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STREET BEATS

Thank You
— Duran Duran

Whatever credibility Duran Duran re-established (or maybe that's established) after the release of their self-titled album, they have lost with "Thank You" (Capitol). The 13-track CD of all covers is Duran Duran's way of thanking some of their influences — Bob Dylan, Elvis Costello, Lou Reed and The Doors. Duran Duran's versions of songs like "Lay Lady Lay," "Ball of Confusion" and "Drive By" are stale and stripped of the original version's emotion. Even with the help of Grand Master Flash and the Furious Five, the lead-off track, "White Lines," pales in comparison to the original. The empty keyboards that lace the over-produced rap song make it tough to take the anti-drug song seriously. Four fashionable white suburbanites re-recording Public Enemy's "911 Is a Joke" with an acoustic flavor was a joke, all right. The only standout on the album is the title track, originally done by Led Zeppelin, and that's because they stuck with the original flavor of the song. Thanks, but no thanks.

—Christina Fuoco

Duran Duran plays "Planet Fest" at Pine Knob Music Theatre, 1-75 and Sashabaw Road, Clarkston, 4 p.m. Wednesday, May 24, with Letters to Clo, The Verve Pipe, Bush, The Rasmus and No Live for a Name. For more information, call (810) 377-0100.

Clumsy
— Samiam

Samiam is definitely one of the best bands to come out of the Northern California all-ages punk/club scene. On "Clumsy" (Atlantic), Samiam takes the energy and attack of hardcore and couples it with melody to create something rarely heard in rock music. Lyrically, the songs eloquently describe the lasting personal torment of surviving a painful childhood. Samiam's personal torment is best described in the minor radio hit "Captured." The song describes the endless cycle of domestic violence, where the child who is beaten grows to beat his family. The speaker wants to end the cycle but finds it difficult. The singer, Jason Beebout, sings.

See REVIEWS, 10B

SOUND Bites

The Deterants



Members:
Jeff Adams: bassist
Jim Ayala: drummer
Jim Chatfield: rhythm guitarist/vocalist
Ian Trumbull: vocalist, lead guitarist
Release: "How's My Driving?"

Ian Trumbull's boss at Tower Records in Ann Arbor is either a really nice guy or doesn't exactly know what his employees are up to when he's not around. Whatever Trumbull is supposed to be doing (pricing discs, stocking shelves), he isn't; he's on the phone, presumably on the clock, discussing the recent plight of his band, Ann Arbor favorite The Deterants.

"We had a bad month," he said recently with a laugh. In March, various automotive troubles began seriously cramping the band's style. Then rhythm guitarist/singer Jim Chatfield fractured his skull.

"It's something to talk about if you want to put any really depressing news in there," Trumbull said. "It was really bad. He wasn't home for a month, and we basically couldn't do anything."

With Chatfield finally healed and the band practicing again, the attention is back on getting the all-important record deal. The Deterants' self-financed second album — "How's My Driving?" — has been out about seven months, full of what Trumbull calls "the Midwest, punk rock, early '80s kind of thing," similarly found in Buffalo Tom and the Replacements. The Deterants' hopes are hanging on its success.

"We've basically using this disc as a tool to get signed," Trumbull said. "We don't have anyone specifically working on it, just whoever has the time, usually me."

Although "How's My Driving?" has just hit shelves, the Deterants are already looking to record again.

"We've got a bunch of material about ready and a bunch more we're working on," Trumbull said. "We're trying to find a label that will support putting out this kind of thing. We've been looking at labels that are not funded by the band. Especially the ones that aren't."

— Todd Wicks



Just lovely: Alex Trajano of Troy clowns around with "The Lovely Liebowitz Sisters" — Cheryl Hawker (Patty), Jane Allen (LaVonne) and Liz Gray (Maxine) — between performances.

Blue Dog's Trajano plays by rules

Drummer Alex Trajano is used to the freedom of jazz and his band Blue Dog. But for "The Lovely Liebowitz Sisters," now playing at the Gem Theatre in Detroit, he's learning a whole new discipline.

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO
STAFF WRITER

Drummer Alex Trajano (pronounced Tra-ha-no) doesn't like to follow rules. The Troy resident's avant-garde jazz/rock band Blue Dog thrives on spontaneity while melding hard-driving guitar, chaotic horns and modern jazz sounds.

"When I'm playing in Blue Dog, there is a discipline involved there but there's no structure," he said. "When I'm playing with Blue Dog, I'm concentrating on the moment. I'm concentrating on what's happening around me, where it's going to go and development and everything."

His look mirrors his tastes in music. Artistic black wire glasses encircle his eyes. His jet-black bobbed hair forms a frame around his face. An earring decorates each ear.

So it may come as a surprise to see Trajano nestled within the bamboo hut, palm trees and erupting volcano of the "The Lovely Liebowitz Sisters" colorful "Krakatoa Lounge" at Detroit's Gem Theatre. Instead of being a calm, cool, collective Blue Dog, he has joined Terry Hanson and Dearborn's John Dunn to provide the music as "Bobby Argyle and His Sox" for the breathlessly funny, audience participation-based review.

For this gig, it's either follow the rules or don't get paid. Eight gigs a week he changes his look to fit in with the 1940s, World War II-era storyline. Instead of a black coat and earrings, he wears dress pants and an argyle sweater. He had to make another sacrifice.

"I had to get my hair cut," the affable Trajano said. "It wasn't long, but it was long enough. I didn't have to get my hair cut it was long and kind

of scraggy but they said I could grow it back inward, or pin it, or wear a beret or something.

"Asian hair is really stubborn. I've tried it, it doesn't work."

His Asian heritage adds a touch of irony to the 1937 Troy High School graduate's latest gig. "The Lovely Liebowitz Sisters" is a World War II-era musical review set in Cleveland's Majestic Amazon Hotel and stars Cheryl Hawker as the flirtatious "Patty," Liz Gray as the baton-twirling "Maxine," and Jane Allen as the all-together oldest sister "LaVonne."

Throughout the show, the three "pleasantly plump" sisters, lead by the gold-toothed emcee "Yannis" (John Tsafoyannis), pay tribute to the "boys overseas" and pray for their safe return.

The average patron in Cleveland in 1945 seeing a patriotic show like "The Lovely Liebowitz Sisters" probably wouldn't be receptive of an Asian entertainer. But Trajano, who is Filipino, takes it all in stride.

"It's so funny because they're talking about the boys overseas and plus it's 1945 in Cleveland."

Instead of cuts off Blue Dog's CD "What Is Anything" (Knitting Factory Works), his set-list includes standards like "In the Mood," "Beer Barrel Polka," "Chiquita Banana," "Cuban Pete," and "God Bless America."

New experience

Even though he's not too keen about his argyle sweater, the cheerful, horribly unpretentious Trajano chalks it up to experience.

"It's cool for the experience of doing it," he said. "I've never done something like this before. It's a gig. I'm doing it because I can."

Playing this kind of music has in-

troduced Trajano a whole new discipline.

"Playing stuff from the 1940s, 1945, that tells you you have to understand what the drummers in 1945 were doing so it sounds authentic," he said. "That's what I mean about discipline. I can't do what I do in Blue Dog in this show. First of all I'd get fired, and second of all it wouldn't sound right. That's not what the gig calls for."

"I'm doing what I'm not used to doing which is doing what I'm told basically."

Trajano was initially attracted to the drums after hearing the song "The Little Drummer Boy." His instruments of choice were pots, pans and hampers until the elementary school when he made his first attempt at learning the drums.

"I started playing when I was in fifth grade, but I couldn't carry the snare drums to school because it was too heavy. Then I tried to play trumpet, which was a disaster. Then when I was in the sixth grade I started playing drums again," he said.

He started taking formal lessons at age 17. Having decided to make music his career, he attended Wayne State University, a school known for its jazz program.

Before graduating with a bachelor's degree in music, he honed his skills performing with Rosemary Clooney, Rick Margitza, Jon Paddie and Gregg Bissonette. A three-time performer at the Montreux Jazz Festival in Detroit, he also traveled to Montreux, Switzerland, to perform at their festival in 1991.

An impressive resume, indeed, but what struck him the most in college was that he could make a living off of his craft. To Trajano, money comes second.

Sole motivation

"That's not my sole motivation for playing drums, however. (My motivation) is more in line with what Blue

Dog's doing and been doing. We've made records," he said. "We've toured. We've gone to Europe. That kind of thing is why I started playing music when I was a kid."

"I never knew as a kid that you could make money playing music. Then when I went to school that was the whole motivation for teaching you, was to say if you do this and this, you can make money playing music."

Founded five years ago by keyboardist Mick Dobbay and guitarist Erik Gustafson, Blue Dog enlisted Trajano soon thereafter. The musical chameleons quickly became an integral part of the Detroit music scene. Pushing gigs aside, Blue Dog paid their dues playing everywhere from St. Andrew's Hall to the Majestic Cafe.

The influential, musically schizophrenic label Knitting Factory Works quickly scooped up the band after receiving their demo. The tour for "What Is Anything" took them to festivals around the world.

Now settled at home Blue Dog is busy recording their next record for an as-of-yet-undetermined label in between Trajano's shows and Blue Dog gigs.

In the meantime, he'll keep on being a Sox until "The Lovely Liebowitz Sisters" ends at the Gem.

"The Lovely Liebowitz Sisters" run at the Gem Theatre, 68 E. Columbia, Detroit, runs through June 25. Ticket prices are \$14.50 for 2 p.m. Wednesday shows; \$21.50 for 7:30 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday shows, and 2 p.m. Sundays; \$16.50 for 6 p.m. Sundays; and \$26.50 for 7:30 p.m. Fridays and 5 and 9 p.m. Saturdays. Discounts are offered for groups of 12 or more, and for full-time college students with a valid I.D. This weekend, the Gem is running a Mother's Day special where patrons who buy one ticket can bring mom free. For more information, call (313) 963-8800.

White Zombie puts 'more' into latest album and tour

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO
STAFF WRITER

Less is more, the old saying goes. But in White Zombie's case, their latest album is just "more."

"It's true; everything we did on the last record is on this record but it's just more of everything — more sampling, more heavier, more of a groove, more production," bassist Sean Yseult said.

And more words in the title — "Astro-Creep: 2000 Songs of Love, Destruction and Other Synthetic Delusions of the Electric Head" — as opposed to 1992's platinum-selling "La Sexorcisto: Devil Music Vol. One."

Soaring faster than the Millennium Falcon, "Electric Head Part 1 (The Agency)" kicks off the super-charged 11-track album. Singer Rob Zombie's dark and sometimes nightmarish vocals are more polished and fluid. Former Testament drummer John Tempesta is now on hand to clang the industrial-sounding, machine gun drums. Guitarist J. and Yseult round out the charismatic rhythm section.

The "more" theory, Yseult said, will carry over into their live show which hits the State Fair Coliseum in Detroit Sunday, May 21.

"It's really out of control," Yseult said. "We're spending every dime we have. We're building a big set. You gotta remember, last time we were on the road, we were getting bigger and playing bigger places. We never had time to stop and build a set or do anything."

Yseult talked about the tour while packing up her belongings to put in storage before she and White Zombie hit the road for a year. She calls this tour "short and sweet" compared to the non-stop, 24-year tour they did in support of "La Sexorcisto."

"We must have come to Detroit 200 times," she said. "At Harpo's they were calling us the house band."

As their fan base grew over the 24 years, so did confidence in Yseult, one of the few women in the hard rock scene.

"I've had a lot of girls say, 'I'm gonna go learn to play bass now,'" said Yseult, who was only 19 when she picked up the bass and formed White Zombie with then boyfriend Rob Zombie in 1985. "It's totally cool, especially because half of them are like 15 or younger. They're probably going to be



White Zombie: Plays the State Fair Coliseum May 21 in support of "Astro-Creep: 2000 Songs of Love, Destruction and Other Synthetic Delusions of the Electric Head."

pretty damn good by the time they get their band rolling."

White Zombie, the Rev. Horton Heat and the Melvins perform an all-ages show at the State Fair Coliseum, Woodward Avenue south of Eight Mile Road, Detroit, 7:30 p.m. Sunday, May 21. For more information, call (313) 961-MELT.