

STREET SCENE

STREET BEATS



The Large Hungarians

— The Large Hungarians

The songs on The Large Hungarians' self-titled cassette are like a witch's brew — a little of this, a little of that to create a new potion. They are mainly pop-rock songs with a little bit of folk, jazz and ska thrown in for good measure.

This is a noble proposition, creating a sound mixture that is definitely your own. The problem is that the Kalamazoo band does not make it work with the exception of a few small parts. It sounds like each member wants to go in a different musical direction, and the struggle leads to a boring middle ground where there are only hints of the potential the band has.

The trombone parts throughout the album are about the only thing that saves the songs from being really uninteresting. Most of the horn parts catch your ear for a minute, but then you get into the song before the rest of the music throws you back into the sea of mediocrity.

The Large Hungarians are not a bad band, but the five songs on their self-titled release do not make them sound like a very good band either. They do not make a very good pop band, but there are hints that they might make a good ska band.

Hopefully, as they continue to grow musically, they will see that a difference in style could make them shine. Until then, there doesn't seem to be much hope.

The tape is available through Hungarian Headquarters, 4210 Valley Ridge Dr., No. 8, Kalamazoo, Mich. 49006.

— Eric Darling

A freelance reporter from Yassar, Eric Darling is the former music director at WUDM, at the University of Detroit Mercy.

Blues With A Feeling

— Little Sonny

Detroit-based harmonica player Aaron Willis, dubbed "Little Sonny" after early influence Sonny Boy Williamson II, has long been out of the shadow of his mentor by the time "Blues With A Feeling — Ann Arbor Blues & Jazz Festival 1972, Vol 2" was recorded. As vital to the serious blues harmonica fan's record library as his early Enterprise and Stax albums were, this is a revelation to the uninitiated and a reminder to those of us who just plain forget how amazing this man was. The last time I saw him was probably around '78 or '79 and though I've been sufficiently knocked out by the new recordings, this is a trip down memory lane that's as fun to hear now as then. This is live, without the luxury even of a sound check.

Magic abounds here: The spoken intro to "Going Down Slow" ("In order for a horse to win a race, they say a horse must change his pace. In the meantime he can't win a race if he slows down all the time. He has to change his pace and speed up sometimes. There's a time to run fast, and there's a time to slow down. If you want to last, you better take it slow then move in. You gotta know to do it and when to do it. If you don't, you're in a whole heap of trouble.")

Beyond the meeting of proverb and double entendre, it's a statement that might serve as the Little Sonny musical credo; the amazing live takes of his staples "The Creeper Returns," "Hot Potatoes" and "Sad Funk" that outdo the already impressive studio versions; the inspired scatting on "A Woman Named Trouble"; and his reinvention of Jimmy Reed's "Honest I Do," which stands as one of the best versions I've heard yet.

Sonny's got a warble to his voice that makes it as instantly recognizable as his harp, and there are very few harmonica players in history who are so distinctive.

Festival and disc producer John Sinclair's liner notes in which, among other things, he called Little Sonny one of his favorite modern bluesmen (an affection I share), are fact filled and make an enjoyable read, and the interview at the end of the disc with Little Sonny, a man with 40 years of Detroit blues history, is riveting. This is a classy, humble man who just happens to be one of the best harp players of our time that too few folks know anything about.

(Little Sonny plays the afternoon of Saturday, Sept. 16, at Gallup Park in Ann Arbor as part of the Ann Arbor Blues and Jazz Festival. For more information, call (313) 95-MUSIC.)

— Mark E. Gaillo

Mark E. Gaillo is a freelance writer from Farmington Hills.

Have a listen

To hear music by Universal Stomp, Hagfish, Soul Coughing, and The Suicide Machines, you can call the Street Scene Music Line at (313) 963-2025 on a touch-tone phone. Fax forward to the corresponding message by pressing 33. To repeat a message, press 4.

Comedian counters Detroit's image

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO
STAFF WRITER

With Trapper's Alley in financial straits, and the death of Deletha Word plastered all over national magazines and newspapers, the city of Detroit could use a few kind words.

Look no further, it's a life-sized Wendy's restaurant girl to the rescue. After a sold-out show at the State Theatre in Detroit last April, comedian Carrot Top calls the city "my new favorite place."

"I had a blast that night," Carrot Top said Monday via telephone from his Charlotte, N.C., home. "That was a good theater. The crowd was crazy. Detroit people are so nice. I felt like Cal Ripken."

He was so impressed by the city that he's considering taping a cable special at the venue. In the meantime, he'll return to the city Wednesday, Sept. 20, to play the other side of town — the Royal Oak Music Theatre.

For those who haven't seen him on MTV, The Tonight Show, Regis and Karee, Arsenio Hall Show, or Rolling Stone or People magazine, Carrot Top's shtick is trunks filled with bits and pieces of everyday life transformed into gags.

Carrot Top, who looks and acts like a cross between a spastic Raggedy Andy and Howdy Doody, whips his inventions out of the cases like a little kid who's trying to find his favorite toy at the bottom of the toy box. He'll pull out a party horn with an inhaler for asthmatics, a briefcase with a credit card machine attached or O.J. Simpson's lawyers, a fire hydrant for handicapped dogs, or a Dr. Kevorkian bath toy — a rubber ducky with an electric plug — among other things.

Carrot Top said this show will be different than his April gig at the State.

"Well, I'll be a little older. I have a lot of new stuff. We have some new jokes and some new lights. I always try to update the show with things that have happened in the news. Like for Shannon Faulkner I have a hat with a little Twinkie dangling in the front of it to get her through her regiment better," said the comedian, who was born Scott Thompson.

His funniest new joke, he said, has to do with Hootie and the Blowfish.

That's as far as he'll go. For the Florida-born Carrot Top, rock music and comedy go hand in hand. He incorporates flash pots, loud music and backdrops to top the energy that comes with rock shows.

"That's what I wanted from the beginning. You go to concerts, and the energy is not only the stage but in the room. It's amazing how people will line up for concerts. At comedy shows it wasn't the same. There wasn't the energy."

In November, Carrot Top will put



Anything goes: Prop happy comedian Carrot Top brings his show to the Royal Oak Music Theatre on Wednesday, Sept. 20.

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Carrot Top

his energy toward "Chairman of the Board," the first of three movies he has inked to do for Trimark Pictures. "I'm going to bring my persona, my crazy self. It's going to be exciting. We're gonna have some of the props. I play an inventor in the movie, chairman of a big Sharper Image kind of company."

He's always looked forward to doing movies but felt a little funny about it.

"I never wanted to see myself in a movie. When it finally does hit the

movie theater, I'll have to go see it on a Tuesday afternoon at 1 so I'm the only person in there. I'm afraid if (the audience) doesn't laugh, Gosh, what if it sucks?" he said.

"I'll probably throw Milk Duds at the screen. I don't like hearing my own voice. I hate that. If I listen to the machine and I hear 'I'm not home right now,' I hate that. I sound like a goofball."

A book is also in the works. "It's going to be about Reba McEntire. She sold so many copies I

thought I'll just call it 'Reba.' I'll tell Reba's story in my own words. No, it'll be all my jokes, my props, like a little comic book."

But the key to the all of Carrot Top's media is to have fun — he and the audience.

"It's still fun watching the crowd laughing at it. It's like I get a chance to see it in action. I sit at home and do the jokes. When they get a response, it's neat to see the process from the building stage up to the performance."

Carrot Top performs at 8 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 20, at the Royal Oak Music Theatre, 318 W. Fourth St., Royal Oak. Tickets are \$22.50 in advance for the 21 and older show. For more information, call (810) 546-7610.

Universal Stomp's bassist is having fun

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO
STAFF WRITER

Aaron Ruby of Garden City never thought that his hobby would earn him national recognition.

The bassist's hard rock band Universal Stomp has been given a thumbs up by influential trade magazines CMJ and the Gavin Report following the releases of the EP "Stomping of Jake" and the full-length CD "Full Swing." Both releases are available in most major record stores.

"I had no idea," Ruby said. "... It was just something that I normally did to pass the time, to have fun and get crazy. ... I never expected it would be like this."

Universal Stomp formed in April 1994 with Ruby, guitarist Dave Curry, guitarist Scott Poole, singer Ed McEachern, and drummer Jeff Shankin. (Shankin has since been replaced with Mike Du Fore of Livonia.)

The band marks Ruby's first foray into bass playing. "The first couple bands I played in were really noisy punk rock bands. I used to play guitar in all those bands. (In Universal Stomp) there wasn't a bassist so I thought, 'I'll play bass for you.'" the 22-year-old said.

A fan of bands like Youth of Today and Corrosion of Conformity, he admits that Universal Stomp's combative music "wasn't anything I was into at all." But after awhile his views changed.

"It was just so much fun to play." Saturday, Sept. 16, Universal Stomp will play for more than fun. They're playing for a good cause — 10-month-old Ricki Kahl of Flat Rock who is in need of a bowel and liver transplant. Local acts Wicked Garden, Fast Orange, Dr. Orinich, Downer's Grove, Honor Among Thieves, HHR, Flow, St. Francis Cathedral, Euphoric and The Emerald are also on the bill at the Mosquito Club in Westland.



Stomping for a cause: Universal Stomp, who released their debut CD "Full Swing" on Novi's Overture Records, play a benefit at the Mosquito Club in Westland on Saturday, Sept. 16, for Ricki Kahl, a 10-month-old baby who needs a liver and bowel transplant.

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Aaron Ruby
bassist for Universal Stomp

Kahl's surgery will not be covered by insurance. So far the family has raised \$200,000 of the \$430,000 that's needed. The baby was born with gastroschisis, a rare birth disorder in which the intestines develop outside the body.

"She's had nine surgeries already," said her grandmother Doris Barnes of

Taylor. "Her chest bowel is too short. She's not getting any of the nutrients that her body needs. That means we have to feed her through a tube and that goes into her chest. She has another feeding tube through her nose. She's a very, very sick baby."

Her parents, Jeff and Denise Kahl, have two other children, Rebecca, 7,

and Rachel, 5. Both are healthy.

Ruby said his band was more than happy to help.

"If someone asks us to help out, how could we say no? We're happy if someone asks us for help."

The Mosquito Club is located at 23049 Joy Road, Westland. Tickets for the show are \$8 for the all-ages show with proceeds going to the Ricki Kahl Transplant Fund. Doors open at 9 p.m.; showtime is 4 p.m.-9 a.m.

To donate to the Kahl, send a check payable to the Ricki Kahl Transplant Fund to P.O. Box 806, Flat Rock, MI 48134.