

STREET SCENE

Rock 'n' roll dream coming true for Oasis

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO
STAFF WRITER

No one has ever accused Oasis' songwriter/lead guitarist Noel Gallagher of being modest.

The band's debut album 1994's "Definitely Maybe" (Epic) kicks off with the proclamation "tonight I'm a rock 'n' roll star."

"I live my life for the stars that shine. People say it's just a waste of time. Then they said I should free my head. . . . In my mind my dreams real. . . . Tonight I'm a rock 'n' roll star," Gallagher says through his mouthpiece, singer/brother Liam.

Now that he is a self-proclaimed rock 'n' roll star, he took the "trials and tribulations" of his new identity and turned it into "What's The Story" Morning Glory?" (Epic). Oasis' follow-up to "Definitely Maybe."

"The last one was written while we were unemployed. I suppose," Noel Gallagher explained.

"We were sort of dreaming of being rock 'n' roll stars, hence the opening track. This one was written while we are actually rock 'n' roll stars and the trials and tribulations that go along with it."

Those trials and tribulations include frequent flashfights between Liam and Noel, and Oasis and the now-defunct The Verve, and ego clashes between Oasis and Blur.

"It started off, well you know papers quite exaggerated," Gallagher said of the now infamous press battles between Oasis and Blur. "But now we honestly do not like each other in the slightest little bit. . . . We hate them."

But the rivalry "is good fun. It keeps the kids interested."

Gallagher has few good words for his home country's music scene. He denounces acts like Blur, The Charlatans, and Menswear as crap, to put it mildly.

"These bands are so shallow. The actual press officer is more important than the person who writes the songs," he said meaning those bands need all the hype they can get.

While speaking on the phone, Gallagher is sitting in a hotel room in Bournemouth. "Bournemouth," he said phonetically. Or "Bun-mouth to you," he said abrasively emphasizing the Oi!, a coastal city on the English Channel. He's watching the band Sleeper perform on the national TV music program "Top of the Pops." Does the band interest him?

"Absolutely not. The girl who's singing is very interesting. It's sort of a bit like a girl-fronted band. It's not very interesting but she's very good looking."

He prefers Primal Scream, Paul Weller (who happened on as lead guitarist and backing vocalist on the song "Champagne Supernova" from the new record), and Cast. Soul music is another favorite of his.

"I love soul and R&B and Motown. Apart from heavy metal, which is disgusting, apart from your Bon Jovi and your Pearl Jam I like virtually anything."

Gallagher tried to pay tribute to Motown on his new record with the song "Step Out," but one Motown artist said it too closely resembled his tune.

"It sounded a bit like 'Uptight' by Stevie Wonder and he got a lit-

tle uptight about that," said Gallagher in a rare moment of humor.

Gallagher said he's having fun being a rock star. It befits his life-style.

"It has its good days and its bad days. Some days you wish you weren't as famous as you are. Sometimes you really don't get any time to yourself. That's one day out of 50, you know what I mean? The other 49 days are a blast being with your mates on the road, meeting fans and actually playing. It's pretty amazing."

The rock 'n' roll attitude isn't as blatant on "What's The Story" Morning Glory" as it was on "Definitely Maybe." There's a few provocative lines on the album, however. In "Don't Look Back in Anger" Liam Gallagher sings, "Please don't put your life in the hands of a rock 'n' roll band who'll throw it all away."

"Roll With It" may explain the attitude that Oasis members possess. "You gotta roll with it. You gotta take your time. You gotta say what you say. Don't let anybody get in your way. Cause it's all too much for me."

This time around Oasis' album has a "Poltergeist" kick off: "Hello! Hello! It's good to be back."

Musically, "What's The Story" Morning Glory" carries a rocker, heavy tambourine kind of T-Rex and Rolling Stones sound to it with the title track, "Roll With It" and "Some Might Say" while the music turns darker with "Wonderwall" and "Don't Look Back in Anger."

"I think there's a lot of depth to the album. There was a lot of depth to the last one, but the last one was very one-dimensional in its sound. This one's spread more



Now they're self-proclaimed rock 'n' roll stars: Oasis is, from left, rhythm guitarist Paul Arthur, lead guitarist/songwriter/backing vocalist Noel Gallagher, drummer Alan White, singer Liam Gallagher, and bassist Paul McGuigan, who has been replaced by Scott McCloud.

across the board. There's more highs and lows," Gallagher said.

Critics in the U.K. haven't been too fond of the album, Gallagher said, but it still debuted near the top of the charts. His band will be able to test the U.S. waters when the band heads over here this month. (They play the Royal Oak Music Theatre on Sunday, Oct. 22). English pop singer Morrissey reportedly said that he feels touring the States is unimportant.

Gallagher feels differently.

"Those bands that said that aren't very successful. It's a get-out clause. The fact of the matter is they're (junk). Our last album went gold there. It's important for us to tour there."

This tour, he said will be a lot like the last.

"The same as last time except different songs. We walk on the stage, plug the guitars in, turn it up to 11%. We just sort of rock

out a bit. I think we're going to do an acoustic set this time as well. That's it really. A lot of loud rock 'n' roll played by five good-looking young men with nice shoes."

Oasis and special guest acetone perform at 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 22, at the Royal Oak Music Theatre, 318 W. Fourth St., Royal Oak. Tickets are \$12.50 in advance for the all ages show. For more information, call (810) 546-7610.

Babes in Toyland

Tough band shows humorous side

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO
STAFF WRITER

Alternative hard rockers Babes in Toyland may like everyone to know that they have a sense of humor.

Take their latest album "Nemesisters" for example. Or it they do a monotone, vocally abrasive cover of Eric Carmen's mopefest "All By Myself," and a pretty true-to-the-original version of Sister Sledge's "We Are Family," the song that Willie Stargell and the Pittsburgh Pirates adopted as their World Series anthem in the 1970s.

"It was really fun," singer/guitarist Kat Bjelland said of the covers. "It was something different to do. 'We Are Family' is really great. See, it shows we're versatile. We're not one-dimensional personality types. We have a sense of humor."

"It's good to do different stuff, not to take ourselves too seriously," Bjelland said via telephone from her Minneapolis-area home.

She said the band is better able to pound their emotions into the heads of fans at smaller clubs rather than the outdoor venues they played during last year's Lollapalooza Festival.

"It's hard especially in those shells that everyone sits down in. I hate those. I want everyone to have a relatively good time dancing. We all prefer smaller venues because of the obvious factor — the intimate theater. It's just a whirlwind of energy."

The intermingling of quivering and droning vocals, abusive guitars, and tribal drums take the brashness of Babes in Toyland to new heights during live performances.

"We always put out really aggressive shows. We always give

out 100 percent. We're wrenching out emotions out in good music," Bjelland said via telephone from her Minneapolis-area home.

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After this tour, the band plans to take a two- to three-month break — without any plans to break up. Drummer Lori Barbero will concentrate on her Minneapolis-based record label, Spanish Fly Records which is home to bands like Sleep Capsule, Saucer, Queer and Milk. Bjelland said the band — which also includes bassist Maureen Herman — benefits from spending time away from each other.

"It puts a little different perspective on things," Bjelland said of the hiatus. "When we take a break from one another, we can take fresh ideas out of each other. We're gonna do a few projects in there but not any 'leaving of the house' projects."

Catching herself, she added: "I'm not complaining. I feel very lucky."

Babes in Toyland performs Friday, Oct. 13, at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. for the all ages show. Tickets are \$12 in advance. For more information, call (313) 961-MELT.



"Babes" in Detroit: Alternative hard rockers Babes in Toyland — from left, guitarist/vocalist Kat Bjelland, drummer Lori Barbero, and bassist Maureen Herman — play St. Andrew's Hall in Detroit on Friday, Oct. 13.

Band tries to transcend boundaries with 'intelligent' songs

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO
STAFF WRITER

If you go to the English pop band Gene's show at the Blind Pig next week, don't mention anything about the Smiths or the comparisons that have been made about them. Guitarist Steve Mason isn't too happy about it.

"If I find the person who started the rumor that we sound like the Smiths, I'm going to murder him," Mason said via telephone from England.

"I think people who say that obviously haven't listened to the album and haven't listened to the lyrics. We write intelligent good melodic songs that are far more like R.E.M. than the Smiths. We've received a lot of flak for supposedly ripping off the Smiths. So far there haven't been any court injunctions, so I said f***it.

The similarity stops at the longing in singer Martin Rossiter's voice. The band's debut album "Olympian" (Polydor) is fueled by guitar whimpers that give way to aggressive guitars on "London, Can You Wait?"

The poignant lyrics in "London, Can You Wait?" are representative of the "intelligent good melodic songs" that Mason was talking about. In it, Rossiter sings, "I was having the time of my life, so why'd you have to . . ."

"I wrote that song. I was thinking 'what are the emotions you go through when you mourn?'

and I decided that for a lot of people it's anger. I'd never heard that addressed in a song before. I really want to explore every emotion, and I want the songs to be all-encompassing. There's nothing I'm afraid of writing about," Rossiter said during a recent interview.

The cascading vocals and fuzzy guitars of "Sleep Well Tonight," the first single off "Olympian," share the feelings of a fight. "Sleep well tonight. To tomorrow we fight."

It's that spectrum of emotions that makes Gene a universally attractive band, Mason said.

"I think our songs transcend cultural boundaries. Everywhere we go, the songs seem to hit nerves with people. The reaction that we normally get is from devoted audiences. It's surprising to be honest. We're in a different land and we still have people singing the words," Mason said.

Gene doesn't want to be pigeonholed into the "sensitive man" category, however.

"We really don't want to come across as entirely one-dimensional and as f***, poetry reading, slippers-wearing fools because we're not just that. We have tendencies as well. I love football (soccer). I drink a lot. I shop at people. I get aggressive. But I can also sit and read books for hours, and I think our music gets across that completeness in personality," Rossiter said.

He admits that not being able to get an immediate reaction from the audience was frustrating. But he thinks his manager for stress-

into a London apartment above drummer Matt James. At the time, James was in a band with Mason called Spin, and when Spin broke up, Miles started playing bass with James and Mason. In 1992, Mason met Rossiter at a London club and added him to the Gene roster.

Success came quickly for the band. In May 1994, Gene released its first single "For The Dead," which was helmed as "Single of the Week" in New Musical Express magazine. The band's second and third singles "Be My Light, Be My Guide" and "Sleep Well Tonight" respectively, received similar praise in Melody Maker.

There really was no excuse for them not to be successful, according to Mason. The band wrote songs and rehearsed for nearly two years before allowing any outsiders to hear their music.

"Before we decided to play on stage, we made sure that every song would be good. We didn't want to be looking down the set list and saying, 'Oh God, do we really have to play this for people?' It has to mean something to us. We're trying to get the sentiment across to the audience," Mason said.

He was quick to add with a laugh, however, "By no means are we the perfect craft."

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were not good enough," he said.

That could have been future material to their recording debut, Mason added.

"It's very hard to attract interest here. If a new band starts playing, everybody knows in a matter of a month who and what they're doing."

Gene with special guest Michael performed Wednesday, Oct. 18, at the Blind Pig, 205-208 S. Franklin St., Ann Arbor. Doors open at 8:30 p.m. for the 19 and older show. Tickets are \$7.50 in advance. For more information, call (313) 961-MELT.



Poppy sound: England's latest contribution to the American music scene, Gene, plays the Blind Pig in Ann Arbor on Wednesday, Oct. 18. The band — from left, keyboardist Martin Rossiter, guitarist Steve Mason, drummer Matt James, and bassist Kevin Miles — is touring in support of its debut "Olympian."

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