

STREET SCENE

STREET BEATS

Stripped
— The Rolling Stones

For a band in its 33rd year, the Rolling Stones have kept remarkably busy. Their most recent burst of activity began with the "Voodoo Lounge" album in 1994 and the following tour is booked well into '96. In fact, Mick Jagger and Keith Richards, co-chairmen of the lean, crude rock 'n' roll band that doubles as a well-oiled moneymaking machine, have put out either a group or solo album almost every year since 1964.

However, the Stones have fallen into a disturbing pattern. Five of their last seven tours have resulted in live albums, the last few of which have been largely panned and/or ignored. No matter how good the tour or the studio album preceding it, Jagger & Co. haven't released a truly great live album since "Get Your Ya-Ya's Out" in 1970, a shockingly crude document which captured the electricity and power of the band in its critical heyday.

"Stripped" (Virgin Records) breaks this pattern — sort of. Released with the worst of timing (buried beneath an onslaught of warmed-over Hootenanny), it breaks from the usual greatest-hits-recorded-in-the-worst-sounding-soccer-stadiums-around-the-world format. A handful of the 14 tracks are live, but most were recorded in rehearsals, with one(!) overdub and a minimum of gloss from one-time local resident/producer Don Was. The result is a vibrant, competitive and the first consistently themed Stones album in a decade.

While record store clerks and VH-1 VJs are going to dub it "Stones Unplugged," there is more to the album. Devoid of Richards' familiar open-G grunge, "Stripped" instead highlights Jagger's harmonica and Ronnie Wood's understated slide guitar. Many of the songs are acoustic-based Stones classics, with enough obscure B-sides, unfamiliar album tracks and covers to keep the spotlight off of the greatest hits.

Recording old songs may seem pointless and comparisons to the classic versions are inevitable, but "Stripped" rises to the challenge by occasionally improving on the originals. One of the few nods to the stadium show, "Street Fighting Man," is an ideal opener. Returning to its original acoustic treatment, the Richards/Wood interplay is electrifying, both strumming with string-breaking intensity.

"The Spider and the Fly," the lament of a tempted traveling musician with a girlfriend back home, sounds better coming from an older Jagger after a lifetime on the road, than it did in 1965.

Hilariously acknowledging his advanced age, Jagger, eyeing a woman in a hotel bar, changes the lyrics to "Shirley" (the looked about 50), backed by a slow blues strut.

In fact, his performance of "Angie" replaces the original's preciousness and singlehandedly makes the song's 70s sentiment even more poignant.

The centerpiece of "Stripped," a cover of Robert Johnson's "Love in Vain," contains the Stones at their best start on a record ever. Beginning with a Richards screw-up and some disarming studio chatter, Jagger's understated, beautifully phrased vocal eases the song into motion.

Whereas live he would concede the end to Wood's great slide, that unmistakable harmonica unexpectedly sweeps back to steal the song back. Here, the Stones sound as wounded and soulful as any wrinkled bluesmen they ever emulated. This version smokes the original.

"Stripped," which comes with a cool CD-ROM preview of their upcoming full-length CD-ROM project, is both a bargain and proof that the Stones can thrive without the Telecaster and stage moves. These are elder statesmen who can do the job.

— Todd Wicks

Winter season
is well under way

Judging from the amount of shows announced this week, the winter concert season is underway. Tickets for all shows are available at Ticketmaster unless otherwise noted.

Barring any internal strife, battling siblings Liam and Noel Gallagher of Oasis play the State Theatre, 2115 Woodward Ave., Detroit, at 7:30 p.m. Sunday, March 3. Tickets, \$15.50, go on sale at 10 a.m. Friday for the all-ages show.

Jazz greats Ella and Branford Marsalis also stop by the State Theatre at 7:30 p.m. Sunday Feb. 25. Tickets, \$21.75, go on sale at 10 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 13, for the all-ages show.

Radio darlings 7 Mary 3 and Poe plays an all-ages show at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit, at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 29. Tickets, \$8.50, go on sale at 10 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 13.

Rock band A/C/P/O? and The Poor have announced a second show for 7:30 p.m. Thursday, March 28, at The Palace of Auburn Hills, 2 Championship Drive, Auburn Hills. Tickets, \$25, go on sale at 10 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 13.

Disco act the Trumpets perform at Industry, 15 S. Saginaw, Pontiac, on Friday, Feb. 2, Doors open at 8 p.m. for the 21 and older show, tickets, \$6. Techno/rock act God Lives Understudies comes to the Shelter below St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit, on Saturday, Feb. 17, for an all-ages show. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Tickets, \$7.

She acts Johnny Socks and The Exceptions play the Majestic, 4140 Woodward Ave., Detroit, on Saturday, Feb. 3. Doors open at 8 p.m. for the all-ages show. Tickets are available in advance at the Best Hotel record store, 3185 W. 12 Mile Road (between Coolidge Highway and Greenfield Road), Berkley, (810) 544-2455.

Singer/songwriters Edwin McCain and Jewel co-headline a Wednesday, Feb. 7, show at the Blind Pig, 206-208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. Doors open at 8:30 p.m. for the 19 and older show. Tickets, \$8.



Moving forward: Skeleton Crew just re-released its debut album "Pre-Historic... Dig!" on the Georgia-based label Intersound.

Royal Oak band digs high tech

BY CHRISTINA FUDCO
STAFF WRITER

Royal Oak-based rock band Skeleton Crew digs technology. So to tell the story of its past and beyond, it's delving into the future.

Intersound records in Georgia has re-released Skeleton Crew's 1994 album "Pre-Historic... Dig!" as an enhanced CD, one which plays music in stereo CD players and multi-media presentations in CD-ROM drives. It is believed to be the first enhanced CD by a Michigan band.

Using an archeology theme, the Skeleton Crew story is told in four parts — "Meet The Crew," "Skeleton Sounds," "Videos," and "Pre-Historic... Dig," each of which is accessed by matching icons of prehistoric etchings.

The first level, "Skeleton Sounds," is a listening post where you can read the lyrics and hear all 13 songs from the album. A stone wall moves to reveal "Videos" on the next level where viewers can see live performances of the songs "In Sympathy" and "Trumpeting Soul" filmed at the Magic Bag in Ferndale.

"Meet the Crew" does just that — introduces viewers to the band through audio profiles and pictures. The last segment, "Pre-historic... dig!" is a puzzle element whose reward, once the proper icons are collected, is behind-the-scenes footage of the band in the recording studio.

"I was totally amazed that the label did this," said the band's singer/songwriter Bill Pilipchuk. "I had never even heard of it before."

The enhanced CD is the brainchild of Intersound's Dick Bozzi. The band signed a deal with the label last spring, and last summer Bozzi asked Pilipchuk for footage. Luckily, various friends of Skeleton Crew had filmed shows, the recording process and interviews while the band recorded "Pre-historic... Dig!"

"I sent this whole box, like a care package that you send to a relative behind the Iron Curtain. I felt like throwing a fruitcake in there since we all are a bunch of fruitcakes." They took all the information and created the package based on the prehistoric title. "Pre-historic... dig!" is Intersound's first rock album to be released as an enhanced CD. Pilipchuk describes the label as "kind of like a classic rock label. We are the first new band that hasn't had a past." Others on the roster include Kansas, the Guess Who (without Burton Cummings), Edgar Winter, the Bellamy Brothers and Crystal Gayle.

The album was originally released in December 1994 on Baltic records, a Detroit indie label. Besides the CD-ROM presentation, the new version of the CD includes a bonus track "I'm No Bad Boy." The song line-up was also reworked.

Rich with texture and driven by Pilipchuk's soaring vocals, "Pre-Historic... Dig!" is a sonic landscape of pop/rock sensibility. The steady balance of clever guitar interplay, delicate vocal harmonies and a gently hypnotic rhythm section, allows the group to mix their eclectic leanings with mainstream appeal.

Soon after its release, "Pre-Historic... Dig!" earned the band critical acclaim. At the 1995 Motor City Music Awards, Skeleton Crew earned top honors as "Band of the Year" and the album "Best Pop/Rock Record." The 1995 Detroit Live Music Awards honored them with the "Best Detroit Rock Band" and "Best Recording" prizes.

Pilipchuk, a former member of the Purple Gang and Bitter Sweet Alley, formed the skeleton version of the band in 1989 when he met guitarist Scott Christy. Their first project was a remake of "Sugar Sugar" by The Archies.

Soon afterward the two began collaborating on songs.

"I didn't have a concept of a band or anything. I wrote 30 moody songs just purging my soul. It was my therapy," Pilipchuk said. Eventually acoustic guitarist/keyboardist Dan Hess, bassist/harmonica player Chris Badyne, and drummer Greg Tyler were folded into the group.

Pilipchuk already has the next two

albums "done in my head. I've got titles, the concepts, and practically all the songs. I just don't know which record should come out first."

For the next record, the group is treading into uncharted territory.

"Things are dramatically changing now. On the next record we'll add electric guitar and there's a batch of more aggressive upbeat things that are going to come out."

For now, the group is taking care of the business end of things for "Pre-Historic... Dig!" which was released nationally Jan. 1.

"It's kind of weird. We have this national record out. I don't have a lawyer. I don't have a manager. There was really no need for a manager in the early days. We were five writers who got together just to write songs. We don't perform that much. Our main concern is writing and recording."

Skeleton Crew performs at the 7th House, 7 N. Saginaw, Pontiac, on Saturday, Feb. 24, with special guests Thunderharp Choir and Scott Fab. Doors open at 8 p.m. for the 18 and older show. Tickets are \$6 in advance. For more information, call (810) 335-8100.

Enhanced CDs are new music trend

BY CHRISTINA FUDCO
STAFF WRITER

Within the last year, record companies have released a slew of enhanced CDs. Here are brief descriptions of the most recent ones. (Unless otherwise stated, the CD-ROMs are available on Windows and Macintosh computers.)

■ "Little Things" maxi-single by Bush (Interscope). The audio portion includes the hit "Little Things" as well as two previously unreleased tracks — a live version of "Little Things" and "Bud."

On the computer, viewers can sample the 11 songs from Bush's album "Sixteen Stone," watch interviews with band members, videos for "Ev'rything Zen" and "Little Things," and live clips of selected songs. A tour of the band's bus is available as well as an introduction to Bush's web site on the Internet.

■ "Spew" by various artists (Arlantio). The disc combines a multimedia format with full stereo audio tracks from nine of Atlanta's new artists: Detroit jazz saxophone player James Carter, CIV, Collective Soul, Dragunoff, The Inbreeds, Jewel, Rusty, Jill Sobule and Sugar Ray.

"Spew" offers computer animation, biographies, lyrics, videos of live performances and interviews. It also invites the user to surf with Jewel, visit Central Park Zoo with the Inbreeds, and taste-test candy with Sugar Ray. Hidden trapdoors and an "old school" video game round out "Spew."

■ "Desire and Wishes," the Cranberries (Island/Philips). Go from room-to-room and hear different songs, click on items on dressers, tables and walls and see visuals like

self-seeded horrible old photos of the Cranberries, peek inside a backstage trunk, and turn stage lights on and off. Clips from the band's performance at Woodstock are also accessible. The audio portion of "Doors and Windows" includes an acoustic version of the band's hit "Zombie."

■ "The Freedom Sessions," Sarah McLachlan (Nettwerk). The CD-ROM features soundbites from the Canadian superstar, videos, and information about how to purchase merchandise including lithographs of her artwork. The audio portion includes her rendition of Tom Waits' "Old 55" and demo versions of selected songs.

■ "Telecommunication Breakdown," Emergency Broadcast Network (TVT). The group's first full-length audio/video recording since its inception in 1991 includes 20 tracks of music and three EBN videos playable on Windows and Macintosh. The CD is also packaged with an interactive CD booklet, a Macintosh floppy disc featuring an information-packed journey through EBN images, liner notes, group history, lyrics, merchandising, and booking information.



Branching out: The multi-media group Emergency Broadcast Network has released its debut full-length album "Telecommunication Breakdown" as an enhanced CD.

■ "Alive in the Superunknown," Soundgarden (A&M). A companion piece to their multi-platinum 1994 album "Superunknown," it features four CD audio tracks (a live recording of "Fall On Black Days," an acoustic version of "Like Suicide," "Like Like Surprises," and "Superunknown"), a ghostly video forest, interviews, and a standstill that leads you into the Superunknown.

■ "I Talk To Planets," Monster Magnet (A&M). "Monster Magnet is a pop culture experience. We're cul-

ture culturers and I wanted this CD Plus to be an adventure," said guitarist/vocalist Dave Wyndorf. On "I Talk To Planets," viewers can delve Wyndorf into primordial ooze and prepare for inter-galactic travel; create trips with 91 video/animated images, and take a journey into the astral plane. It also showcases 24 minutes of video footage and 10 songs.

■ "Stripped" by The Rolling Stones (Virgin). The Stones latest album includes an introduction to their separate CD-ROM with live shots, interviews, and lyrics.

■ "10 Speed" by Mystery Machine (Nettwerk). Videos and interviews with band members are located on

track one of the full-length album. ■ "Far Out," Ginger (Nettwerk). Also on track one, the full-length album includes short clips of studio footage, and interviews. ■ "The Songs of Distant Earth," enhanced CD by Mike Oldfield (Reprise). The CD-ROM portion of the album, which is available for Macintosh computers only, features the video for the single "Let There Be Light," a musical puzzle, and live footage. Inspired by the Arthur C. Clarke book of the same name, the CD is set for release Jan. 30. Fans can preview "The Songs of Distant Earth" by logging into the Reprise Records web site: <http://www.RepriseRec.com/MikeOldfield>.