

STREET SCENE

Rainer Maria serves up 'A Better Version of Me'



STEPHANIE CASOLA

Some might say Kyle Fischer got more than an education while going to college. He got a rock band too.

Kyle Fischer (guitar/vocals), William Kuehn (drums) and Rainer Maria, a rock trio that took its name from 19th Century Austrian Poet, Rainer Maria Rilke. "The three of us met at the University of Wisconsin," said Fischer, during a recent phone conversation. "Bill, our drummer and I actually met going to punk rock shows in Madison, Wisconsin."

Kuehn convinced him to join a punk rock band and Fischer began playing guitar. But the two soon wandered into creating a new sound — music that didn't quite fit the punk rock mold. "I started writing stuff, that we

were using," recalled Fischer. "I decided, this is more interesting to me."

Enter the missing link, the lovely Caitlin De Marra. "I met Caitlin at a University of Wisconsin Poetry Workshop," said Fischer. "We were sort of becoming friends." He organized extra sessions for his classmates to meet and discuss poetry — but had an ulterior motive in mind. "I really hoped Caitlin would show up, which of course she did. I was like 'Score!' She moved into my place July or August of that year."

That year was 1996 and by September, Rainer Maria had found its sound. "She had a great voice before," he remembered. "She picked it up for the band."

Poetic past

The lyrical and rhythmic influence of its poetic past has flowed through Rainer Maria's sound from the start. The trio began by transforming poetry into song. "We had this like great sort of well. Every week a poem was

due in class. You get in the habit of writing that stuff."

Far from the poetry classroom these days, the New York City transplants released their seventh effort, appropriately titled *A Better Version of Me*, on Polyvinyl Records in February. Rainer Maria proved once again to be the kids at the head of the indie rock class, weaving visions of love, heartache and beauty through some familiar quest to search out meaning in life. De Marra's fragile voice resonates above the shush of Kuehn's drums and clatter of Fischer's guitar, sharing a depth not easily or often achieved. Songs like *Ceremony*, *Artificial Light* and *The Contents of Lincoln's Pocket* leave you feeling rattled and above all, like a good poem, make you think.

"It's a very different experience, listening to a song or reading a poem," admits Fischer. "For a really effective song, I think it helps if the song communicates most of what it has to offer (the first time), even in a

live setting. You get everything in the first listen. On one hand the song asks for a certain level of more simplicity. The music helps you along. In some ways you don't have to be as dense with the subject matter."

For this album, the band again worked with producer/engineer Mark Haines and Elliot Dicks at Smart Studios in Wisconsin. Like a return home to where they first created this distinct mix of emotion and instrumentation, Fischer said he wasn't looking for a new sound or another producer. "People started really paying attention after *Look Now Look Again*." After the last record made *Spin's* Top 20 Albums of 1999, Rainer Maria didn't want to "risk it" with someone new.

As with any project, there were a few surprises. For Fischer it was the sheer evolution of the album's opening track. "I never ever thought that *Artificial Light* would be the first song on the album. It's the second song we wrote for the album.

When we were playing it in New York it was like it was going over people's heads...We weren't ever going to record it."

But Mark Haines did get the tune. He knew just how to mix it and where to put it. "Low and behold, *Artificial Light* is my favorite song," said Fischer. "I would put it up against any other song."

The band approaches its work openly. "We're always all-for-one, one-for-all. Everyone has parts they have they do. We're three parts of a triangle." The system works well. Fischer is perfectly content with the finished product. "It's so exactly the way we sound as a band. It is a

better version of us."

So what does Kyle Fischer do when he's not writing? Write of course. He is working on songs for a solo project. Call it a non-stop cycle for the utterly dedicated. "It's mostly acoustic guitar. It's what I do on my days off."

Hear Rainer Maria 9:30 p.m. Saturday, May 12 at the Blind Pig, Ann Arbor. Call (734) 996-8555.

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COMING ATTRACTIONS

Scheduled to open Friday, April 27

AMORES PERROS
Set in Mexico, the story centers on a fatal auto accident and the three lives that crash into one another, revealing the dark side of human nature. Stars Emilio Echevarria, Gael Garcia Bernal and Goya Toledo.

DRIVEN
A high-tech action drama set in the dangerous, exhilarating world of open-wheel racing. Driven centers on the lives and careers of four drivers chasing the ultimate adrenaline rush. Stars Sylvester Stallone, Kurt Russell, Gina Gershon and Cristin de la Fuente.

ONE NIGHT AT MCCOOL'S
The action revolves around three men who separately recount the story of a woman who ruined their lives during the course of one night. Meanwhile, a dead body at McCool's bar irrevocably ties them together. Starring Matt Dillon, Liv Ullmann, Michael Douglas, Paul Reiser, John Goodman and Andrew Silverstein.

TOWN AND COUNTRY

Life, love, friendship, and the sometimes blistering nature of marital bliss provide the basis for this romantic comedy featuring Warren Beatty as Porter Stockard, a well-known New York architect who is at a crossroads with his wife, Ellie. Disillusioned with his marriage, Porter dallies with a number of women before realizing that it's Ellie he truly loves. Featuring Goldie Hawn, Gary Shandling, Andie MacDowell, and Charlton Heston.

THE FORSAKEN
The story tells of a vampire hunter who teams up with another young man recently bitten by a vampire to find the leader of the clan. Featuring Kerr Smith.

Scheduled to open Friday, May 4

EURUSA
A crazed killer, apparently without motive, hijacks a city bus in southwest Japan. In the ensuing carnage only three people survive the driver, a schoolgirl and her older brother. After a long period away, the three are reunited again

only to be accused of murder by the police. Stars Koji Yakusho, Aoi Miyazaki, Masaru Miyazaki, Yoshichiro Sakoh, Sayuri Kokusho, Ken Mitsuhashi and Go Ryju.

THE MURDER RETURNS

The remains of Imhotep and Anck-su-Namun are brought back to London for a museum. This story takes place 10 years later, and centers around the 9-year-old son of Fraser and Weisz' characters. Well, this time around the villain

isn't Imhotep, but Anck-su-Namun and she's after the boy because she believes he's the key to the reincarnation of the Egyptian God, Isis. Stars Brendan Fraser, Rachel Weisz, Patricia Velazquez, Oded Fehr and John Hannah.

SIDEWALKS OF NEW YORK

Billed as a romantic comedy, the story centers on interwoven love stories set in New York. Featured among the ensemble are Edward Burns, Heather Graham and Stanley Tucci.

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SHOWCASE 4000	SHOWCASE WESTLAND	STAR FAIRLANE
STAR GRATIOT AT 15 MILE	STAR GREAT LAKES CROSSING	STAR JOHN R AT 14 MILE
STAR LINCOLN PARK 8	STAR ROCHESTER HILLS	STAR SOUTHFIELD
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TOWN & COUNTRY
A comedy about men who do stupid things... and the women who get even.

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SHOWCASE PONTIAC	SHOWCASE WESTLAND	STAR FAIRLANE
STAR GRATIOT AT 15 MILE	STAR GREAT LAKES CROSSING	STAR JOHN R AT 14 MILE
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SHOWCASE PONTIAC 1-5	SHOWCASE WESTLAND	STAR FAIRLANE
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STAR GRATIOT AT 15 MILE	STAR GREAT LAKES CROSSING	STAR JOHN R AT 14 MILE
STAR LINCOLN PARK 8	STAR ROCHESTER HILLS	STAR SOUTHFIELD
STAR TAYLOR	UA COMMERCE STADIUM	WEST RIVER

NOW PLAYING AT THESE THEATRES!

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SHOWCASE 4000	SHOWCASE DEARBORN	SHOWCASE PONTIAC 6-12
SHOWCASE 4000	SHOWCASE WESTLAND	STAR FAIRLANE
STAR GRATIOT AT 15 MILE	STAR GREAT LAKES CROSSING	STAR JOHN R AT 14 MILE
STAR LINCOLN PARK 8	STAR ROCHESTER HILLS	STAR SOUTHFIELD
STAR TAYLOR	UA COMMERCE STADIUM	WEST RIVER