

## STREET SCENE

## Ann Arbor-based band finds its 'home'



STEPHANIE A. CASOLA

With a name like The Original Brothers and Sisters of Love, it's no surprise that the Ann Arbor-based sextet dabbles in themes of nostalgia and tones of its home. On the band's latest release, titled *H.O.M.E.S.* Vol. 1 after the acronym we learned in elementary school to remember all of Michigan's Great Lakes, the band takes a folk-inspired sonnet of familiarity to new heights. Founding member Timothy Monger took some time to tell me about this sophomore release. New York-based label The Telegraph Company and shared his own thoughts of growing up in the Midwest.

## Redefining the family

Brothers Timothy and Jamie Monger set out five years ago, as The Original Brothers of Love, playing in coffeehouses and recording music on a four-track in their parents' Brighton home. They took quickly to the road, recording what Timothy described as "Ween-esque" songs in hotel rooms across northern Michigan.

"We had absolutely no specific goal," admits Timothy Monger, guitarist, songwriter and accordion player in the band. "It took a very long time to get where it is

now. The current line up is only about two years old."

That line-up includes Greg McIntosh, Fido Kennington, Scott McClintock, and the band's only "sister," Liz Auchinvoile. "It grew naturally out of friends we grew up with that were musicians," said Monger.

Growing up in a home that echoed the sounds of Neil Diamond, The Beach Boys and John Denver, the Monger brothers took to the tradition of songwriting, with a flair for the unconventional. In work as in life, they remain close. "He's been my roommate all my life," said Timothy of his brother. "We're very close with our parents. Our parents are very involved with our band." TOBASOL gives off a feeling that it is more than a band; it is a family as well. Perhaps that's what makes this music sound so familiar.

Songwriting is split three ways. Timothy Monger tends to fall into nostalgic patterns, like painting a picture of old Tiger Stadium on Michigan and Trumbull. Meanwhile, his brother, Jamie, is "definitely the myth-maker." He is also the band's primary songwriter. "Greg's stuff is all over the place," said Timothy Monger. "He's the quirky one. He uses a lot of chord changes, unique tempos. He's really becoming an amazing writer."

## Celebrating roots

With H.O.M.E.S., the first of two volumes of work, TOBASOL

has begun to find its true niche—honoring a sound specific to its home state and universal enough to be embraced without boundaries. Instead of moving away in pursuit of musical dreams, TOBASOL chooses to stay put. This record is a dedication of sorts to what Monger calls the "Third Coast," the Great Lakes region. "It doesn't get written about enough," he said.

One of the most surprising aspects associated with TOBASOL is the band's tendency to experiment with new sound and venture into unusual musical territory with instruments like mandolin, violin, trumpet, cello, organ and saxophone. The diversity was intended from the start. All six bandmates are musicians in the true sense of the word.

Monger has been playing guitar since age 9, but also lends his expertise on accordion, mandolin and banjo in this band. TOBASOL has even worked with found sounds, like the crash of fireworks. While rehearsing in Flint, the band was interrupted by kids lighting fireworks and decided to incorporate it into *Beautiful Night*, a song they recorded in upstate New York. Most of the record was completed in Ann Arbor, at Big Sky Studios with engineer Geoff Michael (Robert Bradley's Blackwater Surprise, the Atomic Numbers).

Monger is more than pleased with the result. From the drifting sensation of riding a *Vintage Schwinn* on a summer day to



MIKE LAM

Musical kindred: The Original Brothers and Sisters of Love are (left to right) Liz Auchinvoile, Greg McIntosh, Jamie Monger, Timothy Monger, Fido Kennington and Scott McClintock.

falling under the spell of a Michigan winter in *Winter Coat Romancing*, TOBASOL finds truth and beauty in daydreams.

"On our first record, we didn't have time to be a band first," he said. "This is a more even record." Ann Arbor's Brothers and Sisters are already hard at work on the second volume of

H.O.M.E.S., which will be more directly related to the Great Lakes. Amid the engaging images set forth by this record is a past we can all relate to if we just listen.

Grab your copy of "H.O.M.E.S. Vol. 1" at The Original Brothers and Sisters of Love's CD Release Party, with openers Saturday

Looks Good To Me, 9:30 p.m. Friday, Aug. 31, Blind Pig, Ann Arbor. Tickets \$5-\$7. Call (734) 996-8555.

Stephanie Angelyn Casola writes about popular music for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. She can be reached at (734) 953-2130 or e-mail at scasola@oe.homecomm.net.

## ART BEAT

Art Beat features various happenings in the suburban art world. Send Wayne County arts news leads to Art Beat, Observer Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia MI 48150, fax them to (734) 491-7279, or e-mail (as a text file) to ichomin@oe.homecomm.net

## OPENING RECEPTION

Nancy Hurd exhibits her drawings, paintings and fiber in a one woman show opening Sunday, Sept. 2 in the fine arts gallery on the second floor of the Livonia Civic Center Library 32777 Five Mile, east of Farmington Road.

Meet the Livonia artist during an opening reception 2:30-4:30 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 8 in the gallery. Hurd is best known for her colored pencil drawings.

The show continues to Saturday, Sept. 29. Hours are 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday-Thursday, until 6 p.m. Friday-Saturday and 1-5 p.m. Sunday beginning Sept. 16. For more information, call Livonia's community

resources department at (734) 466-2538.

## CALL FOR ACTORS

Schoolcraft College is auditioning actors for its fall production, *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, 7 p.m. Tuesday-Wednesday, Sept. 4-5 in the theatre in the Library Arts Building on campus, 18600 Haggerty, between Six and Seven Mile, Livonia.

The play requires a large cast of 30 to 35 actors, both male and female of varying ages. Performances will be presented Oct. 26-27 and Nov. 2-3 in a dinner theater setting, and Nov. 9-10 as performance only.

Scripts are available in the Bradner Library. Actors should read the script before their audition.

For information or to purchase tickets, call (734) 462-4596 or visit the college book store.

## DINNER THEATER

It's a mystery, a musical, a comedy, and it's almost true. The Angel Food Cafe presents *The*

*Great Ypsilanti Train Robbery of 1916: An Evening of Historical License*, an interactive dinner theater, 5:15 p.m. and 8:15 p.m. Friday, Sept. 7 at the cafe, 6 West Michigan Avenue, Ypsilanti.

Tickets are \$39.95 and include a gourmet, three-course dinner. Advance ticket purchase and meal selection required. Call (734) 483-0135.

## SYMPHONY AUDITIONS

The Plymouth Symphony Orchestra is holding auditions for musicians for its 56th concert season 4-8 p.m. Monday, Sept. 10 at Evola Music Center, 7170 North Haggerty, Canton.

Posted positions include principal viola, fourth horn, tuba and section string. Substitute musicians are needed for wind, brass and percussion section positions, and other openings may be posted as necessary.

Audition selections will be taken from standard orchestra selections. Non-standard selections are by appointment only.

Full orchestra rehearsals begin Monday, Oct. 1.

For more information or to schedule an audition, call personnel manager William Huleker at (313) 640-1773 or send e-mail to plymouthsymphony@aol.com.

## ARTISTS NEEDED

North Farmington High School is looking for artists and crafters for its annual Holiday Arts & Crafts Show Saturday, Nov. 17.

Media include pottery, silk flowers, dried flowers, baskets, candles, photography (other than Detroit), wood shelves or anything unusual. Other items waitlisted at this point.

For more information, call Dianne at (248) 553-0513.

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