

## STREET SCENE

## Colin James back in swing with Little Big Band II



CHRISTINA FUOCO

When Colin James released his first album, "Colin James and The Little Big Band I" in 1993, the reception was lukewarm at best.

"At the time, (when I'd) say 'swing record,' everybody didn't jump up and go 'great.' There was a lot of dead-pan looks and, 'Why would you want to release a record like that?'" said James who prefers to call his music "jump blues."

Well, things weren't so bad. It reached double platinum in Canada, where hitting platinum means selling 100,000 copies. In the United States, one million sales certifies platinum.

The album "reached a lot of societies and dance clubs. I'd go down to LA and walk into a restaurant and they'd be playing the record. I'd go, 'You know about this thing?' I think it was a kitchy thing at the time. People who were into the jump blues thing kind of picked up on it."

When his "time was up" at Virgin Records, he jumped to Elektra. In the dawning days of swing's resurgence, however, he took time off from that genre and released a rock/blues album, "Bad Habits," in 1995 with an all-star cast — Lenny Kravitz on clavinet, and Kim Wilson and Navin Staples.

Last year, he decided it was time to follow-up his 1993 release with "Colin James and The Little Big Band II," which hit stores earlier this year. It features James' masterful guitar work and covers of songs by Ray Charles ("May Anne"), Willie Dixon ("You Know My Love") and Cab Calloway ("C'mon With the C'mon").

"It's nice to be able to return and do an album when a few more people are pointed that way (swing/jump blues)."

A Vancouver resident, James is inspired more by "early rock 'n' roll" than swing.

"I guess when I started playing this stuff, it was really early rock 'n' roll that I was shining on; swing being a big part of that just because that's the way it was back then. But from Ray Charles to Jackie Wilson to Louis Jordan to that whole pre-rock 'n' roll era. It's got a lot of great music," said James who has opened for the Rolling Stones, Keith Richards and Stevie Ray Vaughan.

With "Colin James and The Little Big Band II," James added, "We really felt like we were swimming up stream. Although I didn't mind that because there's some kind of joy in feeling like you're doing something that is really different, you know? ... I think the worst thing that can happen is people going to listen to some music they might not listen to otherwise and people get hip to some of the great early

music. If that's the worst thing that happens, that's great."

Colin James and The Little Big Band performs Sunday, April 11, at the Magic Bag, 22920 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. Tickets are \$10 in advance for the 18 and older show. For more information, call (248) 544-3030 or visit <http://www.themagicbag.com>. James' Web site is <http://www.colinjames.com>.

## Proud of record

As an elementary school student, Finger Eleven vocalist Scott Anderson learned early on to feel comfortable with himself.

"One of the bands I that I latched onto so early was Genesis and Peter Dinklage. In grade five or six, that's all I would listen to. But nobody really understood Genesis, especially when you're a 12-year-old kid. I used to write it on my binder. It was really geeky and I was totally comfortable with that," Anderson said with a chuckle.

Anderson, an Ontario, Canada, resident, attributes his musical tastes to his brother, Sean, the bassist for Finger Eleven.

"I was pretty lucky because Sean, who's my older brother, always had friends coming over with this great music."

Finger Eleven and its debut album "Tip" (Wind-Up Records) is closer to guitar rock than prog rock. It wavers between full-on

guitar assaults and moody vocals.

"The original ideas were conceived about a year or two ago," Anderson said about "Tip." "We've been changing and evolving with our boredom and it turned into what we put on the album."

"It was really nice to be so proud of something. You can't say that all the time."

Although he's proud of "Tip," Anderson explained that most people prefer the live show.

"It's got a great energy level to it. That's what most people latch onto. That reaction is immediate. You'll occasionally get someone who comes up to you and says, 'Wow.' They can identify with a lyric or two. That'll make my day."

Finger Eleven and Buck Cherry perform Thursday, April 8, at The Shelter below St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. Doors open at 6 p.m. for the all-ages show. Tickets are \$7. For more information, call (313) 961-MELT or visit <http://www.961melt.com>. Finger Eleven's Web site is <http://www.fingerelven.com>.

## Misc.

The English rock group Gene Loves Jezebel has released its latest album, "VII" (Robison Records), both to stores and on GoodNoise.com, an Internet site



Returning: Jump blues artist Colin James returns to the Detroit area with his Little Big Band on Sunday, April 11, when he plays the Magic Bag in Ferndale.

for purchasing downloadable music. The new album is available in the MP3 (MPEG, Layer 3) format from GoodNoise.com for \$8.99 or \$3.99 per track. A single from the album, "Love Keeps Dragging Me Down," is available for a limited time for free download.

Christina Fuoco is the pop

music reporter for The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. If you have a question or comment for her, you can leave her a message at (734) 953-2047, mailbox No. 2130, or write to her at The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft Road, Livonia, Mich., 48150, or [cfo@homecomm.net](mailto:cfo@homecomm.net).

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AMC DEARBORN 20	AMC SHOWCASE 20	AMC SHOWCASE 20
AMC FARMINGTON 20	AMC STAR LINCOLN PARK 20	AMC STAR SOUTHERLAND 20
AMC SOUTHERLAND 20	AMC STAR TAYLOR 20	AMC STAR WINCHESTER 20
AMC TAYLOR 20	AMC STAR LINCOLN PARK 20	AMC STAR SOUTHERLAND 20
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AMC SOUTHERLAND 20	AMC RENAISSANCE 4
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AMC SHOWCASE 20	AMC SHOWCASE 20
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AMC STAR SOUTHERLAND 20	AMC STAR SOUTHERLAND 20
AMC STAR TAYLOR 20	AMC STAR WINCHESTER 20
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AMC SOUTHERLAND	AMC SHOWCASE 20	AMC SHOWCASE 20
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