

SCREEN SCENE

STREET BEATS

Honor Among Thieves
—Edwin McCain

Like Hootie and the Blowfish, Better Than Ezra, The Verve Pipe and Jackpercio, Edwin McCain is a graduate of the AWARE compilation discs released by Madaket Records. The acoustic first single "Solitude" from "Honor Among Thieves" (Atlantic) is a re-recorded version of what appeared on "Aware II." This time it builds up to a guest appearance by Hootie singer Darius Rucker. It seems like a desperate attempt to attract listeners unless you know that they were schoolmates at the University of South Carolina, and that the two had performed the song during most of their tour together.

"Solitude," which tells the true story of a teenager whose mother insisted that he be kept in a rehabilitation center from age 15-18 even though "the doctors said he was well," is the stand-out song on the album.

The funky uptempo songs like "Jesters, Dreamers and Thieves" and "Don't Bring Me Down" are more of a testament to McCain's talent than the quiet acoustic tunes. (Although the violin in "Don't Bring Me Down" is an awkward touch.) They allow him to showcase his fast-paced vocal style. "Honor Among Thieves" is a good starting point for McCain, who will embark on a fall college tour the beginning of September.

—Christina Fuoco

Strange Pleasure
—Jimmie Vaughan

For his Epic Records debut, former Fabulous Thunderbirds lead guitarist and big brother to the legendary Stevie Ray, Jimmie Vaughan works in a style that surfaced on "Family Style," the disc he cut with his little brother a few years back. Throughout this collection, as was the case with the aforementioned, the style is heavily influenced by 1950s Texas blues and R&B. You can hear that white sax and saddle shoes thing going on, especially in the opening "Boom-Boom-Boom," the piano-driven "Just Like Putty," and the finger-snapping instrumental, "Tilt-A-Whirl," though it's a feel that never strays far. Which is hardly meant to infer that Vaughan has his head stuck in a time warp; rather that he has a reverential appreciation for his roots.

"Flamenco Dancer," the best song here, and "Six Strings Down," a chilling acoustic tribute to the fallen giants of the blues, point to his willingness to stretch out of that roots mold, lest he be pegged some sort of dreaded revisionist. The former, particularly, is about as far from formula as any player has strayed this year. Following its flamenco sketch opening bar, the song breaks into a catchy shuffle that's as infectious as anything out of the classic school. "Two Wings" is a bare-bones, organ and drum-driven gospel piece and "Love The World" works some Creedence-style voodoo drone into the mix.

It's a joyous album, obviously as much for the player as for the listener. Stevie Ray Vaughan's first guitar hero was his big brother, Jimmie Vaughan is the kind of player that every guitar player wishes was his big brother. This is one of the best debuts, in any genre, of this year.

—Mark E. Gallo

Mark E. Gallo is a freelance reporter from Farmington Hills.

Specialty Legends of Jump Blues, Vol. 1
—Various Artists

Call it roots rhythm and blues or just the blues, if you will, but the music that is captured by small labels like Specialty and a dozen others was ultimately to serve as the foundation for rock 'n' roll. Since Fantasy Records acquired Specialty Records, they've been re-issuing spectacular music religiously. This is a taste that jump, live and boogie fans will want to test the speakers and the neighbor's patience with.

The cream of the crop is here, naturally. The great Joe Liggins ("The Honeydripper," "Rag Mop," "One Sweet Letter," and "Pink Champagne"), younger brother Jimmy Liggins ("I Can't Stop It," "Saturday Night Boogie Woogie Man," and "That Song Is Mine"), Roy Milton ("I Dare You Baby" and "The Hunt Is On") are all well represented on collections for their own label, as well as on the "Specialty Story" boxed set, but this will serve as the budget sampler for the uninitiated.

Treats abound here from relative unknowns, as well. Like King Perry and his Pied Pipers doing "Duck's Yaw Yaw Yaw," Buddy Banks' 1949 "Happy Home Blues," with hot vocalizing from Marion Abernathy and Herman Manzy's hard rockin' "I'm Your Rockin' Man." Great stuff to boogie away a Friday night.

—Mark E. Gallo

Mark E. Gallo is a freelance critic from Farmington Hills.

Have a listen

To hear music by Civ (message 2), Orange 9mm (message 3), Seaweed (message 4), Better Than Ezra (message 4), Big Blood (message 5), Edwin McCain (message 6), and Matthew Sweet (message 7) you can call the Street Scene Music Line at (313) 963-2025 on a touch-tone phone. Fast-forward to the corresponding message by pressing 23. To repeat a message, press 4.

'Warped Tour' appeals to punkers

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO
STAFF WRITER

"The Warped Tour" has everything that a skateboard punker could want — two stages of music, skate ramps, street courses, and a giant climbing wall. But Seaweed singer Aaron M. Stauffer says there's one thing missing.

"We think it needs 'The Zipper.' If there were rides this would be a carnival. It does have a climbing wall, but it's not exactly 'The Zipper.'"

"The Warped Tour" is a first collaborative tour to blend music and the "extreme" sports lifestyle of skateboarding, bungee jumping, inline skating, and snowboarding.

"I think this tour's important because it's the first tour like this to go around the country... This is like a really valid thing with a lot of great bands that are, for the main part, not mainstream so far," said Charlie, guitarist for Civ.

All bands playing "The Warped Tour" have been chosen for the tour as a result of their longstanding affiliation with the "extreme" sports lifestyle, dating back to the emergence of skate/musical fanzines in the early '80s, organizers said. Besides Civ and Seaweed, the lineup for the 1 p.m. Friday, Aug. 25, festival at the Phoenix Plaza Amphitheatre in Pontiac includes L7, Quicksand, Orange 9mm, No Use For A Name, Sublime, Fluf, Tilt, Swinging Udders, Red 6 and Wizo on two stages.

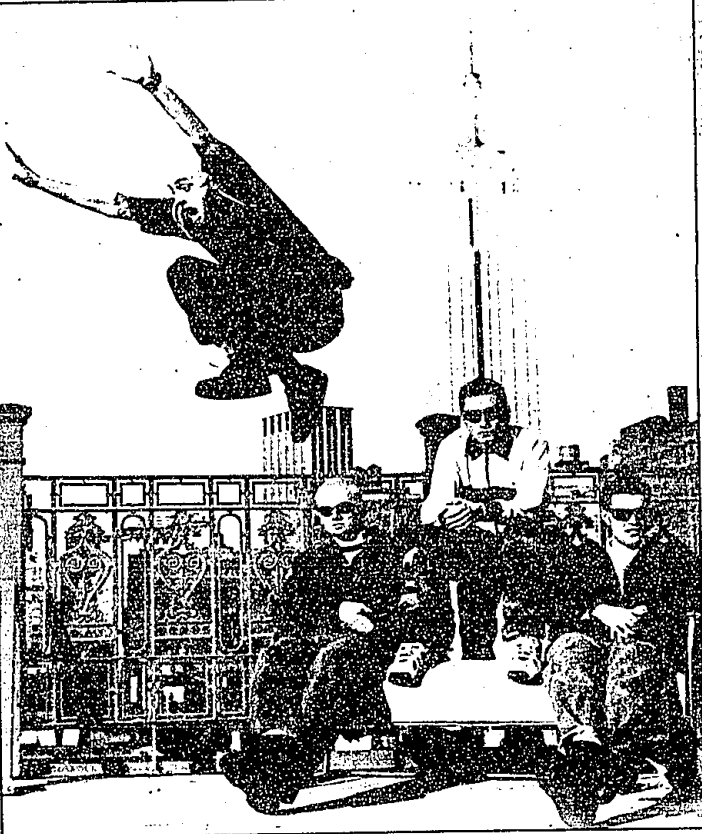
While bands are playing, professional skaters and other athletes will be showing their respective trades in various areas of the venue situated on top of a parking structure. International skate celebrities Remy Stratton, Steve Alba, Neil Hendrix and Jays Bonderer, champion inline skaters Angie Walton, Tom Fry, Rene Hulgren and Arlo Eisenberg and pro BMX rider Keith Tveener are among those scheduled to appear on Friday.

The \$1 charge to climb the wall will be donated to water conservation charity Ocean Aid and the music industry-founded non-profit AIDS organization LIFEbeat.

Most of the bands scheduled to play have achieved street-level credibility with their do-it-yourself punk rock ethic. Orange 9mm, featuring former Detroit Matthew Cross on drums, has toured relentlessly in support of their debut album "Driver Not Included" (East West).

Civ's reason for being like a Who's punk rock with members who are veterans of Gorilla Biscuits, Youth of Today, Judge, Bold, Shelter, Side by Side, and Project Civ, whose major-label debut "Set Your Goals" was just released on Lava/Atlantic, got a boost into the mainstream recently with the addition of the video for "Adam" and the Anti-influenced single "Can't Wait One Minute More" into MTV's "Buzz Bin." Seaweed joined "the show" Tuesday with the release of "Spanaway" on Hollywood Records.

"I'm so excited," Stauffer said last



Creating a buzz: The first video from Civ's debut album "Set Your Goals" is featured in the MTV Buzz Bin along with Better Than Ezra's "In The Blood."

week. "It's my favorite album we've ever made. It has an abundance of good songs on it."

Sublime will soon release an album on Skunk/Gasoline Alley/MCA Records. This tour gives them a peek into potential rock stardom.

"We've only toured in our own vehicle. This time we have a real-life rock-star bus," singer Brad Nowell said.

In spring the band made a ripple in the music industry with its controversial single "Dude Rape." Nowell said that he didn't mean to offend anyone.

When he wrote the song in 1988, he was just messing around with words that rhymed. The complaints about the song, however, have motivated him to write more burning lyrics.

"I've done a lot of phone calls with people who are mad about it. It makes me say, 'Damn. I'd write more songs like that if they would give me a call and yell,'" Nowell said.

Critics have said that this tour will gauge punk rock's popularity. That's the last thing on the minds of the bands.

"I never really think about things

that way. To me, it's a tour that we're doing with a lot of our friends. There's a skate ramp so when I'm bored I can watch these amazing skaters. They just do insane tricks," said Seaweed's Stauffer.

"I think if people come to the show and have fun that's important."

The \$15 tickets for "The Warped Tour" are available at Ticketmaster. The ticket price is slightly higher the day of show. For more information, call (313) 961-MELT.

Nice guys 'Better than Ezra' find success

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO
STAFF WRITER

Better Than Ezra is heading the list of candidates for the "Nicest Band in the World" contest. Singer/guitarist Kevin Griffin edits answer words out of a conversation himself. He explains every music industry term that he uses, if it's needed or not. Instead of rapping on radio, Better Than Ezra goes out of their way to thank the stations that have supported them.

"In every town we go to a radio station and make an effort to get to know people and make an impression. If the people like you personally, they're more apt to listen to your album," said Griffin obviously of good marketing skills as well.

The Louisiana band is on their way to becoming a household name with the release of "Good." Besides the two singles "Good" and the MTV "Buzz Bin" clip "In the Blood," the album is chock full of rock-laden songs. Strings ripple underneath the belted "Killer Inside Me" as Griffin sings "I hope that she believes/Ves I wonder if she sees/The killer inside me." The middle-of-the-road third single "Rosella" should boost the band's credibility with the adult alternative crowd. "Tossage," during which Griffin sings "Wrap yourself in black/listen to the Cure," takes a tongue-in-cheek look at kids. The acoustic "This Time of Year" is the perfect fall soundtrack: "Well there's a football in the air/Across the leaf-blown field/Yeah there's your first car on the road/And the girl you love."

"Everybody loves that song," Griffin said with a laugh. "I wrote it while driving up to a festival game. It was the first fall day. We were driving

north on I-55. It was one of those kinds of days when you get full of revelry."

The road to success was a bumpy one for Better Than Ezra. Before co-founding the band with Griffin in 1988, drummer Cary Bonnez was shot by a former lesbian lover of his then-girlfriend. He has since recovered fully. In 1990 founding guitarist Joel Randall committed suicide.

"After Joel's death, we didn't know if we would enjoy playing as Better Than Ezra," Griffin said. "But after our first show as a three piece, we received so much support from our fans and it bolstered our decision to keep playing." (Better Than Ezra is rounded out by bassist Tom Drummond.)

"Things have been looking 'Good' for the band since it released that album around December of 1993. Initially the band sold copies of the album out of the back of their van. But after reading the SoundScan reports which track album sales, record companies turned their attention toward Better Than Ezra. Elektra won the battle and released the album internationally in January. The six-year pace that it took for the band to be recognized around the world is just food for Griffin.

"I'll tell you, I wouldn't have it any other way. I'm so prepared for it now and we're so much grateful for once and I think we're a better band than if we had gotten signed in '88."

"After playing since 1988 and struggling a lot and playing a lot of nasty bars for no money, it's great to finally be successful," Griffin said.

Better Than Ezra, Dish and the Dumbbells perform an all-ages show



"Deluxe" effort: Louisiana's Better Than Ezra — from left, drummer Cary Bonnez, guitarist/vocalist Kevin Griffin, and bassist Tom Drummond — first released "Deluxe" on their own label Swell Records but when sales starting piling up Elektra signed them. The band plays St. Andrew's Hall in Detroit on Saturday, Aug. 28.

beginning at 7 p.m. on Saturday, Aug. 26, at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. For more information, call (313) 961-MELT.