

STREET BEATS

Robb Roy eyes rock stardom

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

Lenore and Fenton streets are already on the Redford Township map. Robb Roy wants to put those streets on the music map as well.

That's where two of the members of the folk-influenced rock'n'roll band had their beginnings. Robb Roy's founding fathers, lead singer Graham Strachan and guitarist Michael Martin, have been pals since they were 5 and even went to grade school together.

"What really got us going is we did a pantomime to the Partridge Family," said Strachan, who later moved to Livonia and is a 1980 graduate of Livonia Stevenson High School. "Me and Mike and some other guys lip-synched a few of their songs."

Now the only people moving their lips are those saying, "wow," watching the band perform. Robb Roy is one of the more highly touted bands in the area.

Already the group is being scouted by a couple of record companies. RCA is said to be one of the companies interested.

ALSO, ROBB ROY is one of the few bands that has transcended both spheres of the area music scene. The band goes over well in hard-rock venues, like the Token Lounge in Westland. And yet Robb Roy can feel right at home in the Hamtramck hubs like Hamtramck Pub and Paycheck's, noted new music establishments.

Why that is so stems from no real conscious effort on their part. They just play, and play well.

"We just wanted to have the melodic stuff and add a hard bottom to it," said Strachan, describing the group's music. "It was hard at first."

"We're kind of teetering on both sounds," Strachan added. "We have a hard enough edge on our stuff to appeal to both clubs (hard rock and new music)."

Mainly, that's because members of Robb Roy have been on both sides of the fence. Strachan and Martin were also the nucleus of a hard-rocking group, the Lords. The two left the group two years ago, citing creative differences with other band members.

WHEN THEY were together, the Lords managed to put out an album and toured the East Coast and the South.

While this was transpiring, now Robb Roy drummer Perez Morris of Redford was playing for such bands as the Enforcers and the 3-D Invisibles. Strachan performed with Perez in the past in informal jam sessions. When The Lords broke up, he didn't waste a second asking the talented drummer to join the fold.

Then they had to find a bass player. Kevin Pruett of Detroit auditioned for the job. Before that, he performed in everything from heavy metal bands to Top-40 groups.

"I remember the night I came over to audition," Pruett said. "Mike headed upstairs and got Graham.



Several record companies reportedly are interested in signing local rockers Robb Roy: Michael Martin (left), Jason Kuehn,

Graham Strachan, Kevin Pruett and Perez Morris.

They both came down and said, 'There's not a lot of money in this.'"

Jason Kuehn of Livonia played in a rock band with Strachan's brother. Strachan said Kuehn brings the new music influence to the band's sound.

"We're pros," said Martin, who is a 1980 graduate of Redford Union.

"We're secure in what we're doing," Gary Spaniola would agree.

Spaniola is a well-known producer in the area (he produced Ready for the World (MCA) and Toby Redd (RCA) have linked record deals.

"The one thing I liked most about (Robb Roy) is they have a back-to-basics songwriting approach," Spaniola said. "They write and go for the feeling."

record deals. Spaniola has had considerable success as area bands such as Press (Atlantic), Cinema (A&M), Ready for the World (MCA) and Toby Redd (RCA) have linked record deals.

"The one thing I liked most about (Robb Roy) is they have a back-to-basics songwriting approach," Spaniola said. "They write and go for the feeling."

"I think they have great potential. They have some good songs, and they have a real strong lead singer."

Strachan's singing came about by accident. In his youth, he was a drummer. One day, though, Martin took him aside.

"Mike said, 'I think you should try singing,'" Strachan recalled. "I asked why. He said, 'Because you can't play drums.'"

CONCERTS



Mojo Nixon will be performing Tuesday at the Blind Pig in Ann Arbor.

● MOJO NIXON

Mojo Nixon will be performing Tuesday, Dec. 1, at the Blind Pig, 208 First St., Ann Arbor. For more information, call 996-6555.

● THE FRONT

The Front, featuring Greg Stryker, will perform Tuesday, Dec. 1, at Jagers, 3481 Elizabeth Lake Road, Waterford. For more information, call 681-1700.

● UNDERWATER RAIN

Underwater Rain will perform with the Raging Hormones Friday, Dec. 4, at the Hamtramck Pub, Caniff, off I-75. For more information, call 365-9760.

● THE POGUES

The Pogues, with former Clash member Joe Strummer, will perform Friday, Dec. 4, at Todd's, 8139 E. Seven Mile, Detroit. Doors open at 9 p.m. Tickets are \$13.50 and available at TicketMaster Outlets or at Play It Again Records in Southfield. To charge tickets by phone, call 423-6666.

● MAN O WAR

Man O War will perform Friday, Dec. 4, at Harpos, 14238 Harper, off I-94, Detroit. Tickets are \$4. For more information, call 431-6400.

● AEROSMITH

Aerosmith will perform with Dokken Saturday, Dec. 5, at Joe Louis Arena in Detroit. Tickets are \$17.50 and can be purchased at TicketMaster Outlets. To charge tickets by phone, call 423-6666.

● ROBB ROY

Robb Roy will perform with A Million Reasons Saturday, Dec. 5, at the Hamtramck Pub, Caniff, off I-75. For more information, call 365-9760.

● ANTHRAX, CELTIC FROST & EXODUS

Anthrax, Celtic Frost & Exodus

COLLEGE

Here are the top-10 songs being played on WOUX-AM 640, the campus radio station of Oakland University in Rochester.

1. "I.O.U.," The Replacements.
2. "Hard Times," Public Image Limited.
3. "Exhuming McCarthy," R.E.M.
4. "I Want to Be a Filmmaker," Screaming Blue Messiahs.
5. "On Tuesday," Men Without Hats.
6. "Big Decision," That Petrol Emotion.
7. "Prisoner," Squeeze.
8. "Mandinka," Sinead O'Connor.
9. "Caravan of Love," The Housemartins.
10. "Love Removal Machine," The Cult.

will all perform Sunday, Dec. 6, at Harpos, 14238 Harper, Detroit. Doors open at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$15.50. For more information, call 823-6400.

● JAMES TAYLOR

James Taylor will perform Tuesday, Dec. 8, at the Masonic Temple Theatre in Detroit. Tickets are \$19.50 and available at TicketMaster Outlets. To charge tickets by phone, call 423-6666.

● THE CARS

The Cars will perform with the Brandos Saturday, Dec. 12, at Cobo

CDs

Here are the top-10 selling compact discs at Harmony House in Westland.

1. "Live Bullet," Bob Seger.
2. "Cloud Nine," George Harrison.
3. "Momentary Lapse of Reason," Pink Floyd.
4. "Chronicles," Steve Winwood.
5. "... Nothing Like the Sun," Sting.
6. "Live in Australia," Elton John.
7. "Lonesome Jubilee," John Cougar Mellencamp.
8. "Actually," Pet Shop Boys.
9. "Big Generator," Yes.
10. "Hysteria," Def Leppard.

Here are the top-10 songs being played on WMUZ-FM 103.5, a Christian music radio station in Detroit.

1. "Humble Yourself," 2nd Chapter of Acts.
2. "All That Is in Me," Harvest.
3. "The Father Hath Provided," Larnelle Harris.
4. "Whatever You Ask," Steve Camp.
5. "Be Ye Glad," Debbie Boone.
6. "Holy Is the Lord," Twila Paris.
7. "When the Son Begins to Reign," DeGarmo & Key.
8. "Candle in the Rain," David Meece.
9. "Devoted to You," The Imperials.
10. "Questions," Glad.

REVIEWS

BIG GENERATOR
— Yes

Yes sounds like a band that just returned from a shopping spree at a musical instrument store and doesn't know what to do with what it bought. "Big Generator," an Atlantic Records, is a cornucopia of instrumental versatility. This is the couple's second release since reforming in 1985, which was released in 1985.

There's soaring guitar work on "Big Generator," the title track of the album. Heavy keyboards dominate "Alm High, Shoot Low," and violins start off "Love Will Find a Way," the hit song off the album.

And, yes, all the Yes hallmarks are there: Jon Anderson's high-octave vocals, Trevor Rabin's sonic guitar and Chris Squire's thundering bass. But what this album lacks in areas is continually.

Some of the numbers, like "Alm High, Shoot Low" for instance, seem bogged down with instrumental overachievement. As a result, "Alm High, Shoot Low" misses the target and goes nowhere.

One reason for this might stem from the fact that some of the songs are particularly long. "Tim Running"



for example, runs more than seven minutes.

Others, like "Almost Love," could be shortened for better results. Just when you're prepared to listen to the next track, Anderson's voice creeps back in for another round, and the cycle repeats itself.

By contrast, "Rhythm of Love" is more compact and shows definite promise of becoming a follow-up hit single to "Love Will Find a Way."

Rabin's guitar work on this nugget is excellent.

And the harmonizing on "Rhythm of Love" gives the Tabernacle Choir a run for its money.

"Love Will Find a Way" stands out for the same reason "Rhythm of Love" works — it's concise and has direction. Mainly, though, the guitar work of Rabin and the bass play of Squire give the song an edge that others on the album are devoid of.

— Larry O'Connor

EYE OF THE HURRICANE
— The Alarm

The Alarm says it's out of the anthem-making business. Geez, wouldn't Francis Scott Key be glad to hear that?

Instead, the Welsh rockers are now just growing up and learning to cope with their world, according to lead singer Mike Peters. But more importantly, the Alarm wants to break from being lumped with the Us and Simple Minds by trying to make grand statements with their music.

After awhile, people don't take kindly to preachy stances from the rock'n'roll community. They just want to be entertained.

On "Eye of the Hurricane," the band's third album on I.R.S. Records, the Alarm is able to shake the image of trying to change the world. Well-I-I-I, sort of.

Peters still has a tendency to wall like he's reading some sort of proclamation. And lyrically, the band still has a penchant for song titles hinting change like "Rescue Me," "Shelter," and "Permanence of Change."

Yet musically, the Alarm definitely has carved its own niche with a spirited brand of acoustic-guitar-dominated rock'n'roll.

"Rain in the Summertime" starts the album off in the right direction.



The nice blend of piano and Peters vocals really well. No declarative statements here, except the professed like of rain in the summertime.

"Newman Jericho" displays the band's rich guitar-laden sound as does "Hallowed Ground."

On "Shelter," a song which has received considerable air play on college radio, the lyrics get a bit clichéd. Raise your hand if this sounds familiar, "I've been branded/ I've been washed up and left for dead/ I've been cast out... (Yeah, yeah, it's all right/ Jumpin' Jack Flash is a gas, gas gas)."

On "Presence of Love" and "Only Love Can," obviously, the Alarm embraces the cause of romance. And actually, the group handles the subject quite nicely.

On "Eye of the Hurricane," The Alarm has been able to get off its high horse for a bit by falling on both of its collective feet.

— Larry O'Connor

THE BALLAD OF JIM AND TAMMY
— Tammy Faye Bakker

I did so much want to like this record.

After all, from the funniest couple since Laurel and Hardy, I was hoping for great things. With a title like "The Ballad of Jim and Tammy," I was expecting nothing less than a comic masterpiece, a goofball "Ballad of Davy Crockett" for the 1980s.

But this record just doesn't cut it. It isn't so bad it's good, it's just plain bad.

The ballad is set to the tune of "Harper Valley PTA" with lyrics by Tammy Faye herself. You'd think with such a kitsch classic of adultery and other hanky-panky as a base, she'd have given us a litany of Jim's more interesting escapades. Alas, however, it's only a diatribe against Jerry Falwell, and a dull diatribe at that.

The lyrics at times resemble a legal brief: "We watched them tear apart the park and sell the assets of the ministry at a loss, saw them file bankruptcy, go to court and kick Kevin out of his house." Snores galore.

Only once did the lyrics touch me.



"They even sold Max's doghouse, leaving three little dogs out in the cold." That brought a smile to my face, as I pictured those three little dogs shivering outside their air-conditioned doghouse.

As to Tammy Faye's performance, it can best be described as Jeanette C. Riley snoring helium at the end of each line. Tammy doesn't cry but she sure does moan a lot. Hey, but the guitar work is good.

The record sleeve might be worth the two-back purchase price for aficionados, though. There's Tammy Faye in full color, looking, as my cohort Wayne Peal suggests, like Belinda Carlisle after a Twinkie binge. The makeup job isn't as industrial strength as usual, but it still looks as though it would smudge if you ran your thumb across it.

The clerk at the record store probably summed it up best: "It makes a good coaster."

— Richard Lech