

STREET SCENE

Medeski, Martin and Wood draw rock audience to jazz

The audience at last year's... H.O.R.D.E. Fosti... didn't exactly, shall we say,... enthusiastic. The only exception...

The organ-based jazz/funk band's participation in H.O.R.D.E. defied the usual lineup of roots rock acts. But folks in seashell neckties, dreadlocks and baggy clothes ignored the humidity and danced for the next 45 minutes.

Chris Wood, bassist for Medeski, Martin and Wood, said the jam band Phish is responsible for the trio's large, atypical jazz following.

"That happened a lot because Phish was playing our CDs for quite awhile at their shows. Phish is playing to crowds of 100,000 kids. They play our CDs at their concerts. A few of those people got turned on and that's a lot of people," he explained.

"Some of those kids are attracted to Phish or the Grateful Dead, bands that stretch out songs and jam out on instruments. That's what we're about. That's really how that happened. It's also because we're improvising a lot, the same as Phish."



Coming to the State: Left to right, keyboardist John Medeski, drummer Billy Martin and bassist Chris Wood.

Chris Wood, bassist for Medeski, Martin and Wood, said the jam band Phish is responsible for the trio's large, atypical jazz following.

That boost has enabled Medeski, Martin and Wood to move into bigger venues during its tour in support of its latest album, "Combustion" (Blue Note). The trio hits Detroit's State Theatre on Sunday, Aug.

"We prefer more intimate rooms," Wood admitted. "It's always scary to get to a bigger room. It's harder to communicate with our audience, and it's hard to make it sound good for us. So we set up really close together so we can really feel each other."

"Ideally, we love playing in someone's living room together. That's the funnest situation. There's no PAs or mics. It just feels natural and the music seems to flow naturally. We try to get that feeling as much as we can."

Being at home was the key to the recording of "Combustion." For its last album, "Shackman," Medeski, Martin and Wood recorded at a studio tucked in a remote area of Hawaii. This time around, the trio stayed in New York.

"The original reason we were spending so much time in Hawaii was because we were touring so much that we didn't have apartments. We were renting this little tiny shack in Hawaii. It was cheap so we spent time there," Wood said with a chuckle.

When we made this record, we decided to settle back down in New York and stay home with this record. We didn't want to travel anywhere and also we wanted the resources of a nice studio."

Blue Note put the band in the Magic Shop in New York City. Working with 18-track, 2-inch tape and analog equipment gave the sound a "platter and warmer sound."

"Also, John (Medeski) has so many different keyboards, and I have a lot of different bases, all that stuff is in New York. So it was nice to have all of it at our fingertips."

The trio didn't totally abandon Hawaii, however. "Combustion" includes a cover of the traditional Hawaiian song "No Ke Ano Ahinihi" that was inspired by Hawaiian slack key guitarist Gabby Pahinui's version. Also on the album is a cover of Sly Stone's "Everyday People."

Through their friend, former Living Colour guitarist Vernon Reid, the band met Jason Kibler, also known as DJ Logic. He added scratching and ambient sounds to songs like "Sugarcraft," "Start-Stop" and the

appropriately named "Church of Logic."

The trio will tour through the end of the year but will soon take a break for drummer John Wood's wedding. While he's on his honeymoon, Medeski and Martin are going to tour with John Scofield. The jazz guitarist chose the trio to back him on his latest album "A Go Go."

Recording with Scofield, Wood explained, was "very natural and painless. It just felt like we were jamming with a friend next door. He just called us up, and we thought it was a joke by one of our friends."

Thanks to the trio's friends, Phish, the band is moving closer to mainstream acceptance.

"Phish has great taste in music. We listen to all these different types of music. I love to collaborate and support music and it's cool. The Grateful Dead did a similar thing. Miles Davis opened for them. It's cool, the respect that they had for the jazz world."

Medeski, Martin and Wood perform at 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 23, State Theatre, 2115 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Tickets are \$21 in advance, \$23 day of show for the all-ages show. For more information, call (313) 961-6451 or visit http://www.961net.com

DIA presents Vatican Angels and nature

BACKSTAGE PASS



RAIN DELISI

As the summer season of Backstage Pass continues (with never-before-aired music and highlights from our favorite excursions throughout Detroit's arts communities), I'm continuing to use this space to bring you season previews from our area's top artistic experts and connoisseurs. A case in point is Marsha Miro. I love to call Marsha to

find out what's coming up in area galleries, because her passion for the visual arts is contagious. I practically have to run out to a gallery as soon as I hang up the phone. So I called Marsha for a Fall preview.

She started off with the Detroit Institute of Arts. "Despite its lack of a director, the DIA is really going full force. They have great shows this year. We should all be visiting at least once or twice this Fall.

"Of course, the big one is 'Angels from the Vatican.' It's not just paintings, but sculptures, religious artifacts - angels

given many forms. This is how major artists envisioned them, and there are a lot of them in this show, including Raphael, who's about as good as you can get when it comes to angel painting! I think it's going to be a great show."

While "Angels" is looking like this season's blockbuster at the DIA, I asked Marsha if they had any smaller exhibitions planned. "They're doing a show this fall

and graphics by Terry Winters, a New Yorker whose images have to do with mutating nature. His works are really captivating and curious."

Backstage Pass is pre-empted tonight, and pushed back tomorrow night, by our Summer Pledge Drive. Look for us to air this week only on Friday at midnight on Detroit Public Television.

Advertisement for 'Saturday Night Fever' For The 90's With A Latin Beat! featuring Vanessa L. Williams and Ciara. Includes a photo of a woman dancing and the text 'Dance with Me'.

Table listing AMC theaters and their showtimes for Friday, August 21st. Theaters include AMC Bel Air, AMC Eastland, AMC Southfield, AMC Canton Cinema, AMC Showcase, AMC Gratiot, AMC Star Taylor, AMC Star Lincoln Park, AMC Star Winchester, AMC Star 12 Oaks, and AMC West River.

Advertisement for 'The Avengers' movie. Features a large image of the Avengers team and the text 'Saving The World In Style'.

Advertisement for the movie 'Snake Eyes' directed by Brian De Palma. Includes a photo of Keanu Reeves and the text 'A JOLTING POWERHOUSE OF A THRILLER.' and 'CAGE SNAKE EYES'.

Advertisement for the movie 'Wrongfully Accused' starring Leslie Nielsen. Includes a photo of Nielsen and the text 'ONE OF LESLIE NIELSEN'S FUNNIEST!' and 'WRONGLY ACCUSED'.

Advertisement for the movie 'How Stella Got Her Groove Back' starring Cuba Gooding Jr. and Laurence Fishburne. Includes a photo of Cuba Gooding Jr. and a list of theaters showing the movie.

Advertisement for the movie 'Blade' starring Wesley Snipes. Includes a large photo of Wesley Snipes and the text 'THE POWER OF AN IMMORTAL. THE SOUL OF A HUMAN. THE HEART OF A HERO.' and 'BLADE'.