

LET'S GO! STREET SCENE

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STREET SOUNDS

Superstar — Superstar

The name "Superstar" is pretty pretentious for an up and coming band. But there really isn't much that's pretentious about this Scottish quartet.

Superstar is all about straight-ahead pop—without the pompous attitude of some other British bands who shall remain nameless. Lush harmonies reminiscent, believe it or not, of the Beach Boys, form a base for Superstar's sound.

Every once in awhile, different ingredients are added in. For example, in a nod to singer/songwriter Joe McAllister's classical background, a four-piece string section carries the ballad "The Reason Why." Horns spice up the very accessible "I Can't Help It."

Alex Chilton, the epitome of pop, even lends a hand (rather a guitar) in the song "Don't Wanna Die." Soup Dragons fans might like to know that Superstar is a side project of Jim McCulloch.

With "Superstar," pure pop never sounded so good.

— Christina Puoco

LIVE REVIEW

Voodoo Lounge Tour — Stones at Spartan Stadium

In the 1960s, it was written that a city about to be visited by the Rolling Stones experienced a strange tension, like a notorious street gang was about to blow into town. And while the Stones may not inspire that kind of fear today, the atmosphere in East Lansing the week leading up to their show had been nothing short of electric.

It's useless to compare a Stones show in 1994 with one from their heyday. These days the band is less synonymous with sex and violence than old drug habits and big lips. But in the face of age, continuous jabs by late-night talk show hosts and the threat of self-parody, the Stones defiantly strutted on stage Friday night and, for more than two hours, rocked nearly 50,000 faithful and non-believers alike into a frenzy.

Even after 30 years of media overkill surrounding the Stones' every movement, seeing them live, in the flesh, is an overpowering thrill. And the music sounded as hot and vital as ever.

Plumes jetted as a lean, muscular Mick Jagger came out dancing to the pounding beat of "Not Fade Away." Despite the lines in his face, Jagger displayed incredible energy and stamina. The same concert goes who may have nicked about "Grandpa Mick" hours earlier shrieked and squealed with delight as he broke into his trademark snaky moves. Jagger's dancing and Keith Richards' rhythm guitar are the core of the Stones experience, and witnessing these two forces of nature live was pure magic.

The Stones have never been a technically perfect live act, but the dirty guitars of Richards and Ronnie Wood meshed perfectly, especially on trademark stompers like "Tumbling Dice" and "Honky Tonk Women." It's a cliché, but seeing Richards play on stage is like watching the beating heart of rock 'n' roll. Kicking his legs and pumping his arms, Richards looked possessed by the music's power.

Meanwhile, Wood was as playful as ever, smoking and grinning as he bounded around the stage, supplying incredible slide guitar throughout. New bassist Darryl Jones held down a dependable rhythm, and was even showing his own dance moves by night's end.

The stage show itself was a good compromise between the overly flashy "Steel Wheels" concerts and the stripped-down tours of the late 1960s. There were pyrotechnics and impressive gimmicks, but they remained secondary to the incredible charisma of the Stones themselves.

The show wasn't just about hard-rocking firepower, either. There were plenty of tender moments: Richards' warm vocals on "The Worst," a romantic "Beast of Burden" and a loud but touching ovation for silver-haired drummer Charlie Watts, whose usually stoic expression broke into an embarrassed smile.

Newer numbers were well-received, especially the sinister single "Love Is Strong" and "I Go Wild," which turned into an anthem sing-along. A definite highlight was an extended "Miss You" that let the band stretch out and shine. Lesser-known classics like "Rocks Off" and the funky "Monkey Man" were treats for the hard-core fans, but the final barrage of hits had everyone standing and dancing with excitement.

From the moment Richards hit the party-time opening riff of "Start Me Up" through the last pumping chords of the "Jumpin' Jack Flash" encore, the Stones were like some supernatural force. The way they shrug off jokes about their age and keep on doing what they love, fiercely and as wonderfully as ever, should be an inspiration.

It might be silly to say that nearly 50,000 fans went home Friday night, suddenly realizing that age really has nothing to do with rock 'n' roll. But from the sweaty, satisfied grins on stage during their final bows, one could tell that the four Stones already knew it was true.

— Todd Wicks

Suns shed light on their heritage

■ Immigrant Suns' music is like a recipe with a touch of this, a touch of that and a pinch more. And their well-seasoned sound, they say, is a nice change from the noise in popular culture.

BY CHRISTINA PUOCO
STAFF WRITER



It's safe to say that the Immigrant Suns is one of the most versatile bands in the Detroit area. One night they may play their passionate, mostly European ethnic music at a private club in Hamtramck. The next they may gig at alternative havens Alvin's or St. Andrew's Hall.

Wherever Immigrant Suns go, their music, which is a hybrid of Albanian, Turkish and other European cultures, gets rave reviews.

Immigrant Suns recently got the stamp of approval from a Turkish Wayne State University student who had only been in the United States a week. He was surprised, band member Doug Shimmin said, to see a group of "suburban American guys" playing music in a rhythm found mostly in Eastern European and Middle Eastern dance music.

Their last show was a spot opening for the loungey pop band Love Jones at the Burns Room in St. Andrew's Hall. (They'll return there Tuesday, Sept. 13, to open for Combustible Edison.) The band was so impressed by Immigrant Suns that they're considering bringing them on tour with them.

The self-proclaimed "chameleons of music" make the audience feel at ease which may be part of the attraction of the band. Anyone who has even a sliver of Eastern European heritage in them will feel like they've just stepped out of a family wedding at an Immigrant Suns show. In a land where gangsta rappers and down-trodden grunge rockers rule, Immigrant Suns shed a little light playing what Djeto Juncaj calls "happy music."

"People thought we were a refreshing change after hearing all the noise in the popular culture," said Juncaj who plays the guitar and violin among other things.

Transfixing shows
Immigrant Suns shows are so transfixing that it's easy to forget you're watching something, ah-hem, educational.

Violinist Ben Temkow and accom-



Shades of heritage: Immigrant Suns — Joel Peterson (clockwise from top left), Ben Temkow, Doug Shimmin, Djeto Juncaj and Mark Sawasky — will soon release their debut CD.

dian Shimmin vocalize with the utmost emotion, and Juncaj thrashes his black cheekbone-length bobbed hair while playing a potpourri of instruments, including the electric guitar.

Joel Peterson, a veteran of Not Me Dave and the ska band The Exceptions, keeps his trademark smirk on his face while playing his stand-up bass.

Mark Sawasky, who has played every music genre from Polka to rock, pounds away on his drums like he's still in a rock band.

They swap instruments throughout the show as well as they're a handful to watch.

The Immigrant Suns' music is so inspiring that fans have taken to writing poetry and even a film after their shows. The film, written by Ithaca (N.Y.) College film student and Michigan native Jeremy Schroeder, is a "surreal fairytale" that features six Immigrant Suns songs and Shimmin in a major role. "Stand in the Water" will premiere in the Detroit area at the Immigrant Suns soon-to-be scheduled record release party for their CD "Mon-

tenegro."

Juncaj seems himself as the "instigator" of the band. An Albanian, he moved from Montenegro, a now Serbian-run province in the former Yugoslavia, to the Farmington/Livonia area via Italy when he was 8. Like Yugoslavia, many of the cultures that Immigrant Suns touch on have political and religious conflicts. The Immigrant Suns choose to keep turmoil out of their music.

Instrumental decision

For years, Juncaj had an Albanian folk instrument called a Qyteli sitting around his home as a decoration. When he thought about incorporating that with his band Granfaloon, his fellow bandmates weren't really into it.

Knowing that the Detroit-based band Sugi Gun would be receptive to trying most anything, Juncaj strolled into a rehearsal with his Qyteli in tow. Then-Sugi Gun members drummer Sawasky and former Plymouth resident Shimmin liked what they heard and decided to record the music with violinist Ben Temkow and bassist Joel Peterson.

That was roughly two years ago.

As a testament to their talent, Immigrant Suns will perform at the Ark in Ann Arbor on Oct. 1. Temkow has a few reservations about playing there.

"I hope they don't mind the distortion," Temkow said with a bouncy laugh.

In early to mid-November, the band will release "Montenegro" on their label Pho-Net-ic, which also works with Sugi Gun, Burnt Weiners and Not Me Dave.

No, there's no pretentiousness to be found in this band. The accomplished musicians, or at least just Shimmin and Temkow, are it in for one reason.

"Girls."

Immigrant Suns perform Saturday, Oct. 1, at The Ark, 637 1/2 S. Main St., Ann Arbor, (313) 761-1451; and Saturday, Oct. 8, at The Tap Room, 14915 Charlevoix, Detroit, (313) 824-1030. Sugi Gun will perform for the Thursday, Sept. 22, World Music Workshop at Alvin's, 5756 Cass Ave., Detroit, (313) 832-2355.

Bent Lucy: Looking to home for support

BY CHRISTINA PUOCO
STAFF WRITER

Westland-based rock band Bent Lucy has received fan mail literally from all over the world. But in their hometown, they just can't seem to conjure up the same admiration.

"We're like Jesus of Nazareth," guitarist Rob Miller said. "We are not welcome in our own town."

He's not just spewing Matt Dillonianisms from

"Singles." ("We're loved in Belgium," he told "bandmates" Eddie Vedder and Stone Gossard after receiving a bad review.) So far, they've captured the attention of RIP and California's BHM magazines, generating interest from a variety of record labels.

Miller blames the lack of support on the hands-off attitude that grips most music executives, clubs and bands. All of them want success, but they're all

afraid to take a chance, he said.

"They want to play football but nobody wants to touch the football," Miller said.

The band is hoping to gain notoriety locally now that they've released their Rustbelt Records debut "Clowns." It's been a frustrating trek so far. Bent Lucy has heard that their songs are too long (they average six minutes), not radio-friendly, and because lead singer Matthew Ruffino makes a few positive references about God, they've been wrongly labeled a Christian band.

"They can't define our sound and it's threatening to people. Our music has a great beat but you can't dance to it," said drummer Michael Brasic in reaction to those comments.

"We're scary to too many people," Miller added. The sound in question can be best described as The Doors with a dirty, heavy 200-pound sound. (They even have an unpredictable lead singer in Ruffino whose actions have caused them to be blacklisted at a handful of clubs.)

They said they don't plan on changing the sound to make it more "commercially accessible." Bent Lucy, which also includes bassist Kirk Bleau, is not giving up, however. Now is probably not the right time for them, Brasic explained.

"It's just not cool to like us yet," Brasic said with a laugh.

Bent Lucy will perform with Magic Dragonart Friday, Sept. 16 at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit, (313) 832-2355; and at the Magic Bag Theatre Cafe, 22918 Woodward Ave., Ferndale, Friday, Oct. 7, (313) 844-3030.

No respect:
Bent Lucy —
Michael Brasic
(from left), Rob
Miller,
Matthew
Ruffino and
Kirk Bleau
— have fans
worldwide
but can't get
any attention
in their
hometown.



A Rochester resident, Todd is a third-year student, studying journalism, at Michigan State University.