

STREET SCENE



Boo: The Vudu Hippies will bring their Boo TV show to Rick's in Ann Arbor on Halloween.

Vudu Hippies living up to expectations

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO
STAFF WRITER

The Vudu Hippies have had to live up to a lot of high expectations. Since their creation more than 6 1/2 years ago, they've been touted as one of the area's top alternative rock bands.

They've had a lot of shoes to fill too. Never were they tested more than when the Counting Crows lead singer Adam Duritz fell ill during a co-headlining tour with Cracker. Consequently, Counting Crows backed out of the sold-out Feb. 19 gig at the State Theatre in Detroit, much to the disappointment of fans many of whom didn't find out until show time that the band canceled.

The Royal Oak-based band was called in to fill the spot and instead of panicking about the fact that many people there would be upset about not seeing the Counting Crows, they "rose to the occasion."

At the beginning of the Vudu Hippies' set, the crowd had been hanging out by the bar chatting among themselves. Slowly, the crowd moved closer and closer to the stage. When lead singer Renee belted out the Janis Joplin hit "The Other Side of the Mountain," their acceptance was clinched.

"It's just amazing how good you can be given that situation," said the Farmington Hills resident in retrospect. "It was a tough spot filling in for Counting Crows. Here we are, this nowhere band filling in for these top of the chart Counting Crows. We didn't get booed... we expected to."

Apparently, Cracker's lead singer David Lowery felt the same way. Impressed with the Vudu Hippies' set, he invited them along to the Orbit Room in Grand Rapids to fill in once again for Counting Crows.

"It wasn't as comfortable as the State Theatre. It was kind of a cold room," she said. "(But) I was pretty excited that they liked us that much to ask us to continue."

Those shows are a good example of how things have been going for the Vudu Hippies since they inadvertently began recreating their sound to a fuller, lighter and pop rock-oriented sound. The evolution began when bassist and former Birmingham resident Chris moved over to guitar, and new lead guitarist Luke and bassist Rod came on board.

"It wasn't like a planned change either," said Brad, Vudu Hippies drummer. "It was something that happened once they threw in their stylings. It definitely was a noticeable turn which I like because we're doing some more upbeat stuff (like) borderline rock."

Once again, fans at the State Theatre applauded the change when the group opened for Canadian popsters Barmaked Ladies in late September. The crowd almost erupted into a moan pit during a saccharine-sweet unreleased track "Blissful."

Fans can see the band next at Rick's in Ann Arbor on Halloween when they bring their "Boo TV" holiday show to the bar. Guitarist Chris said it's a show not to be missed.

"Our live shows tend to parallel the intensity of an MC5 show, mixed in with the glamor and pizzazz of a Madonna concert, the brilliant choreography of a fine Janet Jackson performance, the impeccable harmonies of Boys II Men, large-like-lightning guitar riffs of a Led Zeppelin reunion show, hair the size of Lyle Lovett, great costumes and a good beat. I'll give it an 87," he said.

Soon afterward, they will re-enter the Temper-mill studios in Farmdale to record more demos. It takes revivals like this to keep a band going for more than six years.

"This is definitely the group that's going to go the distance. We've got great people. The attitudes are fantastic. The only thing that can stop us is, God forbid, the people think we suck," Brad said.

Vudu Hippies perform Monday, Oct. 31, at Rick's, 611 Church St., Ann Arbor. For more information, call (313) 965-5747.

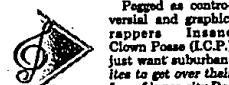
■ Here we are, this nowhere band filling in for these top of the chart Counting Crows. We didn't get booed... we expected to.

Renee

I.C.P.: Sending out a warning

■ With more than 50,000 albums sold, graphic rappers I.C.P. are trying to prove that the world is about to end.

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO
STAFF WRITER



Poised as controversial and graphic, rappers Insane Clown Posse (I.C.P.) just want suburbanites to get over their fear of inner-city Detroit. They should help out its poverty-stricken residents instead of looking at them like they are members of a freak show.

"It's like you're sittin' in the stands of a circus," rapper Violent J. said. "They're looking at the 'freak shows.' This is the way the rich people (think) when they come through (Delray) to Bobo. You see them looking. You see the kids up against the window. It's like they're sittin' there and pointing and looking like they were at the freak show at the circus. Then they laugh at you and don't even help you."

"The ghetto is like the carnival. You can go through Delray and this is all you'll see."

The world is in such bad shape that Violent J. and his partner Shaggy 2-Dope are counting down to the end of the world, they said.

"Every album is a Joker card. By the time the sixth Joker card is released... the world's gonna be over with," Violent J. said. "I was driving down the street the other day on I-75 and there was a man in the middle of the freeway laying down in a puddle of blood. I swear to God. You know what the cars were doing? They were driving around (him)."

"When the world is that (screwed) up, how you gonna say it ain't about to end?"

I.C.P. born

2-Dope and Violent J grew up in Southwest Detroit within bike-riding distance of Detroit's Delray neighborhood. As they "Ninjabled" around the empty warehouses and down-trodden inner-ghetto, the duo witnessed the illness and decay that molded their future.

"We used to call it the unknown city because we used to ride our bikes down there and see run-down factories. Violent J. said, 'You always see one or two houses in three crammed in between the factories. They just put the factories up around her.'"

Having also lived in the suburbs, the rappers feel they have ample knowledge to compare the two lifestyles. At times, however, it seems as if they subscribe to the "suburban beliefs."

"All these kids are killing each other and it's like bumbling clown."



Full regalia: Detroit-based rappers Insane Clown Posse (I.C.P.) — Violent J. and Shaggy 2-Dope (standing) — will play an all-ages sold-out show Saturday, Oct. 29, at the Majestic in Detroit.

You see them banging into each other and killing each other. The whole city's like a big circus. That's why we say it's a big 'Carnival of Carnage,' Violent J said referring to their October 1992 release.

To hammer home their circus point, 2-Dope and Violent J. hide behind clown makeup at shows and in-store appearances.

I.C.P. isn't saying how much of their lyrics are autobiographical.

"We can claim what we claim," Violent J. said stressing that "Dead Body Man" isn't about him or 2-Dope. "We can say we've been there; we can say we've been down and out."

We can claim everything. We've got a right to say what we've got a right to say. You don't hear me singing country because I can't claim that. I never lived on a farm."

"They're into 'clown love,' a love for all gang socks, 2-Dope said. However, they won't say if they're in a gang. They're also into Paygo — and I.C.P.'s fans know that."

"When we do in-stores at record stores, people always come and they have Paygo they want us to autograph. Paygo is the poor man's pop. We're definitely down for some Paygo. We throw Paygo all over the kids and they throw it back."

Halfway there

I.C.P.'s next record will be released in early 1995, marking the halfway-point to world destruction. In preparation for the event, they have already drawn up the remaining three Joker cards which will appear in forthcoming records. Judged on what they've seen, 2-Dope and Violent J. believe they are on track.

"That goes along with Nostradamus' prediction when the world's gonna end," Violent J. said. "That goes along with all the great philosophers, and it goes along with me and him and that's why the world's going to end by the time all six Joker cards are done. We're halfway there to the end."

They chuckle when asked why they should even bother releasing a sixth album since nobody will probably hear it. Although they appear evil on their albums, the affable Violent J. stresses he's a religious man.

"I'm very religious toward God, and I believe by the time the sixth one's released, I'll have converted some people over to God," he said. "My music isn't religious but I'll have so many followers by then that when I say something like, 'Go toward the path of God,' I have the feeling some of them people will and in turn I'll save some people."

Their primarily teenage fans may listen. The EP "Terror Wheel," released in August, went as high as No. 2 on the Detroit-area SoundScan charts in early September. The album spawned the minor hit "Dead Body Man" which was a top request while WHYY was still playing rap and R&B. Still, without major airplay, I.C.P.'s four releases — "Terror Wheel," "Ringmaster," the EP "Beverly Hills 6013" and "Carnival of Carnage" — have sold more than 50,000 copies. The duo credits it to their committed underground following.

"If you go underground it just lives its whole life," he said. "Somehow our first album is still selling. It's still regularly paced. We're still catching on to more and more underground fans who don't listen to the radio and aren't hearing about it."

Along with selling records, they've sold out consecutive shows at Detroit-area venues like The Ritz in Roseville and St. Andrew's Hall and the Majestic in Detroit. Their Halloween show Saturday, Oct. 29, at the Majestic is already sold out.

"With rap in Detroit, usually it will sell, but nobody will come to the show," 2-Dope said. "I guess that's what's unique about us, we sell and we also pull crowds to venues."

"We try to attack both markets (shows and records). Rap is all records. That's why you can have... four platinum artists in one show and they can't even sell out Joe Louis."

Flaming Lips: Escaping the flames

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO
STAFF WRITER

The Flaming Lips considers Detroit its second home but because of the city's violent reputation, the quartet is in and out of there as quick as possible.

"Everybody's pretty scared of Detroit," said Lips' bassist Michael Ivins whose band has never been a victim of crime in the city. "There's just something about it."

To ease their nerves, the Oklahoma-based band found a safe haven at a small hotel in a safer southwestern Oakland County suburb, Ivins said.

"We found a place to stay so we can high tail out of the city," he said.

"That's a step up from what they used to do. After performing, they'd high tail it out of the area completely."

The Flaming Lips is returning to Detroit with Candlebox and Mother's Tongue to play a show on one of the city's most notoriously violent nights — Devil's Night. This is one of the reasons he feels his band's fear is justified.

Despite that, the whiny, yet melodic Flaming Lips, who croon about women making them toast on their hip single, are fond of the city. They perform here at least once every six months and receive a fair amount of airplay on college and alternative radio.

This time around, the quartet is playing Detroit to promote their latest release "Providing Needles for Your Balloons." The eight-song CD is a limited edition EP featuring unreleased and live tracks, including their rendition of "Little Drummer Boy."

"There were these extra sort of melodies lying around (and) no one would be able to hear a lot of it because they're on soundtracks or compilations or something," Ivins said.

On "Needles," the Lollapalooza Festival veterans pay tribute to Suicide founder Alan Vega by covering their song "Too Drummer." Further pro-



viding Suicide's influence on The Flaming Lips, the band plays their album before they hit the stage — sometimes to the dismay of fans.

"We played this state fair in Fresno (California)," Ivins said. "It's funny to see all these kids who maybe have never been exposed to weird stuff and have a crowd of like 5,000 people who have wandered into the fair and Suicide's first album is playing. It's stuff like that that's really cool."

The Flaming Lips' musical preferences are almost as strange as the bills on which they've appeared. Currently touring with Candlebox, the group has visited the area with a variety of acts, including Porno for Pyros, Tool and Butthole

Surfers. "There's several ways you can look at it. Well, maybe there's only one way. Playing is the most important thing. They (Candlebox) are nice guys and they do like us and stuff," Ivins said tapping into the Beevis and Butthead vocabulary list. "We're just out playing to probably loads of people who haven't heard us."

The Flaming Lips will perform three sold-out, all-ages shows at the State Theatre, 3115 Woodward Ave., Detroit, Thursday, Friday and Sunday, Oct. 27, 28 and 30, with Candlebox and Mother's Tongue. Call (313) 961-5451 for more information.

Freaked out: The Flaming Lips will perform with Candlebox and Mother's Tongue in three sold-out shows at the State Theatre in Detroit this weekend.