

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 6, 1994

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STREET SOUNDS

Too Many Dogs — Starlings



Starlings is not a band in the traditional sense, but is the solo project of Chris Sheehan, a veteran English musician who wrote, played and produced everything on "Too Many Dogs," Starlings' second album for Atlantic Records. This makes perfect sense, since "Too Many Dogs" sounds much like a Nine Inch Nails album; unfortunately, it's one without all the hooks.

The 10 songs here deal with anger and consist of NIN-type drum loops and whispered vocals, but where Trent Reznor injects brutal guitar riffs and/or harsh screaming, Sheehan simply rides out the songs to their tepid conclusions. His lyrical outlook isn't as bleak as Reznor's, just less interesting: "I hate to have to listen to anybody else, it sounds like noise/And I hate to have to ever have to go to work, I just want to play with my toys," (from "Tears Before Bedtime").

Sometimes after multiple listenings, music that is atmospheric and initially sounded dull can inculcate itself and grow on the listener. This is not the case with "Too Many Dogs." The uncontrollable fury of bands like the Sex Pistols and sometimes Pearl Jam makes their music come alive and gives their songs vitality. As the Clash once sang: "Let fury have the hour, anger can be the power."

Whether you like the works of Nine Inch Nails or not, the aggression and venom in Reznor's songs always make the listener take notice. Listening to Starlings, one comes away thinking that never before has being mad at the world sounded so boring.

— Todd Wicks

A Rochester Hills resident, Wicks is a student at Michigan State University.

Walking on a Tightrope — Johnny Adams

Johnny Adams is royalty in New Orleans. Since he cut his first R&B single in 1959, the Dr. John-produced "I Won't Cry," Adams has had critics falling over their words to try to describe, in some small manner, the majesty, the subtlety, the finesse and the bone chilling beauty of the man's voice.

For a man who spends so much time in jazzy, gospel-based rhythm and blues music, it makes perfect sense to call him one of a small and select handful of the greatest blues singers on the globe. His 1962 "Losing Battle," also produced by Dr. John, was the last thing he had come to a hit before he apparently pulled the shutters back down in his New Orleans neighborhood.

If it hadn't been for Rounder Records signing him in the early 1980s, this prodigious power might have been lost to those who call this music magic forever. Two albums I recommend are 1989's "Walking on a Tightrope," a collection of Percy Mayfield material, and 1991's "Johnny Adams Sings Doc Pomus: the Real Life." The second is a collection of his work by a journeyman vocalist. They're among the finest recordings ever laid to a laser. Slightly akin to Ray Charles in soulful integrity, Adams is gifted with a perfect sense of musical and dramatic timing. He's quintessentially hip, the master throat artist. He turns a phrase with more shading and authority than anyone, outside of Ray Charles.

— Mark E. Gallo

Teenage Symphonies to God — Velvet Crush



Even if the ultra-blue jean jackets, the McCartney Hofner bass, and a turtleneck in the band photo don't give it away, it's obvious from the first chorus of "Hold Me Up" that Velvet Crush wishes it was 1965 again. More simply put, they are a retro band, trapped along with the Black Crowes and Lenny Kravitz in a world they don't want.

Their bio even compares their music on "Teenage Symphonies to God" (500 Music/Epic) to "the celestial sound that Brian Wilson had in mind" when he described the Beach Boys' legendary "Smile" album as the four words that make up this album's title. And though none of the 12 songs here will even have the staying power of oh... "Kokomo," the Mitch Easter-produced track makes a pleasant enough pop sound. In fact, Velvet Crush would be easily comparable to the current breed of power-pop grunge, such as Material Issue or Urge Overkill, but many of their originals are quieter and more thoughtful than anything those two bands would crank out.

In all, most of today's record buyers don't care if bands recycle the '60s. The age marker this group will appeal to was still in grade school when vinyl began its decline. So the managers can go ahead and put the Velvet Crush disc on. They'll lie on their beds, close their eyes and enjoy the music. Then they can pretend that they'll have to get up and flip sides after six songs.

Todd Wicks

A Rochester resident, Wicks is a student at Michigan State University.

Cause & Effect: A hard 'Trip'

■ After the death of one of Cause & Effect's founding members, his musical partner wanted to give up. Cause & Effect is back, though, with an album dedicated to the deceased musician.

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO
STAFF WRITER



Just as David Gahan and Martin Gore make up the core of Depeche Mode, Sean Rowley and Robert Rowe weaved their talents to create the synth-pop trio Cause & Effect.

They independently distributed 1991 debut "Another Minute" was so successful that Zoo Entertainment picked up the distribution and helped push the single "You Think You Know Her" to No. 24 on Billboard's Hot 100 Singles chart. In November 1992 the California-based duo recruited drummer Richard Shepherd and hit the road. The tour was going well until disaster struck.

Rowley suffered a fatal asthma attack in Minneapolis, Minn.

"My first thought was that it was over," said a choked-up Rowe via telephone from New York. "I hadn't worked with anyone else. It had always been Sean and I. It was hard to imagine doing it without him." Rowe and surviving drummer Shepherd recruited old acquaintance keyboardist Keith Milo and tried to resume the tour. However, the jaunt was plagued by equipment malfunctions, theft, automotive breakdowns, management disputes and mounting legal problems. Rowe, who had worked with Rowley on and off since the mid-1980s, went into seclusion.

"I did a lot of thinking and tried to write songs. I felt hollow but I realized that I really liked doing this and I wanted to continue," said the British-born Rowe who also suffers from asthma.

A month later, he and Shepherd emerged and performed during the "Acoustic Christmas" benefit concert with Soul Asylum, Suzanne Vega and David Byrne, sponsored by Los Angeles alternative radio station KROQ. It was rough but they saw a glimpse of the light at the end of the tunnel of depression.

"There was so much support that night, for what we were going through, and the letters we were getting from fans. I couldn't really quit and let the fans down because they wanted us to continue," Rowe explained.

The trio jetted to England and recorded "Trip" with famed producer Martyn Phillips (Erasure, Je-



All right: Cause & Effect — Keith Milo (from left), Richard Shepherd and Robert Rowe — have released their first album since co-founder Sean Rowley died of an asthma attack in late 1992.

rus Jones and the Beloved.) They intended on making "an uplifting record about entering into a soul search." While still uplifting in the musical sense, "Trip" turned into a story of self-discovery and a eulogy of a lost friend. Nonetheless, it has garnered success for the young trio. The first single "It's Over Now (It's All Right With Me)" has received moderate airplay and is one of the top requested songs at the 3-D nightclub in Royal Oak.

Cause & Effect tells its stories with lush ballads ("Alone") and burbling dance rhythms (the first single "It's Over Now").

"Soul Search" is one of the songs Rowe penned while in the self-proclaimed "hibernation."

"I took a drink of holy water," he sings. "It tasted like the pipes were

rusty. I listened to the words of wise men. It sounded like their words were dusty. In the morning would you let me wake with something to believe in 'cause in the morning I only ache for something to believe in."

The aching feeling Rowe awakened with continues in "Sinking" where he pleads with a friend to try to understand his situation: "If you were in my shoes you'd think about it twice because I'm sinking, sinking to a place I've never been before."

The poppy "In Shakespeare's Garden" is by far the most touching. In the song, an anxious Rowe pleads for his "angel to appear."

"I'm sitting in Shakespeare's garden underneath a tree wishing that my missing angel could sit next to me, to help me breathe."

Despite intensely emotional lyrics Cause & Effect gets a lot of flak because Rowe's vocals are similar to Depeche Mode's Gahan. But being compared to Depeche Mode isn't necessarily a bad thing, Rowe said.

"It's certainly good and they're certainly one of the biggest synth bands," he said. "They always niggle hole you. When you think of a synth-based band, everyone thinks of Depeche Mode. If people really listen to the music and what it's about, you'll see Cause & Effect is very different."

The next step is touring, which Cause & Effect will begin in mid-October. (There isn't a Detroit date scheduled yet.) You can't blame Rowe for being a little apprehensive. "I've never been so nervous as all my life," he said with nervous laughter.

High-tops: Reaching a new high in style

BY KYLE GREEN
SPECIAL WRITER

The Detroit fashion elite have many difficult decisions these days.

The choices are endless. True authentic retro looks or new flashy flashbacks, black or midnight black, tight-fitting or cumbersome... and that's just jewelry. Don't even start with clothing.

Nevertheless, many of today's fashion ideas are mirrored designs of streetwear from European fashion. One idea in particular which has been a hot fashion accessory is expected to smolder on this side of the Atlantic is a simple twist on an old athletic favorite — platform high-top. This rediscovered disco fashion trend inspiration graced the catwalks, sidewalks and dance floors of London where it became a fashion staple accessory.

Ravers, fashion elitists and even store manne-

quins sport the retro-1970s fashion heatwaves with a modest twist to the standard athletic foot apparel.

The platform trainer, English for sneaker, is particularly essential to any platform wardrobe, according to Figen Somali, manager of The Boot Store's Kings Road Store, located in one of the London's fashion districts.

"It's European," Somali said, "and it's appealing. Like Timberland (boots) don't appeal to American (tourists), but it is American. This is English and it's appealing to Americans."

The Boot Store, which specializes in American and European boot styles, sells a platform sneaker made by Rappa's Shoe Inc. at its five London stores for almost \$50 a pair, unlike Timberland work boots which can cost more than \$200 for a basic style.

The Rappa's sole stands roughly 1 1/4 inches tall, and its shell is constructed of canvas. The shoes come in black, wine and the best seller white and appeals mostly to females, Somali said.

"They like the style," she said. "We have had ladies in their 30s and 40s who buy them. The Gail age is 18 to 24 years old."

"If we had the men's sizes we would have doubled the sales."

Shelly Shoes of London sells two styles of platform high-tops at its 11 London stores. One style made by Converse with rubber soles and canvas bodies and was available in a wide variety of colors and sold for roughly \$60 a pair. The second line of black, white and silver-colored nylon-constructed model made by Junior Gaultier and sells for over \$100 a pair.

Shelly's reports solid sales of both styles to shoppers of either sex, but would not provide specific numbers, according to one of the company's fashion public relations consultants.

"You could wear them with a suit, probably right now a single-breasted and ball bottoms is very in," she said. That's probably the appeal that they are an oddity, but you could wear them with a bomber jacket and jeans, if you must."

That was the idea that Heidi Lichtenstein, co-owner of Cinderella's Attic in Royal Oak, had when she ordered platform high-tops made by Nana.

Out of the "dozens" ordered, few have been sold, Lichtenstein said.

"People who are really into platformed shoes will buy authentic platform shoes, not athletic platform shoes," she said.

The black and white canvas-styled shoe, complete with skull and crossbones accents, attracts attention in the store's window on Main Street earlier this year, but the curiosity ends there.

"Everyone likes them, but some people are afraid (to purchase it), and there are a new breed of people coming in here who like the music and not the music and the lifestyle," Lichtenstein said.



KYLE GREEN

Stepping up: Platform tennis shoes, a cross between the disco trend and the run-of-the-mill sneakers, have found their way from England to the United States.