also features Mimi Harris and the Snakes and The Alligators among others. Admission is \$6. For more information, call (800) 223-6722 or (313) 882-9135.

Lemon Juice savors its '70s sound

Lemonjuice:

Mitchel Angeles, Michael Puwal, Dominic Lamarr and Anthony Bernabè offer music with a '70s flavor.



By CHRISTINA FUOCO
STAFF WRITER

Lemon Juice lead singer/guitarist Mitchel Angeles has focused on a music career most of his life. In preparation for success, he has never strayed far from the "creative atmosphere" on which he has thrived the last 26 years.

At his Dearborn home Angeles received a music education that would make most aspiring musicians envious. Along with being the frontman for the rhythm and blues band The Reputations, Angeles's father John penned songs for the likes of Joe Cocker and sang with Ted Nugent's Amboy Duke.

When the senior Angeles died in 1984, the younger Angeles continued his father's legacy by taking over The Reputations.

He continued to learn about the music industry while working at Cinella's Attic clothing store in Royal Oak. His job there has allowed him to hobnob with established rock acts

like Sonic Youth, The Smithereens and The Cult.

In January 1993, Angeles rolled all those experiences — with The Reputations' drummer Dominic Lamarr in tow — into the creation of the 1970s-flavored rock band Lemon Juice. Although only picking up the guitar five years ago, the swirling power behind it, reminiscent of older Aerosmith, drives the band along with Angeles's smoky voice. The unique blend makes the band one of Detroit's standout talents.

Angelos has a simple explanation for it.

"I don't follow trends... We may sound a little Scantley. If we sound a certain way, that's the way it's supposed to sound," he said squinting his eyes and dragging on a cigarette in a Royal Oak pub.

Actually he prefers more of the camaraderie within the Seattle scene. On his wish list is the collaboration

See LEMON JUICE, 5A

IN CONCERT

HAND ME DOWNS
With Vision at Blind Pig, 206-208 S. First St., Ann Arbor.
(313) 996-6555

2 ISLANDS FROM EARTH
Avon Bar & Grill, 3982 W. Auburn, Rochester Hills, (acoustic)
(810) 652-2707

JESUS AND MARY CHAIN VIDEO APPRECIATION
3-D, 1815 N. Main St., Royal Oak, (videos)
(810) 589-3344

MULAN-MULAN: THE THROAT SINGERS OF TONY
The Ark, 637 1/2 Main St., Ann Arbor.
(810) 645-6555

Wednesday, Jan. 19

FERRIS BURTON
With host John D. Lamb at the Magic Bag, Woodward at Nine Mile Road, Farmdale, (acoustic)
(810) 544-3030

MICHAEL ZAPOROSKI
Followed by Ron Brooks Trio at Bird of Paradise, 207 S. Ashley, Ann Arbor, (solo piano)
(313) 662-8310

BARBARA BURGESS
Blind Pig, 206-208 S. First St., Ann Arbor.
(313) 996-6555

LUNA JAZZ ENSEMBLE
Featuring Quincy Stewart at Q Club, 29 S. Saginaw, Pontiac, (jazz)
(810) 334-7401

Thursday, Jan. 20

MARY MCKINNEY
Hoops, 2705 Lapeer Road, Auburn Hills, (acoustic folk rock)
(810) 373-4744

MICHAEL ZAPOROSKI
Followed by Ron Brooks Trio at Bird of Paradise, 207 S. Ashley, Ann Arbor, (solo piano)
(313) 662-8310

THE DAVE MATTHEWS BAND
Blind Pig, 206-208 S. First St., Ann Arbor.
(313) 996-6555

NETTVO
Griff's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac.
(810) 334-9292

IN-YA ORCHESTRA
Scop Kitchen Gallery, 1585 Franklin St., Detroit, (big band)
(313) 259-1374

See IN CONCERT, 5A