

# Timing right for Gandharvas

Timing is everything, according to singer Paul Jago of The Gandharvas. And now was the time for his London, Ontario-based band to get a worldwide record deal.

"With the first album, we had an indie deal with a label out of Chicago that went nowhere. Then the second album didn't have very much notoriety. It was hard to sell. This one just seemed to work," Jago explained via telephone from his London home.

The "one" Jago is speaking of is "Sold for a Smile," The Gandharvas' debut effort for MCA Records. Released in the fall 1997 in Canada, "Sold for a Smile" has sold more than 25,000 copies, halfway to a gold record in that country.

Fans in the United States will get the chance to hear it for themselves when "Sold for a Smile" is released here Tuesday, April 28. Those who are really anxious can see The Gandharvas play a free, all-ages show with fellow Canucks Pure on Friday, April 17, at The Shelter below St. Andrew's Hall in Detroit.

As with most border cities, Detroiters have had a jump start with the music of The Gandharvas, named after the Hindu term for "celestial musicians to the gods." Radio station CIMX (88.7) has played the band's first single "Downtime" from "Sold for a Smile" for months.

The moody, ethereal song "The First Day of Spring," off an earlier album, has inundated the radio station's airwaves for weeks. Fans of that song will be



surprised when they pick up "Sold for a Smile." Shortly after Jago's quiet vocal introduction in "The First Day of Spring," The Gandharvas injected a metal/hop guitar feel leading up to the second verse.

"We had originally recorded this album without 'The First Day of Spring.' We were doing it live that way; the heavy version. When we signed on with MCA in the States, they came to see our show a few times and they heard the heavy version. We decided we might as well put it on the U.S. album and re-release it in Canada as well," Jago said.

He added that he likes both versions for different reasons. "I like the subtly of the first one. It's a little more dramatic. The first one is not very exciting to me live. It takes too long to develop. The second one is much more fun all around. It has bite."

**Gandharvas:**  
Time is right for a major label deal. The band plays St. Andrew's Hall on Friday.

alienation ("Waiting for Something to Happen") are addressed on the record.

"Every album we do is different," explained the soft-spoken Jago who sounds as if it's almost painful to answer questions about the album.

"We decided that for this record we would do a straight-up rock 'n' roll record, which is more like our live shows. We were just really concentrating on doing an album that was true to form to what you see when you see the band. There used to be a bit of a discrepancy between what we do on the live shows and what you get on the CD."

Not with "Sold for a Smile," he added. Finally after releasing earlier albums "A Soap Bubble and Inertia," and "Kicking in the Water" on indie labels, The Gandharvas can show U.S. fans what is all about.

"It makes it much easier when we do come to towns like Detroit or Buffalo or whatever. It's always hard telling people, when they ask, that they have to go over the bridge to get our CDs. It's kind of a nuisance."

"It's all timing. You know you have to keep making an effort to get a deal anywhere to extend your audience. It took us a little while."

The Gandharvas along with Pure and Plain perform a free show Friday, April 17, at The Shelter below St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. Doors open at 6 p.m. for the all-ages show. For more information, call (313) 961-MELT or visit <http://www.961melt.com>.

## STREET SCENE

### Eric Clapton fans come from all ages

The audience for last week's Eric Clapton concert at the Palace of Auburn Hills included boomers who probably started listening to the guitar legend as teenagers, their kids and at least one lady who appeared to be in her 80s.

Being around as long as Clapton has in his various incarnations, it's probably natural that his audience covers a lot of different age groups. It also doesn't hurt that several Clapton songs have become mainstays of light rock radio, in addition to seventies oldies stations.

There's nothing wrong with appealing to a wider audience, but the most recent Clapton concert at times had an unsatisfying and almost watered-down quality. It wasn't that Clapton wasn't musically strong — he was in fine voice and his guitar work was as strong as ever. The problem was more the crowd on the stage with him and a lack of emotional depth in some of his more recent songs.

A 20-piece orchestra backed Clapton and his band which included three back-up singers. With the exception of "Tears in Heaven," the strings were mostly an annoyance that muddled the overall sound. At worst, it was like having a slight buzz in your stereo speakers, at best superfluous. Also, in fairness, it might have been the sound at the Palace also sounded a little fuzzy at times.

To his credit, Clapton has been known for performing new arrangements of his songs over the years. That was one of



Eric Clapton

the fine aspects of his "Unplugged" performances that featured a shuffling version of "Layla," which was performed last week.

Clapton was at his strongest when he sat down and performed with an acoustic guitar or powered through harder driving blues numbers like "Old Love" and "Have You Ever Loved a Woman." Seemed like old times again.

The capacity crowd seemed to enjoy the two-hour concert but there wasn't the enthusiasm shown at, for instance, a concert in support of "From the Cradle." That strongly blues based set had an energy and emotion that are lacking from some other Clapton work including songs from his current release "Pilgrim" which opened the show.

## Stratford director makes pitch for the arts

### BACKSTAGE PASS



ANN DELISI

this entity, "the arts," equal parts soap bubble and tank.

On Backstage Pass, we try to promote and nurture the arts, and happily we're not alone. Recently, Wayne State Theatre Department faculty member and Backstage host Blair Anderson was able to sit down with Richard Monette, the artistic director of the Stratford Festival, a cherished annual summer theater event that has championed Shakespeare and other great work for years.

Mr. Monette was in town to address the Economic Club of Detroit with a speech he called, "Lunatics, Lovers and People of Business: Why We Need Artists." Blair commented to me on the uniqueness of the address, "Often when artistic leaders make appeals to the business community, it's for corporate sponsorship, donations, and phi-

lanthropic hand-outs. Monette's appeal was much more essential in describing the need of a society to actively interact with the arts.

"Monette gained immediate credibility when he was introduced as an artistic executive who had taken his company from a deficit only a few years ago to a company 'in the black' even while making extensive outlays for improved facilities," Smart man. In addressing business people, he spoke the language of the bottom line.

Blair said he built other bridges, too. "Monette pointed out essential qualities in an artist: you need to generate ideas, bring something new to the table. You need to turn the ideas into viable realities, so you need the skills, motivation, and energy to follow through. You need to micro- and macro-manage, giving attention to details while keeping the big picture in the table. Theatre artists need to work independently and as part of a team, and need analytical and critical skills to assess your own performance and work. The audience chuckled in growing awareness of the similarities between successful business people. His point was that art doesn't happen in one's sleep or on the spur of the moment. It demands hard work."

Monette stressed that art was

'good for you,' but shouldn't be seen as some sort of cultural medicine but rather as a fine wine: 'complex, rich and intoxicating; it inspires conversation; it aids in love; and we consume it for pleasure.'"

What an eloquent voice for the arts! Blair also asked Richard about the upcoming season. "It's an exciting one: 'Man of La Mancha,' and 'Miracle Worker' for popular fare; 'Tennessee Williams' 'The Night of the Ignorant' and Beckett's 'Waiting for Godot' are piquing my interest. Richard is directing two shows: Shakespeare's 'Much Ado About Nothing' and Moliere's 'The Miser,' which will move to the City Center in New York for Broadway runs in the fall." All that just a beautiful 2 1/2 hour drive away.

Also on the Big Show, we'll visit the studio of Detroit artist Robert Martin. I had a chance to describe what he does. "I'm an interactive artist — when most people work with art, it's more pacified; you're not involved with the work. I make installations that people can walk into, and they're actually creating images, projected or on monitors, as they walk in. It's

like walking into a theatre, you're creating the graphics that you see and the music you hear as you're walking around. In a regular movie, you're sitting and watching, and it's the same every time. This is more like jazz: it can be different every time. And your entire body is part of the interface, you're not limited by having to use a mouse."

About two summers ago I had an installation at the DIA called 'The Virtual Plinidium,' a reference to a club in New York well-known for showing music videos made by musicians and artists. People could walk into the room and create the interaction between the music and the graphics. Not surprisingly, kids knew how to have fun with it. A lot of adults were a little intimidated by it. But the adults who never grew up, they knew how to have fun with it, too."

Also on the show, Mammoth Records recording artist Pure will rock the studio, and 83-year-old Russell Green will show why he's called Detroit's Dean of the Trumpet. That's all on Backstage Pass, tonight at midnight on Detroit Public Television, repeated tomorrow at 7:30 p.m.

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