

C'mon feel the noise at Gold Dollar's unusual music fest



STEPHANIE A. CASOLA

strange, fuzzy, wrong or out-of-tune.

So exactly when did noise become music?

A genre embraced in Germany and Japan remains underground

here. Noise fuses unorthodox artistic vision with pure punk attitude, and it's often created by homemade "instruments."

David Warmbier remembers the first time he heard noise. "It blew me away," said the musician and former radio show host. "It was intense. I'd just never seen anything like it. I guess I've always been drawn to the extreme."

Organizer of the International Festival of Noise, coming Saturday, March 24, to Detroit's Gold Dollar, Warmbier is also one-half of noise-makers The Hearing Trumpet. He and Greg Hallock, a Redford resident, have been performing for about seven

years. The band developed out of a radio show, *Misanthropy 96.1*—still heard Sunday nights from midnight to 2 a.m. on Windsor's 91.5 FM. The show began in 1985 with Warmbier creating live radio mixes of experimental music with found-sounds he ran across at their stores.

His time in radio linked him to contacts in experimental music across the globe. When Warmbier discovered bands like the Ruins and PAK were touring together and Troum would be in town on the same night, he formed the first International Festival of Noise.

"I called up a couple of friends and called it a festival," said

Warmbier, a Farmington Hills resident.

Ask festival performers like Little Princess and you'll see, noise is about energy and drive rather than chaos.

Little Princess is artist Davin Brainard, a Livonia native with a penchant for finding noise in unlikely places. Among his favorite homemade instruments is the electric log, a melding of music and nature.

"Little Princess started in 1992," said Brainard, 31. "It had a lot to do with working at a record store, being alone on Sunday, and having a double-dub cassette deck there and a lot of

blank cassettes."

From there, he created Time Stereo, a label, which features bands like His Name Is Alive, his own paintings and a host of assorted items—like your standard must-have monster gloves, camouflage T-shirts and butter-cream-scented incense.

Brainard said not every band on the bill can be called noise. Bands like Japan's Ruins tend to be heavier rock. Troum will be heavier rock. Troum will be drone, and PAK falls into a prog-rock category.

"Noise doesn't sound anything like music," said Brainard. "It still has the energy of rock 'n' roll."

The first International Festival of Noise will feature the drum and bass of Ruins, improv rock by Ron Anderson's PAK, the drone of Troum, haunting Knurl, Livonia's own The Little Princess, Redford-based The Hearing Trumpet, and guitar noise by Honeybuzz, 8 p.m. Saturday, March 24, The Gold Dollar, Detroit. (313) 833-6873.

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Soft Boys

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weird bass playing," he said. "I kind of wonder what I was on."

For Hitchcock, it incites memories of what it was like to write those songs. "I'd be basically staring at something out on the water, staring at a beam of light," he said. That hypnotic state served him well. "One someone threw a bicycle into the river. It still had a light on. The light shined up through the water from this sort of drowned bicycle."

Such a scene might have been an inspiration for *Underwater Moonlight*, said Hitchcock. He's not sure. "I just had this vision of *Underwater Moonlight*. I might even have heard the title before. ... I imagined these two people going out for a row, two lovers, and then their boat is intercepted by a huge sea crea-

ture. Two statues appear where the lovers stood. I remember writing it, but I don't remember then what I was feeling."

By the time Seligman joined on, the band had moved to London from Cambridge and had begun rehearsing at another place. "One day, 'We were definitely trying to be a punk band when we recorded *I Wanna Destroy You*,'" he said.

Seligman remembers it as an exciting time. "I think I was very committed. I was very happy that I made this record. I'd never been to America before. *Underwater Moonlight* brought him to New York for the first time.

The Soft Boys have rehearsed a few times since last July. Most of its members remained in music through the years, working together or keeping in touch

in some form. Row's band the Waves, became Katrina and the Waves and hit with *Walking on Sunshine*.

When the Boys finally came back together, Hitchcock said, it sounded surprisingly good. "I think *Insanely Jealous* is the best song," said Hitchcock. "I've never written anything better than that."

There is a strong contrast between the band today and the low-fi wails on *Underwater*

Moonlight. "The edges are much smoother, even if the music is the same," said Hitchcock. Seligman agreed, noting that it's strange to hear it so well-played.

"We never played to an audience," he said in a modest, teasing tone. "We always played to empty rooms."

When the Soft Boys hit Detroit March 29, the room will be full. The band plans to record the show and broadcast it over the Web. "It really feels like music

matters there," said Hitchcock. "The Soft Boys gotta make a live album in Detroit."

Seligman too is looking forward to the show. "If it's good, everyone will be in a state of shock, including the band," he said.

The Soft Boys featuring Robyn Hitchcock perform 8 p.m. Thursday, March 29, at St. Andrews Hall, Detroit. Tickets \$17 for this 18-and-older show.

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