

LET'S GO! STREET SCENE

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STREET BEATS

Collective Soul — Collective Soul



Collective Soul barely got out of the starting gate when their demo "Shine" turned into a major hit for the five Georgia rockers. In retrospect, the album it was included on, "Hints, Allegations and Things Left Unsaid," was exactly that — a hint about the future, allegations by cynics that they would be a one-hit wonder and a full-blown rock sound that was left unsaid.

With their self-titled second album, Collective Soul's intentions are made perfectly clear. They want to rock (for a lack of a better expression), and write songs so hook-filled listeners will get sucked in mercilessly.

One of those songs, "December" I heard first during the first 20 minutes of an 1 1/4 hour-long, rain-filled drive to Toledo and it was enough to charge me up for the rest of the trip. It's one of those toe-tapping, unpretentious songs that you'd picture Collective Soul singing with acoustic guitar on their front porch.

The chorus — "Don't scream about/Don't think about/Turn your head now baby just spit me out" — sung with singer Ed Roland's stiff-jawed growl, is the highlight of album. A subtle string section rounds out the tale of an addictive yet loveless relationship, which is one of the best pop songs released this year.

Collective Soul shares their fondness for funk in the opening track "Simple," which will please "Shine" fans with its similar ending. The influence of The Beatles' "I Am the Walrus" in "Collection of Goods" and "Untitled" is obvious but the songs still carry the trademark Collective Soul sound.

Collective Soul continues the grip through the rest of the album. Lead guitarist Ross Childress' chunky, charging guitar in "Where the River Flows," the hit single "Gel," and "She Gathers Rain" mixed in with Shane Evans' drum assault, and the crucially catchy lyrics of "Collective Soul" and you have one of the best albums of 1995.

Collective Soul should help out other bands who face the sophomore slump. They own the vaccine. — Christina Fuoco

Glow — Jes Gru



Two years ago, image was a big part of Detroit's Jes Gru. The five pretty boys hit the charts with mismatched "70s outfits and one-dimensional love songs. Now that they've released their second CD "Glow" (Vicarious Records), they hope to be taken a little more seriously.

They've ditched the image and replaced it with long hair (or no hair in one case), matching, run-of-the-mill "twenty-something" gear and two-dimensional love songs.

The 10-song CD is a more mature — musically and lyrically — than the Jes Gru's debut "Mumbo Jumbo." The thicker sound is thanks in part to newest members drummer Heath Moore — who reportedly jammed with the Gin Blossoms on a regular basis while living in Arizona — and guitarist Jeff Davis, both of whom carry the band on "Glow." (Keyboardist Mike Palazzolo and bassist Tom Nixon were prominent on "Mumbo Jumbo.")

Singer Tom Blenkwies seems more at ease than he did with the first effort by showing more emotion. There isn't a standout song on "Glow," but it's a step in the right direction. — Christina Fuoco

924 Forestville St. — Bracket



There has been a lot of attention paid, as of late, to the resurgence of punk rock with the success of bands like Green Day and The Offspring, but none of those bands comes close to the music of Bracket.

On "924 Forestville St." (Caroline), Bracket plays the same punk rock as the others, but Bracket sounds more multi-dimensional, showing they were influenced by punk as well as much of the other great rock music of the late 1970s and early 1980s. The songs are catchy pop numbers with a humorous slant, but not cartoonish like Green Day — Bracket can be funny without being juvenile.

Bracket brings back the memories of growing up in the 1970s and 1980s from the perennial elementary school gym class ritual, "Dodge Ball" to the pain of growing up not being a Brady. The album is kind of like a scrapbook of your youth set to infectious melodies.

"924 Forestville St." should be the record that gets Bracket the recognition they deserve as a great band. Few bands can match the catchy melodies and fun lyrics of Bracket. This is one of those albums you find yourself singing with while you are driving in your car, so be prepared to look foolish as a road hog.

— Eric Darling

A Vassar resident, Eric Darling is the former music director of the University of Detroit's radio station.



Helping out:
Van Halen
— Michael
Anthony
(from left),
Sammy Ha-
gar, Alex
Van Halen
and Eddie
Van Halen
— will collect
food for USA
Harvest or-
ganization
before their
April 15-16
shows at The
Palace of Au-
burn Hills.

Life's in 'Balance' for Van Halen

Eddie Van Halen has long been regarded as one of the top guitarists in the world. But now that Van Halen's sober, bassist Michael Anthony says he's better than ever. Van Halen's latest tour will come to The Palace of Auburn Hills April 15-16.

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO
STAFF WRITER



After nearly two decades of playing on stage, Van Halen bassist Michael Anthony admits the band "still gets jittery" before they hit the stage. But that's not necessarily a bad thing.

"It's great that we still do," said Anthony via telephone from Albuquerque, N.M. If it just felt like another job, he added, the fans would be able to tell and their interest would wane, too. It's not necessarily a nervous nervousness, though.

"It's more of just being excited about it and I feel that way before every single show," he said. "Before we go on and the lights go down and the audience starts showing their excitement, you almost feel like a piece of jelly for a minute."

MTV viewers got a firsthand look at Van Halen's nervousness, Anthony said, when the first date of the band's

channel's spring break coverage.

"We're much better than that now," he said laughing. "You have the first show, you're nervous enough as it is. Then MTV is there, plus we're recording. The second show was so much better."

That uneasiness affects some band members differently than other. For world renowned guitarist Eddie Van Halen, Anthony said, alcohol was what he used to relax. Ironically, now that Van Halen is sober, Anthony thinks he's a much better guitarist.

"He says that he would drink because he was kind of nervous and stuff which is understandable," Anthony said. "I think with Eddie being sober now, he is playing much better."

There's such a big difference now that he's not drinking. Van Halen follows in the footsteps of his brother/drummer Alex who has been sober for 7-8 years. Singer Sammy Hagar and Anthony are "not alcoholics, but we do have occasionally cocktails."

Looking solely at Eddie Van Halen's condition, "Balance" seems to be an appropriate title for their latest album. But it goes deeper than that. A tremendously stressful period preceded the recording of "Balance" — the group's 11th and first collection of all new material since 1990's "For Unlawful Carnal Knowledge."

"We toured quite a bit; we did a live album (1993's "Live: Right Here, Right Now") in between that," he said. "A month after that, our manager (Ed Leffler) passed away so that kind of hit us all pretty hard. Sammy himself was going through a divorce that was pretty ugly."

They took a month off and spent time apart to ease the tension. In the end, it proved beneficial.

"When we got together in the studio, we were closer than we had ever been as a band."

As a result, "Balance" has a lot to say, maybe more than any other I've written," singer Sammy Hagar said in the press materials that accompanied the release of the album. "I felt more inspired to talk about what I think is true and what I'm seeing in the world around me. It's all a lot more personal this time and I've never worked as hard to find the best words to say what I was thinking and feeling."

Tracks like "The Seventh Seal"

and "Deja Vu," I'm real proud of, but I spent just as much time on a simple love song called "Can't Stop Loving You." I tried to go a little deeper each time."

The new material is the focus of Van Halen's latest tour, which comes to The Palace of Auburn Hills for two sold-out shows Saturday and Sunday, April 15-16, but they're not saying that old songs won't be included.

"We're doing as much material as we can off the new album," Anthony said. "We don't have a basic set that we play. It does change from night to night. We're really open to a lot of spontaneity. Sammy doesn't have a certain rap or whatever that he says to the audience. He's always got something different to say."

There's a serious side to the tour, too. Like the last tour, Van Halen has organized a tour-long food drive with the USA Harvest organization.

"It's great, certain radio stations hold contests and things. This one guy brought 400-500 pounds of food to the show," he said.

Three weeks into the tour, the group had already collected 91,000 pounds of food. All the donated food goes immediately to organizations in the area that Van Halen is playing.

"By the time we go on, the good is on its way."

Mojo Nixon knows his 'Whereabouts'

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO
STAFF WRITER

The South by Southwest Music Conference in Austin, Texas, is a place where music industry wanna-be's learn about the business, and struggling bands hope to get noticed by record companies.

Frankly, this is a pretty scary thought but one of the veteran musicians who served as a mentor was Mojo Nixon — the man who brought us "Debbie Gibson Is Pregnant with My Two-Headed Love Child" and "Don't Henry Must Die."

"I guess Michael Bolton or Irving Azoff weren't available," Nixon said with a laugh. Since he started his music career some 16 years ago, Nixon has been one of the most colorful members of the real alternative scene. He scored a handful of college hits which included "Jesus at McDonald's" and "Burn Deep in the Mall" before he hit the headlines when the "Debbie Gibson Is Pregnant with My Two-Headed Love Child" was banned by MTV.

Shortly thereafter, he began his tour with Ireland's Pogues and Violent Femmes. He and ex-Pogues singer/renowned perpetual drunk Shane McGowan kicked off a few people after McGowan passed out during their rendition of "This Land Is Your Land." That, he said was "one of my best

As usual he's stirred a bit of controversy. The song "Bring Me the Head of David Geffen" was beheaded before the release of the album.

experiences singing."

"Shane fell face first into the ground and didn't even notice. He didn't spill his drink either!" Nixon said.

Nixon showed his true colors earlier this year when he attempted to satisfy his "ultimate career objective" — opening for Elvis Presley at the Hollywood Bowl in California. He was invited by the promoters to open after the Weekly World News reported that Presley called Clinton to set up the gig. Much to Nixon's chagrin, the show was cancelled when Presley failed to show up.

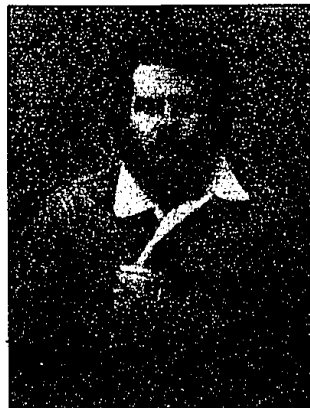
Presley isn't scheduled to play but Nixon is coming to the Blind Pig in Ann Arbor on Tuesday, April 18. You can expect the usual Nixon debauchery. He guarantees it.

"It'll be a hell of a good time. You'll need a doctor's note explaining why you missed work the next day," he said.

Nixon is touring in support of "Whereabouts Unknown," an album that he released on his own. "Either we're geniuses or idiots," he said of taking on the task of putting out a record with little help.

As usual he's stirred a bit of controversy. The song "Bring Me the Head of David Geffen" was beheaded before the release of the album. Prior to that, Nixon sought Geffen's approval by displaying a U.S. Army Assault Vehicle from Tower Records in Hollywood to the Geffen offices. They parked the vehicle near the label's security guards and staff members plastered White Zombie stickers on it. Conveniently, Geffen wasn't available for Nixon to speak with.

The video for the first single "Girlfriend in a



Role model?: Mojo Nixon recently participated in the South By Southwest Music Conference's Mentor Program.

Come" is already in the can and he got top-notch people to work with him on it.

"We thought, 'Why don't we get somebody famous?'" he said. "Sam Shepard is in town, but didn't know him. (Country singer) Kelly Willis was standing next to me. I thought, 'Kelly's on the cover of the National Enquirer (with Lyle Lovett) and you can't get anymore famous than that.'"

Mojo Nixon plays the Blind Pig, 206-208 S. First St., Ann Arbor, on Tuesday, April 18. For more information, call (734) 998-8868.