

American Mars spaces out with release of new CD, 'No City Fun'



STEPHANIE A. CASOLA

American Mars first caught my eyes—and ears—as I ran into Toronto's Cameron House only to catch the final moments of the band's set at the 2000 North By Northeast Music Showcase. Gasping and out of breath, I stood in disbelief as the band walked off stage.

"Since the day I first heard that last note, I'd been waiting for something tangible, music I could take with me. This month, the wait is over. American Mars unveils *No City Fun*, Friday, Dec. 16, with a party at the Magic Stick in Detroit.

The story of American Mars began in 1995 with singer-songwriter Thomas Trimble, a Dearborn resident with a penchant for writing picturesque lyrics and conjuring bewitching sounds. Two years later, the band released its debut, *Late*, produced by David Feeny at his own Tempermill Studio in Ferndale.

Feeny didn't know then that he'd become a member of American Mars two years later.

Trimble and the original line up toured following the release of *Late*, after which, he said, "all hell broke loose." Band members began leaving but Trimble never quit writing. He wasn't ready to give up.

In 1999, the band was invited to perform at North By Northeast music showcase, so Trimble

had to break the news: "There is no American Mars, but I'd love to come play." He solidified a shiny new line up—including Feeny on pedal steel guitar for the first time—and headed North.

Composing some strange brew of americana-space-rock, American Mars was reborn. Sparse drums and pedal steel guitar rounded out the new sound. Soon, Trimble and Feeny started working on material and recording what would become *No City Fun*.

They brought in friends like Karla Richardson, a former American Mars bandmember, drummer of The Volcans Scott Michalski, Patrick Pantone and

Jim Johnson of the Come-Ons, and drummer Mike Popovich and bassist Garth Girard—who tour with American Mars.

For Trimble, the record represents two distinct time periods. "The first batch I wrote pretty much after American Mars broke up," he said. "I was disappointed that it fell apart," he said.

The newer songs possess more of a pop edge, toned-down and melancholic. Gems like *Loneliness Is Murder* and *If Monday Were Mine* came from a collaborating with Feeny. "I was writing words for a group again," said Trimble.

American Mars songs deal

with real experiences, real life. The words ring true of family, of loss and loneliness.

The band's style isn't easily complemented by other area bands. "There is no cohesive scene," noted Feeny.

Still American Mars has garnered support from radio stations like WDET and CJAM. "We certainly have our guardian angels," Trimble said.

He's not sure what's kept him

going. "I believe I was seduced by the sounds of rock 'n' roll," said Trimble with a shy smile. "It has led me down a foolish path."

Join American Mars with opener Judah Johnson, 9 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 16, Magic Stick, Detroit. Tickets \$7 for this 18 and older show. Call (313) 833-9700. For more information, see the Web site at www.americanmars.com

S.A. Casola writes about popular music for O&E Newspapers.

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