

## STREET SCENE

## Dutch band strives for 'pure, simple rock'



CHRISTINA FUOCO

The Dutch rock band Bettie Serveert had one goal in mind while recording its latest release "Dust Bunnies" (Motator).

"We had a goal to make a pure, simple rock record instead of

(1995a) "Lamprey" which had an over dramatic feel to it," bassist Herman Bunskecke explained.

For that, the quartet - which also includes singer/guitarist Peter Visser, and drummer Bernd Dubbe - did something it had never done before. Bettie Serveert, who opens for the Counting Crows and the Wallflowers on Sunday, July 6, at Pine Knob, used an outside producer, Bryce Goggin (Pavement, Come, Spacehog), and practiced the songs for weeks before recording them.

"He made us very aware of what we were doing. He simplified some bass lines and some guitar lines. We went over all the drum parts also. It was a good thing. After pre-production we did two shows and people really could hear the difference," Bunskecke said.

With its gentle melodies and abrasive guitars, Bettie Serveert admits that its kind of nervous about touring the United States with the Counting Crows and the Wallflowers.

"We're not a very extroverted, out-going loud band at all. We're into making more intimate emotional music. It's hard for us to perform for a big audience but it's a major opportunity to reach

a lot of people," Bunskecke said.

The Missouri-based trio Stir has a simple theory for its building success.

"We're working one fan at a time," said vocalist/guitarist Andy Schmidt.

"It's been a long, slow build. That's what we were shooting for. We wanted to play in front of as many people as we could before radio takes over."

The plan has paid off. The band's first singles, the anthemic "Looking For," and "Stale" placed in the top five and 10 respectively on Billboard's mainstream rock chart. Stir's latest single "One Angel" hits radio on Tuesday, July 8.

It's a busy time for Stir which also includes drummer/vocalist Brad Booker, and bassist/vocalist Kevin Gagnepain. After performing at WRIF fest on Tuesday, July 1, Stir is making an encore appearance opening for 7 May 3 on Wednesday, July 9, at the 14th House in Pontiac.

Stir's self-titled debut album was originally released on Aware Records, an indie label known for its compilations which introduced The Verve Pipe, Better Than Ezra and Hootie and the Blowfish to the nation. In October 1996 Capitol Records picked up the album and re-released it.

The striking part of Stir is the versatility of its musicians. Along with their primary instruments, members of Stir play the dulcimer, dobro, guitar and bass, Wurlitzer electric piano and pots and pans.

"We pretty much play everything," Gagnepain said.

Stir opens for 7 May 3 at 8 p.m. Wednesday, July 9, at the 7th House, 7 N. Saginaw,

Pontiac. Tickets are \$10 in advance for the all-ages show. For more information, call (248) 335-8100.

• Weezer fans who need proof that the band is just as goofy in person as they are on CD, read on:

"Are you Italian," singer Rivers Cuomo started his phone conversation.

"Yes," I replied.

"Is your dad Italian? My dad's Italian," he said giggling incessantly. "Do you know that if you changed two letters in your last name we'd have the same last name?" Cuomo said.

OK.

Cuomo and his band came to town Sunday to open for No Doubt at The Palace of Auburn Hills while he's on summer break from attending Harvard.

Still promoting the album "Pinkerton," Cuomo admits that he offended a few people with the reference to his attraction to "half-Japanese girls."

"I remember a radio station in San Francisco wouldn't play it because somehow I'm racist because I say 'half-Japanese girls.'"

"I like it when people get upset. I've said outrageous things since we started. I'm just a harmless little nerdy guy."

Although "Pinkerton" was released way back in September, he's expect a new album from Weezer anytime soon.

"Come on. Give me a break. It was released in September."

Nothing like motivation.

• Random notes ... UB40 has cancelled its tour including its Meadow Brook Music Festival date on Aug. 26. Refunds are



Coming to town: The Dutch rock band Bettie Serveert opens a sold-out show at Pine Knob.

available at the point of purchase ... Blues wunderkid Jonny Lang has been added as the opener for Aerosmith's show at The Palace of Auburn Hills on

Thursday, Aug. 21.

If you have a question or comment for Christina Fuoco, you can write to her in care of The Observer & Eccentric

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## Michigan stuffs a lot into its short summer season

## BACKSTAGE PASS



AMY DELISI

We Michiganers love our summers. Forget the calendars, spring's an option here; it can jump from ice storms to steam bath humidity, usually sometime in June. And in a September

flash, you can go from beachwear to sweaters. Michigan summers are short. They're tentative. They're subject to cancellation without notice. So we devour summer ravenously, like it's a plate of chocolate cake that might be arbitrarily snatched away from under our fork. We cram a ton of events into this fleeting season. If you can't have fun in a Michigan summer, it's time to run toward the light.

On tonight's *Backstage Pass* Detroit Public Television, we sample the fun of some of the Metro area's summertime fixtures. Starting us off, Dave Wagner - DJ at WQRS and our crack correspondent for the classical music scene - will host a performance by a duo from the Detroit Symphony Orchestra in the Channel 56 studio. Bassist Rick Robinson and violinist Laurie Landers will give us the scoop on the annual summer concert at Greenfield Village, as well as a preview of the DSO's summer concert series at Meadow Brook.

Dave told me how the annual

event at Greenfield Village showcases the symphony to a whole new audience. "The show's a lot of fun. The whole focus is on pops-oriented American music, usually with a particular theme covering many different styles. There's really something for everyone. And it's a casual event. There are food and refreshments. A lot of young people and young families attend."

The casual approach of outdoor concerts appeals them up to sampling by folks who might be reluctant to enter the rarified atmosphere of Orchestra Hall. They can spread a blanket and enjoy the music in a relaxed setting. Says Dave, "It's not a formal concert atmosphere - there's a sort of constant, respectful hum, people moving around, people picnicking. Symphony concerts don't always have to be black tie and tails. It's a great way to introduce people to symphonic music."

And once they're introduced, many are hooked for life. "When people hear the symphony for the first time, they're blown away. There's nothing like hearing 100 musicians playing acoustically, no mic or amps, creating this ball of sound that pours over you. They discover that Detroit has a world-class symphony that travels the world and has made about 14 recordings in the last seven or eight years. They're a hometown gem that we sometimes take for granted."

Also on the show, David Rau - one of our art contributors and the curator of education at

Cranbrook - will take us to another fun summer event happening at the Center Gallery, the official gallery for Detroit's Center for Creative Studies. The exhibition is called "The Clothes Show: Objects For and About Clothing." But don't be fooled, it is not a fashion show. David explained why clothing makes a good subject for making art. "It's accessible because everybody wears clothes, so they all have a point of reference. Yet setting The Clothes Show isn't like going to a boutique where you see outlandish fashion. It's more about the idea of clothes in our culture."

David says folks at the Center Gallery have put the exhibition together in the spirit of summertime fun. "For their summer show, CCS purposely does a bigger call for artists to get as many as possible. And in doing that, you create a context of fun. There's an element of freedom in the show. It's a bit more playful."

But the show is also thought-provoking. "One piece is a wedding dress completely made out of wedding paper. The meaning seems to be that the bride is a gift. We wrap her up and present her. It's beautiful, but it's also a little subversive." Catch *Backstage Pass* tonight to see works displayed only at the show's recent opening, plus some presented exclusively for the local performance artist in some truly unusual outfits.

Also on tonight's show, Gary

Graff talks with local band Hoarse as they brace themselves for their first major label CD release with RCA. They'll also rock the joint with a couple of

numbers. Elliot Wilhelm will tell us about the Arab Film Festival he's presenting at the Detroit Film Theatre which ties in with the soon-to-open Splendors of

Ancient Egypt exhibition at the DIA. That's tonight on *Backstage Pass* on Channel 56 at 7:30 p.m. rebroadcast Friday at 11:30 p.m. Now get out there!

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## Dance artist likes keeping busy

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO  
STAFF WRITER

Robin S. doesn't know what day or date it is, and that's the way she likes it.

"I am so turned around now I don't know what day it is. I'd rather be that way than not busy," she said with a laugh.

The dance artist has been keeping busy promoting her sophomore effort "From Now On" (Big Beat/Atlantic). Part of her schedule includes performing as part of the "Dance Across America" tour, which hits Pine Knob on Saturday, July 6.

Robin S. - no last name, just S. - said that all this comes at a perfect time since the Grammy committee just set aside a category for dance music.

"I am very excited, ecstatic. It's long overdue. I'm feeling good about it. I'm hoping I win. That's all that's on my mind," Robin S.

said so quickly that she barely had time to breathe.

It's about time that dance artists got some respect, she added. A lot of dance artists are being pushed aside by R&B singers who are doing dance remixes.

"A lot of R&B singers are leaning that way. They don't use regular remixes. They're using notable dance producers to do their remixes, which certifies them as a club artist for the time that they're out. That's wonderful. I don't have a problem with that," she said.

"But people like us who really sing - Jocelyn Brown, Martha Wash - they never get any bonafide credit for it."

Robin S. has had to prove to her audience that she can sing.

"I've even had to stop singing in the middle of a track and ask the audience 'Do you hear any

vocals? See I really do sing. Now you can really party.' I don't mind having to do that."

The key to being successful in the genre, she said, is to have meaning to the lyrics even though the music is timed at 110-120 beats per minute.

There has to be a beginning, a middle and an end. It can't be "Ooh, baby baby, Oh baby" all through the record. It has to be something that you can take home and listen to and say "OK. I know how she feels."

"Dance Across America Tour" featuring La Bouche, Quad City DJ's, Jocelyn Enriquez, Robin S., Amber and Crush, is at 7 p.m. Saturday, July 5, at Pine Knob Music Theatre, 1-75 and Sashabaw Road, Independence Township. Tickets are \$22.50 pavilion, \$12.50 lawn. For more information, call (248) 377-0100.