

Gov.-elect Granholm could surprise critics

As this is being written, Gov. John Engler is preparing to leave office after 12 years as undisputed king of the political hill, but leaving a state budget barely in balance after exhausting virtually every accounting gimmick available. For her part, Democrat Jennifer Granholm is about to become Michigan's first woman governor, but faces an enormous projected deficit for the coming fiscal year and a Legislature controlled by Republicans.

Most media pundits have already reached the conclusion that the Granholm administration is in deep trouble. The general argument goes like this:

■ The budget deficit, now estimated at \$1.8 billion, is truly horrendous. The Budget Stabilization Fund has been drained, the recession continues to sap state tax revenues with no clear upturn in sight and the kind of cuts Gov.-elect Granholm will have to make will surely anger everybody in sight.

■ Granholm may be governor-elect, but she's pretty much without Democratic allies in Lansing. Sen. Ken Sikema (R-Wyoming) will lead the state Senate; Rick Johnson (R-LeRoy) will be Speaker of the House; and fellow Republicans Mike Cox and Terri Lynn Land will be attorney general and secretary of state, respectively.

■ The criminal investigation launched a couple of weeks ago against Granholm's patron, Wayne County Executive Ed McNamara, had a bunch of FBI agents waving subpoenas at everybody in sight, including a fair number of people she had considered appointing to major positions in her administration. Despite U.S. Attorney Geoffrey Collins' reputation for integrity and fair dealing, this probe could run on and on and on, a la the Whitewater investigation that dogged President Clinton for years.

No wonder Bill Hallenger, editor of Inside Michigan Politics (and a savage, long-time Granholm critic), concluded last week that Granholm would be a weak governor, hemmed in by the opposition, "especially if she has no program, no mission that's been certified by the voters."

My own reaction? It's far too early to project the demise of the Granholm administration, especially before it has even taken office. My thinking is rooted precisely in the factors the pundits are using to predict woe for Jennifer Granholm.

For her part, Democrat Jennifer Granholm is about to become Michigan's first woman governor, but faces an enormous projected deficit for the coming fiscal year and a Legislature controlled by Republicans.

■ Budget. No doubt it's very bad. But a terrible budget situation provides a Granholm administration with a wonderful opportunity to conduct a fundamental and sweeping review of the operations and costs of state government. A few slashing, cost-cutting, special-interest-busting, results-oriented agenda could be just the thing a Democratic governor needs to dislodge critics and assemble a new coalition of support.

■ Republican dominance. OK, the GOP won virtually everything in the November election, but what's the party going to look like in a year or so? Consider Oakland County, once reliably Republican. County Executive Brooks Patterson, astoundingly cast as a moderate interested in pitching the big tent, is engaged in fierce civil war with a bunch of right-wing fundamentalists led by Tom McMillin of Auburn Hills and outgoing state Rep. Bob Gosselin of Troy. And incoming state Republican Chairman Betsy DeVos is a handy symbol of a party that may be conservative, but not likely particularly compassionate.

■ FBI investigation. So Granholm won't have the freedom to appoint "persons of interest" such as her campaign manager Dave Katz and others to big jobs in Lansing. She's already said she would appoint on the basis of merit, not past connections. Maybe the investigation will give her the opportunity to reach out beyond the usual Democratic suspects and bring in capable outsiders. My sense is that Granholm, a self-described moderate, will wind up governing from the center by both personal preference and political necessity.

Don't get me wrong. I think the Granholm administration has a tough row to hoe. But I also think it's both unfair and premature for the pundits to write off prospects for success before she even takes office.

Phil Power is the chairman of the board of the company that owns this newspaper. He would be pleased to get your reactions to this column either at (734) 953-2047 or at power@homecomm.net.



Hugh Gallagher

Movie about Motown pays tribute to area's creativity

Michigan has gone Hollywood. Three movies in current release have a Michigan angle.

Rapper Eminem makes his film debut in the critically praised but desolate "8 Mile." Flint's counter culture humorist Michael Moore is back with another documentary, "Bowling for Columbine," about the gun culture with some prominent gun advocates from the Thumb. Not exactly a positive image for the state.

But the third movie about Michigan is all uplift and good vibes, even as it rights a serious oversight.

"Standing in the Shadows of Motown" is a tribute to the Funk Brothers, the talented band of primarily jazz musicians who laid down the basic rhythms for the Motown sound.

When Berry Gordy wanted good musicians for his new Detroit rhythm and blues label, he didn't have to go very far. In jazz clubs throughout the city, he found a group of players who would give life, color and improvisation to the works of Smokey Robinson, Holland, Dozier and Holland, Marvin Gaye, Barrett Strong and other Motown songwriters. Their musical support would make stars of The Temptations, The Supremes, Martha and the Vandellas, Robinson, Gaye, Alvin Wells, The Four Tops, Stevie Wonder and others. Yet the band would remain unknown and often uncredited.

Boxed sets and fan devotion have helped right that wrong. But this film brings their story to a wider audience and it does so with high spirits, combining good storytelling with a concert featuring current performers such as Joan Osborne, Meshell Ndegeocello, Bootsy Collins and others, backed by the surviving Funk Brothers doing those great 1960's Motown songs.

What the film says is that as hard bitten as Detroit is, the city has always had a creative side. In addition to the Funk Brothers, Motown also used other local jazz performers and members of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

The film proclaims, rightly, that the Funk Brothers were the greatest pop music hit machine in history. Narrator Andre Braugher tells us they played together on more hits than Elvis, the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and the Beach Boys combined.

This being a Detroit story, it isn't without its sad notes. A couple players succumbed to drugs and alcohol. One scene recounts how the band was doing a session in the Hillsville basement on Grand Boulevard when the city erupted into flames just blocks away during the 1967 riot.

That creativity still exist throughout our metro area. The loss of the Motown label didn't stop the music. Classical, jazz, rock, r&b, country and rap all flourish here from the inner city to the far reaches of the suburbs.

The Funk Brothers were primarily black musicians but included two white musicians, Joe Messina and Bob Babbitt, who were accepted into the fold because of their musical talent. The surviving musicians are Jack "Black Jack" Ashford, Babbitt, Johnny Griffith, Joe Hunter, Urie Jones, Messina and Eddie "Chank" Willis. The Funk Brothers "here in spirit" are Benny "Papa Zita" Benjamin, James "Igor" Jamerson, Eddie "Bongo" Brown, Earl "Chunk of Funk" Van Dyke, Robert White and Richard "Pistol" Allen (who died after the film was made).

Sadly, Berry Gordy really did go Hollywood in the early 1970s. He pulled up stakes and moved Motown to Los Angeles. A few of the local musicians followed, hoping to continue their steady gig in the land of sunshine and movie stars.

Most returned to Detroit. A combination of intense competition and a lack of creative interplay drove the players back to the city that nurtured them as jazz players and r&b hit makers.

That creativity still exist throughout our metro area. The loss of the Motown label didn't stop the music. Classical, jazz, rock, r&b, country and rap all flourish here from the inner city to the far reaches of the suburbs. Eminem and Kid Rock are only the latest in a long line of performers who have launched national careers from the Detroit area. Some, like Madonna and Diana Ross, have reached legendary status.

"Standing in the Shadows of Motown" is a fine tribute to the best backup band in pop history but it is also a tribute to the many small clubs, older musicians and eager music aficionados who nurtured them.

Hugh Gallagher is the managing editor of The Observer Newspapers. He can be reached by phone at (734) 953-2149, by email at hgallagher@homecomm.net or by fax at (734) 591-7279.

FIGHT BACK - DUMP CABLE TODAY!
Get More for Less...

FREE DISH

FREE Installation
Up to 4
FREE Receivers
FREE Shipping & Handling

FREE 1st MONTH OF SERVICE

Package	1TV	2TV	3TV	4TV
Basic	\$27 ⁹⁹	\$32 ⁹⁹	\$37 ⁹⁹	\$42 ⁹⁹
Plus	\$38 ⁹⁹	\$41 ⁹⁹	\$48 ⁹⁹	\$51 ⁹⁹
Premium	\$48 ⁹⁹	\$50 ⁹⁹	\$55 ⁹⁹	\$60 ⁹⁹

Call Today **800-377-8875**

www.dishnet4u.com

Also Available
DIRECTV

FREE Nationwide Long Distance **FREE** Voice Mail Caller ID Call Waiting **UNLIMITED** Night & Weekend

2 for 1 Holiday Specials

Nokia 1260

Reg Price \$79.95 ea.
1 Phone \$34.95
2 Phones \$49.95
mail-in rebate - \$100.00

Motorola V60

Reg Price \$199.99 ea.
1 Phone \$129.95
2 Phones \$189.95
mail-in rebate - \$100.00
Final Price **\$89.95 for 2 Phones**

Choose any 3 for **FREE** Final Price **You Make \$50.00**

Madison Hts
29 W. 14 Mile Rd.
S.W. corner Next to Shell • 3 blocks West of 8 Mile Rd.
248-583-5555

Eastpointe
21330 Gratiot Ave.
586-443-4444

Some restrictions may apply. Rates subject to change without notice. See store for details.

Spectacular Sportswear Sale

up to

50% Off

Super savings in time for the Holidays on selected Fall and Winter styles from fashion's leading designers...

- Susan Bristol
- Sigrid Olsen
- David Brooks
- Karen Kane
- Bushwaker
- And Many Others



Don Thomas Sporthaus

www.letski.com

6600 Telegraph at Maple • 248 . 626 . 9500
Open Evenings 'til 9 pm; Sundays Noon - 5pm

Follow your favorite high school sports team each week in the Observer