

# New year promises to pop with local music



STEPHANIE A. CASOLA

Just days into 2001, the official millennium, and the musical direction set forth by some of the most intriguing local musicians seems solidified — this will be the year pop rock reigns supreme. It may be more of a prediction than a resolution, but thanks to bands like The Waxwings, Mood Elevator, Atomic Numbers, The Sights, They Come in Threes and edgier acts like the White Stripes and The Witches, Detroit is slowly earning back its Rock City moniker.

A self-proclaimed pop junkie, I of course couldn't be happier. So I got in touch with some other leading forces in local music, and I got an earful.

## From hip hop to hip 'pop'

Livenia's Freddie Benourgard — known to crowds of overzealous fans as Paradime — is the next hip hop superstar. That's all there is to it. His album *Vice* is due out this year. Paradime's own highlights of the 2000? "Detroit's explosion," he said. "Kid Rock, Eminem, D12, Royce 5'9" not only did well, but put a spotlight on the D that's so bright it hurts my eyes."

While it also hurts him to admit it, Paradime knows what's in store for 2001: "Pop music is at its cheesiest," he said. "It will make a turn back in to rock. I guess, but my take is that that is so fake, and so cheesy, and it has no heart or edge, and doesn't make you think; (it) won't last."

Chris Johnston, a Birmingham native and frontman for promising pop rock outfit 19 Wheels, would most definitely disagree.

As his band gets its first real taste of success — now an 89X favorite for its cover of *You Ain't Seen Nothing Yet* — Johnston names his own highlights from the past year: "The continued success of Kid Rock and Eminem as well as great records by The Atomic Numbers, Waxwings, Robert Bradley's Blackwater Surprise, Five Horse Johnson, the Workhorse Movement, The Mood Elevator and others receiving well deserved recognition."

"I think people are going to get back to catchy little ditties," Johnston said. And that's just what he strives for in songwriting. "If I can't get it out of my head I figure it's got to stick in somebody else's."

## Hitting a high point

Moods for Moderns know something about sticky melodies and hooks. The band's manager, Brian Grant of Superior Township, confesses that pop music has fallen into a slump. But he hasn't given up. "The only thing I live by is — a hit song is a hit song, whether it's got real drums, a disco beat, a techno beat, turntable scratches, a midtemp, or a rap in the bridge."

Without turntables or technology, Ann Arbor's Al Hill manages to perfect his own musical love, the rhythm and blues. On his own or as bandleader for the blues legendary Johnnie Bassett, Hill is just one reminder of the tremendous blues talent in the area. This past year, he was blown away by "The long overdue success of Alberta Adams."

"She knocked out crowds at a number of national festivals, and was a joy to work with," he said of the living blues legend.

As for the future of music trends, Hill had this to say: "I don't know where pop music is headed — usually, but the com-



Chris Johnston of 19 Wheels

munication between artists and their audience will continue to be enhanced by the Internet."

## Cyber-rock

Speaking of Internet, 2000 brought masses of music and music lovers together in cyberspace. Jon Kott, frontman for Rochester's Rooster, can be found at [www.roosterband.com](http://www.roosterband.com).

The rocky rock band won the 2000 Jim "Benefiting Emerging Artists in Music" Grant and was one of three winners of the Palace/Pine Knob's Annual Opening Act Contest. His thoughts on local music? "Let's just all make that 19 Wheels get a record deal so we can take the emphasis off of Kid Rock and Eminem and (get) back onto good ol' American rock and roll!" he said. "After four years of playing all over the Midwest and state of Michigan, it's nice to come home to a city that wants you home."

Friend and fellow Opening Act Contest winner, Jeff Moehle — formerly of Troy — is looking forward to more touring in 2001 with his band Kase Deez Shaz. Moehle hopes the new year brings back the rock bands. "There are so many solo artists with talented bands behind them. Now it's time for the great bands to get a chance. I also believe that we'll be seeing more organic music take control."

If you crave organic rock, check out Give. Bassist Ray Ech-



Band on the run: Ken Karasek, Dave Dean, Sam Vail and Jon Kott of Rooster look forward to what 2001 has in store for local music. Seeking to add an extra member on bass, Rooster asks that interested musicians e-mail them at [rooster@roosterband.com](mailto:rooster@roosterband.com).

lin's favorite moments of 2000 range from his band's stunning set at the Hamtramck Blowout last winter to the performance they started at Detroit's Dally in the Alley — before the power blew.

## Close to home, boys

And when he's not performing with Give, he and his brother Lew Echlin are Harry Chronic Jr. — who made it to radio via 89X's *Homeboys Show* this past year. "It was the first time most of the band had been to a radio station, let alone meet (host) Kelly Brown and have our music spun on the air."

While Chronic is still recording, the band intends to shoot a video for the single *It's Terrifying* this month.

My hope, err, resolution for the new year in music? I'd like to see less cutthroat competition and more musicians willing to work together. And I know I'm not the only one.

Mr. Johnston had this to share: "Could this be the year that Detroit bands figure out

that a little friendly competition is good, but we'd be better off pooling our limited resources?"

Well said. Good luck to all in 2001.

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## MOVIE REVIEW

# 'Miss Congeniality' wins laughs, has heart

BY CARRIE COOPER  
SPECIAL WRITER

Are beauty pageants just a bunch of beautiful women with nothing more than looks and a desire for world peace? Or is that a stereotype?

Special Agent Gracie Hart (Sandra Bullock) is on the case. Actually she goes undercover to catch a terrorist threatening the Miss United States Pageant. But in the process Gracie finds that there is more to the pageant than just a winning smile and a good platform.

She starts to see that the beauty contestants aren't just a bunch of airheads, but rather a group of beautiful women who want to make a difference in life.

Now Gracie finds herself caught up in the pageant's glamour and starts to really care for the contestants. But will she be able to catch the terrorist in time or worse yet could it be one of the contestants she has befriended?

Castle Rock Entertainment

presents *Miss Congeniality*, a comedy starring Sandra Bullock (28 Days), Michael Caine (The Cider House Rules), Benjamin Bratt, Candice Bergen (Murphy Brown), William Shatner (Star Trek), and Ernie Hudson (Ghostbusters).

The film also stars, Heather Burns, Melissa De Sousa, Steve Monroe, Deirdre Quinn and Wendy Raquel Robinson. It is directed by Donald Petrie and produced by Bullock.

*Miss Congeniality* is a very physical comedy, especially for Bullock, with a simple plot. The Miss United States Pageant is here threatened; and the only FBI Agent that appears to be photogenic and loose is Gracie Hart. This is a far stretch for someone who likes to be "one of the guys" and never even puts a brush to her hair.

Gracie is reluctant to go along with this plan and her fellow agent Eric Matthews (Bratt) literally and figuratively has to

wrestle her into doing it.

To make matters worse the bureau hires Victor Melling (Caine), a beauty pageant consultant, to transform Gracie into Miss New Jersey. He's the best at what he does but Gracie will be his biggest challenge.

As the pageant approaches, Gracie finds herself becoming fond of the other contestants. She starts to realize that there is more to these women and the pageant than just beauty.

Now Gracie is even more determined to find the culprit and protect the other contestants. In the process she becomes *Miss Congeniality*.

Sandra Bullock is back doing what she does best, physical comedy. Very funny in this role, she shows her ability to produce

a worthy comedy.

Benjamin Bratt, who is known for his television role on *Law & Order*, currently stars in three films.

Michael Caine is the perfect veteran actor to play Victor. After several dramatic roles Caine shows he still has what it takes to do comedy.

Candice Bergen and William Shatner provide wonderful performances as well. They are the perfect pair to play the pageant directors.

*Miss Congeniality* is a great laugh out loud comedy. Bullock's comedic performance alone is worth the trip to the theater.

Carrie Cooper is a Troy resident who writes about film.

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