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STREET SCENE

Diablos edge into national music scene

BY CHRISTINA FUGIO
STAFF WRITER

From the outside, the Bear's Den looks inconspicuous with its yellow awning and brown brick, nestled within "downtown" Berkley. On Sundays, however, it's anything but inconspicuous.

Inside, fans are dancing on chairs and the floor, or standing on their toes to get a glimpse of one of the Detroit-area's hot up and coming bands, the funk/blues outfit the Howling Diablos.

Within the past few years, the Howling Diablos have built up a following by playing around town relentlessly. Now it's starting to pay off.

The Howling Diablos captured the attention of Nick Buticaria, a vice president at the powerhouse William Morris Agency in New York, after his former DMA booking agency partner and current Diablos manager Dave Leone took him to see the band. Buticaria, a former Allen Park resident who goes by the name Nick Caris professionally, set up two showcases for the band in New York. He was so impressed that he booked the Diablos to open for the Scorpions and Alice Cooper on their Midwest leg of their summer tour. Buticaria also works with the Eagles, Lollapalooza, Collective Soul, Neil Young, Sheryl Crow, Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, Rage Against the Machine, the Gin Blossoms and the Goo Goo Dolls, among others.

"They kicked (butt)," Buticaria said about the New York shows, one of which included fellow Michiganders The Verve Pipe. "Everyone went crazy for them. We needed opening acts (for the tour) so I gave the Midwest dates to the Howling Diablos."

By the time the Diablos, Alice Cooper and Scorpions show hits Pine Knob tonight, they will have played for crowds in Indianapolis, Chicago, Columbus, Cleveland and Cincinnati. Tickets for tonight's show, which starts at 7:30 p.m., are \$25 pavilion and \$12.50 lawn. For more information, call (810) 377-0100.

"It's like a cool bill at the drive-in," said Howling Diablos singer Martin "Tino" Gross of Royal Oak. "You see the first movie's 'Easy Rider' and then the second movie's 'Frankenstein,' and the third one is 'Das Boot.'"

"It's rare to be on something like that without a record deal. They're treating us as good as we could possibly hope. A lot of times, if you're third on the bill you're just kind of left to flounder. But they're treating us



Making their mark: The Howling Diablos play the WRIF/Budweiser Rock 'n' Blues Festival at Greemead Park (On Newburgh at 8 Mile Road), Livonia on Saturday, July 27, with Black Market, InDrama, Mimi Harris and the Snakes, Mudpuppy, Robert Noll, Corey Stevens and Texas Flood, Humble Pie and Edgar Winter. The show, which runs from noon-11 p.m., is free.

great."

After five years together, the Howling Diablos have finally found their niche. Their blend of funk, hip-hop and blues, as well as Gross's laid-back yet charismatic stage presence, have attracted guest players like rapper Kid Rock, the Black Crowes' Eddie Harsch, and bluesman Robert Bradley to the Bears Den. Former members include Sponge lead singer Vinnie Demorelli and Jeff Fowles of Bradley's Blackwater Surprise, both on drums.

"That's turned into a great thing for us. It's been a place where we can experiment a lot, find out what works and what doesn't work. It's a place where people can see us all the time. We've pretty much built a core following out of that bar. It's been really off the hook up there for over a year now. It's just total musical excitement. There's great vibes in there too," Gross explained.

The collaboration between the Diablos and Kid Rock (whose real name is Bob Ritchie) has paid off personally and professionally for Gross.

"It's become one of my best friends. Basically, we're a rock 'n' roll band but we've got a lot of funk. When you have a funk thing goin' on, you're dealing

with rhythm. A rapper, for example, can fall right in with that. It was just kind of a natural hook-up."

Although record labels are watching the Howling Diablos, the band is planning on releasing a live album on Kid Rock's Top Dog Records in the fall.

"We want to come out with a real street-level underground thing. That's all we concentrate on. Let me just say this, I'm sure we'll get signed one day. It's gonna happen in the right way for us. We'll have our own vibe and fan base happening. A record label will step in and help us do what we're already doing. ... All I concentrate on are the fans in front of me. The live thing. Those are the people we care about."

Besides the Bears Den on Sundays, the Howling Diablos will also perform at 7:45 p.m. Friday, July 26, as part of Rochester's *Dancin' in the Street* series, at Walnut and West Fourth streets, from 2-3 p.m. Saturday, July 27, at the WRIF/Budweiser Rock 'n' Blues Festival at Greemead Park in Livonia. For more information about the Howling Diablos, visit their web site at <http://www.user.aol.com/HowlingDs> or write them via e-mail at HowlingDs@aol.com.

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ART BEAT

Artbeat features various happenings in the suburban arts world. Send news leads to: Mary Klemic, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham 48009, or fax (810) 644-1314.

PAINTING PALETTE

Noted bloomfield Hills artist Karen Halpern is offering sum-

mer art classes for children in grades 2-6. Her "Young Artists' Painting Palette" begins Monday, July 29. Call (810) 851-8215 for information, or (810) 433-0885 to register.

GATEWAY GATHERING

The Cultural Council of Birmingham Bloomfield is sponsoring a meeting 7 p.m. Wednesday,

July 31, at the Baldwin Public Library, 300 W. Merrill in Birmingham, to explain the Gateway sculpture.

OUR TOWN

Artists are invited to submit work for jurying in Our Town XI, art exhibition. All entries, must be postmarked by July 31. Call (810) 644-5932.

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