

LET'S
GO!

STREET SCENE

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MUSIC NOTES



CHRISTINA FUOCO

Orbital — City was influential

Paul Hartnoll of Orbital still remembers the first time he heard the Detroit-based, platinum-selling house band Inner City.

"When I first heard 'Big Fun' (by Inner City) I thought, 'All right. This is it. This is what I've been looking for.' I thought it was really good. I normally stay away from a vocal track, but that was a real sort of massive record."

On their latest album, "Invisitation," the band inadvertently stayed away from the Detroit sound.

"It was nothing intentional. We tend to sort of write what we fancied at the time and see if it works or not."

"We normally go for someone we know — people who are very good with harmony. I'm really into weaving harmonies around each other. I don't prefer instruments to vocals."

Mills and her record label SBK/EMI are in a bit of a legal flap. An irate woman is suing them for "sexual harassment" because the woman on the cover of Mills' album "The Divine Comedy," according to the woman, "lowers the standing of blond women in society, causing contempt and unwanted hatred and shame."

She would be happy if the woman on the cover was "made into a black-haired white woman."

The cover, painted by Ukrainian-born artist Alexis Steele, depicts a Renaissance-style impression of Mills reaching toward the sky with a variety of creatures at her feet, including a large snake wrapped around her feet.

Early works by Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds ("From Her to Eternity," "The First Born Is Dead," "Kicking Against the Pricks" and "Your Funeral My Trial") as well as Einstürzende Neubauten are being re-released on Mute Records.

Neubauten's album "Strategies Against Architecture (Vol. 1)" includes tracks from their first 7" singles ("Blahversion," "Katie Sterne"), highlights from their album "Kollaps" and hard-to-find vinyl EPs "Tanz Delir" and "Negative Nein." It was re-mastered by long-time Neubauten collaborator Jon Caffery and was compiled by the band with Jim Thirlwell (Poets).

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Sound Bites

Moisture

Members:

- Bob Ostry: singer/songwriter, guitar, piano.
 - Gary Chocak: lead guitarist.
 - Christopher Andrews: drums.
 - Mike Beggs: bassist.
- Upcoming releases:
8-song CD "Moisture"

Ever since the Vancouver-based band Moist started getting airplay, the question "Moist, right?" has become a phrase that makes the Grange Pointe Shore-based alternative band Moisture cringe. It's not just potential fans siding in the screw-up. In promotion of a Moisture gig, an East Lansing club listed that Moist was playing.

"I'm shocked by it," Ostry said. "Maybe that's good though. Maybe they're promoting us."

Most of Moisture's members are childhood friends who grew up in the Redford and Canton areas. They played around in bands like The Tyns and Uras. Chocak and Andrews, who had the promotional "creative difference," kept playing with the other band. "I was friends with them, but I was never in it," Ostry said. "I was never in it. I was never in it. I was never in it."

Because their original CD, "The Little Things," was released on the independent label "The Little Things," it was not on the "Billboard" charts.

Catch the band Friday, Oct. 21, at Flannery's Pub, 2000 Woodward Ave., Detroit, (313) 831-8070, 8 p.m. The House of Blues, Friday, Nov. 11, at Oakland City, 22418 Woodward Ave., Ferndale, (248) 356-1125 (acoustic performance).

Finding the Mental Landscape

■ The members of Mental Landscape have plenty to say about the Detroit music scene and they're ready to strike a blow at the status quo with the release later this month of an 11-song CD.

BY MATTHEW DELEZENNE
SPECIAL WRITER



The mind is a region difficult to navigate. Inroads are few and the terrain uncharted.

The Detroit rock band Mental Landscape has come to claim this remote and forbidding place as the vanguards of a self-proclaimed "Thought Revolution."

With the CD "Harrow's Bard" due out Oct. 29 and a new, diverse line-up of members, the band feels poised to strike a blow to the status quo.

The disparate musical interests of the quartet are apparent on the 11-song CD, which was recorded in four "very long days" at the Loft Studios in Saline with engineer Tim Petalain (Sponge). Nonetheless, the upcoming release is a mature, well-conceived piece of work and shows great improvement over last year's three-song, 7-inch record.

Although two of the songs from the 7-inch appear on "Harrow's Bard," they are supported by stronger material.

The CD's sound is, as the group said, "impossible to label." Some tracks have a straight-ahead, power-pop grunge feel similar to Sugartooth or the Meat Puppets. Others, such as "Pamphlets," "Peas" and "Drawing Down the Moon," tread more heavily. Two standouts are the ballads "Morpheus," with acoustic guitar and duet vocals, and "Headache," with a rhythm and guitar melody very reminiscent of the Doors' classic "The End." Still another choice cut, "Decline," touches on the dissonant aggression of the Rollins Band.

In the spirit of the Doors and Alice in Chains, the lyrics are fragmented and abstract, and the themes of the songs often concern the human psyche.

Reshaping the mind

Founder and vocalist Rambeaux (pronounced "Rambo"), said the group's name is a result of their efforts at "reshaping the mind" of their audience.

"The basic idea is that instead of just going out and playing music and drinking a lot of beer and partying, we try to approach it from the (direction of) making relevant music, things that make you think about different subjects," said bassist Viola Redox.



Yo, quo: Mental Landscape will celebrate the Oct. 29 release of their CD with a performance and party at Alvin's in Detroit, with special guest Forge.

"I wouldn't say we're totally a political band. We write about social things, relationship things. We also include arts and cinema and theater and things in music and the performances."

The first incarnation of Mental Landscape appeared in 1989 when Rambeaux attempted to form a band with his friends and "introduce folk into punk." It was less than successful.

"It came down to the point where they couldn't play what I wanted to do," he said.

By 1992 the group was reformed to include guitarist Steven Allore and bassist/vocalist Redox. The drum slot was filled last February when Ken Macmillan replaced former drummer Mike D. Allore recently left the group and was replaced three weeks ago by Jeremy Polant, former member of Sin-Eye.

"People think we're the same band as three years ago," Redox said. "We actually sound nothing like the old band."

Allore joined after answering an ad that Rambeaux had run. Referring to the other two guitarists who were being considered, Allore laughs and calls himself "the least of three evils." The guitarist, who formerly played bass in what he calls "cheesy metal bands," had rather unimpressive equipment at the time.

Rambeaux, who admits to playing "several instruments poorly," laments the state of "the scene" here in Detroit for aspiring musicians.

'70s mentality

"The mentality of Detroit is still in the '70s," Rambeaux said. "One of the main problems is total apathy toward the music. There's almost a negative attitude about paying \$3-\$5 to see a band."

"There's a large glut of really bad bands, but there are really good ones."

One of the ways Mental Landscape hopes to garner attention is with their live performance.

"We're probably one of the last bands, at least locally, that has a stage show," Rambeaux said. "It's been compared to vaudeville."

Props, projectors and lighting techniques are used to convey a visual message along with five TVs which are placed on stage displaying educational films and graphics. The effect, said Macmillan with a laugh, is "apocryphally conceptual."

But rock audiences are notoriously fickle, and no matter how much effort a band puts forth, results are never guaranteed.

"We could sit around and whine about not getting interest in Detroit,"

Rambeaux said, "but why not concentrate on where we are getting interest?"

Mental Landscape issued a letter to the press in the spring of this year stating "Detroit Just Doesn't Get It." Urging "Wake up, wake up Detroit," the letter warned "This is your last chance to catch up!"

On the other hand, the group's press pack shows "five nominations in the 1993 Detroit Music Awards," and a "best single" nomination in the 1994 Motor City Music Awards. According to inside sources, they have been nominated for multiple awards in the 1994 Detroit Music Awards to be held in mid-November at the State Theatre in Detroit. Further, they claim a single listed in a local top 10 list and airplay on radio station 89.5.

So, it would appear Detroit's music is very well "awake" and does in fact "get it" after all.

Perhaps Mental Landscape just practices songwriting a bit more diligently than they practice diplomacy. But that's OK, a "Thought Revolution" is no place for ambassadors.

Mental Landscape celebrates the release of their CD with a performance and party at Alvin's, 6766 Cass Ave., Detroit, with special guest Forge and Heavy Water Factory. For more information, call (313) 832-2355.

Pigface: Music as diverse as its members

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO
STAFF WRITER

Martin Atkins toured the world with Ministry, Killing Joke and Public Image Ltd. One day on tour, however, the success came crashing down on him. He realized he wasn't happy.

"I remember sitting in Los Angeles going, 'Here we go. There's the pool. There's the palm trees,' (while) twiddling my toes in the pool and being really unhappy," Atkins said. "It had to do with the controls that were being placed on me by people who didn't understand what I was doing and me having the ability to express myself and be heard."

In response, he formed Pigface, a revolving team of musicians, most of whom have played with industrial acts.

"If Pigface didn't exist, I wouldn't be making music anymore, plain and simple," he said.

"Pigface Team '94" is more of a league than a team which consists of three separate groups. The Detroit-bound "A Team" include Atkins, Charles Levi (My Life With the Thrill Kill Kult), Mary Byers (Gaye Byers On Acid), Pat Sprawl (Skinny Puppy), James Teitelbaum (Evil Clownz), Joe Trump (Carbon) and Meg O'Leary (Crunch). Detroit musician Troy Gregory, formerly of Prong and Flotsam and Jetsam, may also make an appearance.

Making appearances in other cities are Paul Ferguson (Killing Joke/The Orb), Andrew Weiss (Rollins), Danny Carey (Tool), Ogre (Skinny Puppy), Cynthia Plastercaster and Jim Thirlwell (Poets). Atkins' Public Image Ltd. bandmate Johnny Lydon is tentatively scheduled to perform in Los Angeles.

Showing his penchant for diversity, Atkins invites a performer that most alternative music followers would scoff at — Taline Downe, vocalist/guitarist of the rock band Faster Pussycat. Although Downe doesn't fit the Pigface stereotype, Atkins said that Downe's attitude fits perfectly, making him a logical choice.



League of its own: With a diverse group of musicians, "Pigface Team '94" is more of a league than a team with three separate groups performing in different cities.

"He has been the person on the Internet talking to people; he's not sitting around saying, 'I was in Faster Pussycat where's my cup of coffee?' He's saying, 'How can I help,'" he said. "That's exactly the kind of person I want to surround myself with."

Atkins is dragging his teams around the country in support of Pigface's latest album "Notes From The Underground," on Atkins' Chicago-based Invisible Records. It features a handful of the touring musicians as well as some other influential artists, including the Red Hot Chili Peppers' bassist Flea.

"Notes From The Underground" is a melodic collage of heart-pounding beats, abrasive guitars and intermittent spoken-word performances. Like the album, the tour, which at first glance would seem under the reigns of insane confusion, is guaranteed to be "locked," Atkins said.

"Everyone on stage (will be) completely locked more than any supposedly well-rehearsed top 20 band."

It will also be more diverse, he added. He likes to shock the senses of his audience by bringing a variety of instruments like cellos and four drum kits into the picture. He couples that with "beautiful harmonies" and "insane distortion."

"It will challenge a few preconceptions," he said with a laugh.

Pigface with special guest Evil Mothers will perform at 8 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 20, at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. Must be 18 or older to enter. For more information, call (313) 961-MELT.