

Give it all: Ferndale band heads into local studio



STEPHANIE A. CASOLA

into their domain.

If you haven't already heard of Give, chances are pretty good you've seen these musicians performing in other successful bands over the years. Singer-songwriter Ferris George, bassist Ray Echlin, guitarist Allen Liggett, drummer Scott Spellman and fiddler Jim Flynn have made their way in and around the local music scene, each searching for the perfect combination, the perfect sound. Together, they seem to have found it.

Creating a buzz

Give members are currently working on what will become their first album, and performing regularly in area clubs. Music fans might have caught the band at a Whitney Garden Party, or performing at "Pumpatock" outside the

Town Pump in Detroit. It was outside the Town Pump that band's moniker adopted meaning. Echlin was approached — in a Detroit alley — by a man who seemed to know immediately he was a musician. The man said four profound words in reference to the band and its music: "Give is visiting Earth." Give is an acronym for those words. Give formed less than two years ago with George and Echlin at the helm, just an upright bass, lap steel guitar and the sound of George's voice. Additional instruments and musicians were added into the sound which has come to signify the band — a genre Flynn calls mainstream modern rock (even though the band doesn't really fit any particular mold).

The creative approach

Songs, like the melodic "Up and Down" and "Something Unpredictable" are carried in the forefront by George's voice, lyrics and acoustic. Flynn's fiddle gives a modest, romantic, and gently pervasive side to the music. Give is far from your typical drum-bass-guitar rock combo. "Ferris writes the lyrics," said Echlin. "He's got the gift of words."

But as far as music goes, the band bounces ideas off one another,

Writing music is a collaborative and somewhat spontaneous effort for Give. "It's more emotional," said George, strumming softly on his guitar. "We just sit in a room and watch the vibe happen." Echlin said the band's songs develop from a simple riff or the initial boom of a bass line. Even if they argue over a song structure, the bandmates agree they are passionate about the music. Echlin said he doesn't always use words to express where he sees the music going.

"You can communicate it easier with a guitar," he said. "Often I find myself scating a drum or Ferris will hum a bassline in my ear. A lot of times these ideas will stick."

Give's song lyrics take on the same sort of life of their own. George admitted that "Sometimes I don't even know what the theme of the song's going to be... If you trust it, it comes out almost perfect." The true test of the music, according to George, is the emotional impact it expresses. "Is it touching me?" he asks of a song. "If it touches me it must touch someone else."

But Flynn insists the real magic of Give is to be experienced in a live venue.

Echlin — who at this point is providing the appropriate "interview music" on a nearby piano,



adds confidently, "It's always a positive reaction. People come and listen." While you might be moved to dance or sway when Give takes the stage, it's more likely the music will capture your attention and your mind. "Some of the music is kind of trance-y," Liggett explained.

Flynn added of the typical audience: "They get into the zone with us."

What's most evident about this group of musicians is the passion they share for making music. Liggett said the passion for performing and making music simply something you're born with, something he's always wanted to do. From the first show Give performed as a five-piece, a benefit for a fellow musician at St. Andrews Hall, he said "We all knew it was something special."

Dave Foony, owner of Tempermill Studio and sound engineer, knows first-hand how the musicians work. "It's an interesting collective," he said of Give.

"Their strengths are their experi-

ence of being around the block, knowing what it takes to put something together," added Foony, while working on a song. "Their weakness is their experience of being around the block. It's a double-edged sword. Everyone has a strong opinion."

Those strong opinions only serve to make the band's passion for music that much more noticeable.

"The album is going to be a work-in-progress," said Liggett. With five songs near completion, Give is compiling material to send out to record companies and radio stations, while completing a full album.

There's no better time for a group of dedicated and talented musi-

cians like Give to seek the limelight. "Detroit's a real hotbed," said Flynn of the musical talent flooding the metro area. It's only begun to receive recognition as such on a national level.

"We all couldn't believe, when we first started playing together, how well we just jelled," said Liggett.

As for future aspirations, Echlin offered a blanket statement: "We just want to share the music with a lot of people, to give the music out."

See Give perform Friday, Nov. 26 at Lil's 21, 2930 Jacob in Hamtramck. Call (313) 876-6555.

Stephanie Angelyn Casola can be reached at (734) 963-2130 or e-mail at scasola@ec.homecomm.net.

Sounding Off: More music reviews

Local musicians may submit full-length compact discs, which have been completed or released no more than three months prior to submission, to the newspaper office. Send materials with a daytime phone number c/o Arts and Entertainment, 36251 Schoolcraft Road, Livonia, Mich. 48150. We do not guarantee that all submissions will be reviewed, but we'll try our best.

David Mead

The Luxury of Time
RCA Records

Since Fat Boy Slim and Len have made smart pop singles hip again, music fans should be primed and ready for David Mead.

On his debut album "The Luxury of Time," the guitarist/composer takes his clever, shrouded lyrics and laces in upstart instrumentation to create thirteen instantly familiar tunes.

Comparisons to Squeeze, Elvis Costello, Beck and even the Beatles are almost unavoidable, yet this is the work of a young artist whose vision is solely-owned and musical ambitions sustained.

With "Touch of Mascarade" and "Breathe You In," the engaging tenor redefines ballads as warm

and integral chapters in a collection, rather than mere footnotes to the big hits.

But with a fat bass guitar, a retro Wurliitzer, the Havana horns and beguiling lyrics in the "World of a King," Mead proves he can pump out glossy tomes, too.

The familiar themes of love and loss are evident throughout this album with a seemingly endless array of emotional twists and turns. Mead recorded "The Luxury of Time" with Jason Lehning and British producer Peter Collins, whose credits include Brian Setzer, Jewel and the Indigo Girls.

The result is a tight debut effort which hearkens back to classic pop style — not lost in time — but merely luxuriating in its inextinguishability.

Garth Brooks

In the Life of Chris Gaines
Capitol Records

When it was announced that Garth Brooks' latest release would be an alter-ego rock concept album, fans and feet were understandably confused. And when comparisons between his "Chris Gaines" and David Bowie's "Ziggy Stardust" began

circulating, there was no choice but to offer up a bit of skepticism: "You, sir, are no Ziggy Stardust."

Trouble is "Garth Brooks... In the Life of Chris Gaines" is good. It's not groundbreaking, but it is an ambitious attempt by the man who has sold more albums than any recording artist save the Beatles.

The album is billed as a "pre-soundtrack" to a movie. Whether Brooks retains the Trent Reznor wig and arse "soul patch" to play the capricious rock star is still a Paramount secret. Produced by Detroit-area native Don Was, "Gaines" is a carefully crafted, solid production which pulls from many musical genres.

"Main Street," co-written by Trisha Yearwood, draws heavily from Dylan, and "Right Now," which combines a '90s rap with the Youngbloods' classic "Get Together," is the album's most compelling tune.

Though Brooks has the talent to reach beyond the confines of country, his rocker persona takes no unnecessary risks.

— **REVIEWS BY ALICE REHIN**

STAY TUNED

Somewhere between a Turkey-induced slumber and football scores there's a space for alternative rock hit-makers Third Eye Blind. The band will debut their new single "Never Let You Go" at half-time on Thanksgiving Day. Look for the band on Fox Television during the Detroit Lions/Chicago Bears Football game, which kicks off at 12:40 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 25. The song is featured on Third Eye Blind's latest release "Blue" which hits stores Nov. 23.

Feeling blue? Hip-O Records has the cure. On Nov. 2, the company released "Broken Hearted Soul Eastside," a compilation of R&B hits like Percy Sledge's "When a Man Loves a Woman" and Smokey Robinson's "The Tracks of My Tears." Two volumes are available in stores now.

As if radio stations don't overlap songs like Barenaked Ladies' "One Week" and Madonna's "Ray of Light" too much, a compilation of hits has included this year's most popular songs on "Totally Hits." With names like Kid Rock and Santana, it's radio with rewind and fast-forward.

Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol
adapted and directed by Charles Nolie
November 20—December 26

Meadow Brook Theatre
Oakland University's Professional Theatre

For tickets call the Box Office
(248) 377-3300

Tickets also available at all Ticketmaster locations.
(248) 645-6666

Presented with the generous support of
GMAC
SEATS STILL AVAILABLE FOR THESE DATES!

HALF-PRICE PREVIEW PERFORMANCES
Saturday, Nov. 20: 2:00 p.m.
Sunday, Nov. 20: 6:30 p.m.
Sunday, Nov. 21: 2:00 p.m.
Sunday, Nov. 21: 6:30 p.m.

SPECIAL FAMILY DISCOUNTS
THANKSGIVING WEEKEND
Friday, Nov. 26, 8:00 p.m.
Saturday, Nov. 27, 2:00 p.m.
Saturday, Nov. 27, 6:30 p.m.
Sunday, Nov. 28, 2:00 p.m.
Sunday, Nov. 28, 6:30 p.m.

and all performances December 16-26

Wednesday, Dec. 1: 2:00 p.m.
Thursday, Dec. 2, 8:00 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 3, 8:00 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 4, 2:00 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 4, 6:30 p.m.
Sunday, Dec. 5, 2:00 p.m.
Sunday, Dec. 5, 6:30 p.m.
Thursday, Dec. 9, 8:00 p.m.
Friday, Dec. 10, 8:00 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 11, 2:00 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 11, 6:30 p.m.
Sunday, Dec. 12, 2:00 p.m.
Sunday, Dec. 12, 6:30 p.m.

Slappy Hollow

AMC BIT AIR 10
AMC LAUREL PARK
AMC WOODBRIDGE
AMC SOUTHWILD 20
SHOWCASE
STAR SOUTHWILD
12 OAKS

AMC EASTLAND 2
AMC LIVONIA 20
BIRMINGHAM 8
QUO VADIS
SHOWCASE
STAR SOUTHWILD
STAR TAYLOR
WEST RIVER

AMC FORUM 30
AMC SOUTHWILD CITY
CANTON CINEMAS
RENAISSANCE 4
SHOWCASE
STAR SOUTHWILD
STAR TAYLOR
COMMERCIAL TWP 14
COUPON ACCEPTED

TOM HANKS TIM ALLEN
Disney • PIXAR
TOY STORY 2

STARTS WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 24

AMC BIT AIR 10
AMC LAUREL PARK
AMC WOODBRIDGE
AMC SOUTHWILD 20
RENAISSANCE 4
SHOWCASE
STAR SOUTHWILD
STAR TAYLOR
COMMERCIAL TWP 14
COUPON ACCEPTED

AMC EASTLAND 2
AMC LIVONIA 20
BIRMINGHAM 8
QUO VADIS
SHOWCASE
STAR SOUTHWILD
STAR TAYLOR
WEST RIVER

AMC FORUM 30
AMC SOUTHWILD CITY
CANTON CINEMAS
RENAISSANCE 4
SHOWCASE
STAR SOUTHWILD
STAR TAYLOR
COMMERCIAL TWP 14
COUPON ACCEPTED

Laurel Manor's Millennium Gala

Dine, Dance and be Dazzled into the New Millennium with sophisticated music in a truly elegant atmosphere of silver and spectacular lights.

Friday, December 31, 1999
7:00 p.m. - 2:00 a.m.

A Black Tie Optional Evening featuring:

• A choice of Lobster and Chicken combination or Vegetarian Dinner
• Champagne toast with dinner
• Live Music
• Party Extravaganza designed by the Manor
• Live Music to the sophisticated music of "Big Band"
• Premium Bar Package - 6
• Afterglow at 12:30 including Coney Dogs, Fries and Candies

and
A Complimentary Keepsake Millennium Collectors Plate and Champagne Glass for Each Guest!

\$25.00 Off
Minimum of ticket before discount
Must be 21 or older

Call for Reservations... (734) 462-4626
Payment by Visa, MasterCard, Discover, Cash or Check
39000 Schoolcraft • Livonia