

STREET SCENE

Phish demurs on being next Dead

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO
STAFF WRITER

The band Phish has sold out venues like Madison Square Gardens in New York, and is expected to pack The Palace on Saturday. Sure, bands do that all the time but what's so unusual about Phish is that they've done it without the benefit of a hit single or much radio airplay.

Drummer Jon Fishman admits his band's strategy for collecting such a cult following has a lot to do with pure luck and the way they treat their audience.

"Well other than paying our audience . . . I guess we're not like mean to them. We don't throw things at them, break their limbs and treat them (horribly) like some bands who do nasty things to their audiences. Although it does seem like the nastier the bands are to their audience, the more response they get," Fishman said.

"I think it's just getting out and playing a lot of gigs throughout the years. We've had some airplay but in general it's all been from word of mouth. We just got lucky."

It has nothing to do with the fact that rock magazines and industry insiders have dubbed them "the next Grateful Dead."

"That's a bunch of (crap). A bunch of malarkey. No one's the next anybody. They're still looking for 'the next Jimi Hendrix.' It's just because we've got a lot of hippies in our crowd, we're known as a live band and there's some similarities to our reputations as far as the consciousness. I think the comparisons end there."

"We do have music where we jam and improvise. We're a rock band that improvises. A rock band that improvises is a pretty general statement of comparison. . . . There's certainly been no mass exodus from the Grateful Dead crowd as it were over to our crowd. It's not like all the wealthy businessmen who bought blocks of tickets for Grateful Dead shows suddenly started doing that for our shows, or all the old hippies who used to go to the Grateful Dead 30 years ago throw on the tie-dies and suddenly started doing that for us."

Phish's success has a lot to do with pure talent. The band's live shows "typical" rock show. During the free-form musical happening it's not uncommon for the band to break into a polka, an a cappella Hebrew folk song in the middle of a rock set, an acoustical blues number, or a 15-minute jammed in jam session. Fishman is proud to have captured that feeling on Phish's latest album "A Live One," which he calls one of their best records.

"For years I said, 'I wish we could make an album that had the same kind of energy that our shows do.' We didn't necessarily want one that sounds like a pig but we did want that level of energy. It seemed like (during



Travel'n to town: Phish — from left, Page McConnell, Mike Gordon, Trey Anastasio and Jon Fishman — jump into the waters of the Great Lakes state on Saturday, Oct. 28, to play The Palace of Auburn Hills.

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"clearing all the cooks out of the kitchen" and producing it themselves. "The best stuff from us has yet to come. I don't think any of our albums are a great album. 'A Live One' is our best album, at least energy wise. It's a pretty good selection of songs."

Phish plays The Palace of Auburn Hills, 2 Championship Drive, Auburn Hills, at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 28. There is no opening band. Tickets are \$20 for the all-ages show. For more information, call (810) 377-0100.

- Cabins and ghosts have plenty of choices this Halloween to rock out with the best of them. Here's a listing of some of the wicked choices:
- **Alvin's**, 5756 Cass Ave., Detroit, has its Halloween party at 9 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 28. 18 and older. Cover charge: (313) 832-2355.
 - **Howling Dudes**, Sparta, Waka Jwaka and Skeleton Crew at 8 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 28. Magic Bag Theatre Cafe, 22016 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. \$8. 18 and older. (810) 544-3030.
 - **The Incubators** host their Halloween party at 8 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 28, at the Overtime Sports Tavern, 27200 Morgan Ave., Fraser. (313) 277-0812.
 - **The Luddites** play during a Halloween party 9 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 28, at the New Way Bar, 23130 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. (810) 358-8311.
 - **J.D.**, 1815 N. Main St., Royal Oak, hosts "Halloween Hell" on Saturday, Oct. 28, with "ghoulish drink specials" and the prize for the worst costume. No cover before 10:30 p.m. 21 and older. (810) 544-3030.
 - **Crem** (good review) C.P. sponsors Halloween with the "Second Annual Holo-Wicked Clown Show," Monday, Oct. 30-Tuesday, Oct. 31. Royal Oak Music Theatre, 318 W. Fourth St., Royal Oak. \$10.50 in advance. All ages. (810) 548-1810.
 - **Frank Alton** and the **Old Sox** perform from 8 p.m. to midnight Tuesday, Oct. 31. Heidenberg, 2151 N. Main St., Ann Arbor. (313) 875-8555. 18 and older. Cover charge.
 - **The Buckets**, 8 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 31. Band gig, 206-208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. 18 and older. Cover charge. (313) 240-8355.
 - **Tight Night IV** 7 p.m. to 2 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 28. The Foundry, 18000 E. Warren, Detroit. Features performances by Dan Thee Street, Mental Landscape, The Process, Forge, The Impaler, and Kevin the Uncanny Magician. Cash prizes for best and worst costume plus "special band prizes." The "World's Most Renowned Vampire," Mad McNoy, as seen on *Entertainment Weekly*, *Joan Rivers*, *Talk Soup*, *Entertainment Tonight*, *"Sightings," "Sally Jessy Raphael"* and *Cliff*, will make an appearance while The Learning Channel (MLC) airs the event for an upcoming documentary on "Halloween Vampires." All ages. Cover charge is \$6 for those 21 and older, \$8 for 20 and younger. (313) 886-9260.

Southpaw Grammar — Morrissey

"To be finished would be a relief," sings Morrissey on "The Teachers Are Afraid of the Pupils," the 11 minute-plus opener on his seventh solo album "Southpaw Grammar" (Reprise). It's his umpteenth suicide line; with such lyrics, it's no wonder he's been forever pegged as the music world's most impeccably coiffed mooper.

What's continually overlooked is how much fun moping with Morrissey can be. Since the exalted heights of the Smiths in the '80s to his last solo album earlier this year, few artists have presented their listeners with such a thorough, complete exploration of a certain mood and feeling in a body of work. Notoriously guarded in his personal life, over the course of his career Morrissey has nevertheless revealed more of himself through his music than any artist this writer can think of. He is a genius.

That said, there is astonishingly little doom and gloom on "Southpaw Grammar." The guitars of co-writers **Box Boomer** and **Alain Whyte** are once again brought to the fore, making for Morrissey's noisiest album yet. It is also his most difficult. For beginners, it's hard to decide what to make of "Teachers" and the 10-minute closer, "Southpaw." These two elephantine tracks loudly and ponderously sandwich the other six songs, but despite them, "Grammar" careers at an astonishing pace.

Morrissey's lyrics are typically thoughtful and evocative, but as always, ring true later, after the rush of the music fades. He is in fine voice, his band in top form, so it's no surprise that cuts like "Reader Meet Author" and "Dagbenham Dave" are aggressively catchy and satisfying. The album's real treasure is "The Boy Racer," as exciting a slab of riffage as the *Mozart* has ever crooned over, taken at a full gallop.

Despite its lack of a trademark, meditative brooder and its epic, confusing bookends, "Southpaw Grammar" has muscle to spare. In fact, the album's intensity threatens to alienate his fans, the number of which seem to steadily decrease each year. However, at this point in his career, Morrissey has the success, the clout and the mind to do whatever he wishes. One gets the feeling he wouldn't despair if his latest career move throws a few more fans. After all, what other artists can truly say that the older they get, the harder they rock?

—Todd Wicks

A Rochester Hills resident, Todd Wicks is a senior journalism student at Michigan State University.



Morrissey: Rock music's master of mope offers up an interesting mix of music in "Southpaw Grammar."

Superchunk goes it alone for quality

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO
STAFF WRITER

For frenzied rockers Superchunk, recording its latest album "Here's Where The Strings Come In" (Merge) was a stretch.

"We spent more time on it than others, which is five days recording and five days mixing," said guitarist/vocalist Mac McCaughan of a process that takes other bands months. "For us that's a luxurious amount of time in the studio. We just tend to work fast."

The result is a stunning punk/pop gem. The manic "Hyper Enough" leads off the album which also includes slower, more expansive songs. One song, "Detroit Has A Skyline," takes a look at the brighter side of touring.

"It was kind of about our last tour which was kind of a drag of a tour. There's a friend of mine who lives in Detroit who I hadn't seen in a long time and I got to see her. It's about something good happening in the middle of a bad tour and how it is possible to have a good time on tour, like getting to see people you never get to see. All different kinds of stuff."

The band has done its share of touring since Superchunk was formed in 1989 by McCaughan and bassist Laura Bellance. Jim Wilbur was added on guitar just before the band's first tour, and Jon Wurster joined in late 1991 to complete the present line-up.

McCaughan and Bellance epitomize the "do it yourself" work ethic owning and running Merge Records out of Chapel Hill, N.C.

"People try to turn our decision to make our own records into ideological one, but for us it's a common sense; if you can have complete control over your music and your records every step of the way, why let someone else do it?"



Chunky rock: Superchunk plays St. Andrew's Hall on Sunday, Nov. 5, with Seaweed and Qu'ner.

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Mac McCaughan

"We also do it," McCaughan said. Superchunk's live shows take on a straight-ahead approach as well. "We don't do anything outrageous. We don't have funny costumes. It's just a straight-forward rock show. We play a different set every night to keep ourselves interested. We have seven albums worth of material to choose from so it's easy to do that."

The droning organ that makes sporadic appearances on "Here's Where The Strings Come In" will serve as a special guest.

"We just have to persuade someone in Qu'ner or Seaweed to help us out."

Superchunk, Seaweed and Qu'ner perform on Sunday, Nov. 5, at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. For more information, call (313) 961-MELT.