



Tina Marcaccio (left), keyboard; Randy Martin, bass and vocals; Ramsey Gouda, vocals and guitar; Tom Campbell, drums and vocals; and Marty Heger, saxophone and vocals, all work to make The Difference sound different.

Bass sends accountant flying on stage with acclaimed group

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

By day, Randy Martin makes sure his No. 2 lead pencil jibes with the numbers he's laying down on his calculator.

By night, Martin makes sure his bass lines are in tune with the numbers being put forth by The Difference. Except, on stage he doesn't wear a suit and tie. Nor does he sit still for eight hours like he does on his job as an accountant.

Frankly, with bass in hand, the man is out of control. Martin prowls the stage with head bobbing up and down, rhythmically thudding his bass and singing along the way. He's a show by himself.

"I think about all the girls I used to date and I get (angry)," said Martin of Bloomfield Hills about his endless supply of movements.

Yet Martin is only one of five highly energetic and very talented members of a group whose musical virtuosity has garnered national attention. The Ann Arbor based band recently won best college band honors in an MTV competition.

Also The Difference was picked in the top-20 out of 2,000 nationwide in

Musican magazine's "Best Unsigned Band" competition.

The group's strength lies purely in its musicianship and stage presence.

A LOUD, pulsating beat by drummer Tom Campbell opens every number, leaving audience members to believe The Starship Enterprise is about to land. The rest of the band members follow suit.

Vocals are interspersed amid a series of grueling solos. Tina Marcaccio, keyboards; Marty Heger, saxophone and guitar; Ramsey Gouda, guitar; Campbell and Martin go their own directions but somehow still manage to keep the tightness.

"I think it's all about the chemistry between the five of us that works," said Campbell, a graduate student at the University of Michigan. "We've all played in different bands with some great musicians. But just because you have five good musicians doesn't mean it's going to work."

The Difference clicked from the onset. The band formed two years ago in a week's time through a series of mutual friends at U-M.

The Difference gained instant notoriety around Ann Arbor with its

high-powered music fortified with elements of funk, jazz, pop, reggae and rock. The group has been a regular at Rick's American Cafe and at The Blind Pig.

Both places have small dance floors. People still crane them to move to the music. Band members, though, are quick to refute the notion they're strictly American Bandstand fodder.

"We want to be listened to, not just heard," said Marcaccio, a music student at U-M.

"Dance bands are conventional," Campbell added. "We're less conventional, less typical."

NO KIDDING. At a recent show at Rick's Cafe, the band followed a Sex Pistolish rendition of "Hello Daddy" with a swinging bebop number and then a reggae-laced tune.

Creativity, originality, musical content and performance is where the band scored high marks with the judges in the MTV competition at Daytona Beach, Fla. The Difference outshined collegiate bands and a number of bands from Boston, Atlanta and New York.

The contest booty included \$5,000 in cash and a \$5,000 scholarship along with all-expense paid record-

ing sessions at Nola Studios in New York. The competition was co-sponsored by Energizer batteries.

"We got to meet Jacko, the 'Oy' guy," Campbell said. "We ate pepperoni and played football all day."

The latest coup, the top-20 rating in the Musican magazine competition, if anything lends further validity to the band's deft musicianship. "It confirms what we already believe," Gouda said.

If the Difference make the top-10, the group will be included on a Warner Brothers-produced compact disc.

With the latest events, a record deal would seem inevitable, especially with the national attention of late.

The Difference, though, isn't intent to sit back and wait. The band will head to New York this week to record an album. Already, six of the band's songs are on a cassette, "The Difference."

With things happening at such a rapid clip, the band had to take May off to settle down.

"It's so hard for a band to get to the stage where we are now," Heger said. "There's 1,000 bands in each city. It's important that we all have a focused effort."

IN CONCERT

• GREG STRYKER BAND

The Greg Stryker Band will perform Wednesday through Saturday, June 8-11, at Jagers, 3481 Elizabeth Lake Road, Pontiac. For more information, call 681-1700.

• THE PIXIES

The Pixies will perform Thursday, June 9, at Rick's American Cafe, 611 Church, off Liberty, Ann Arbor. For more information, call 996-2747.

• JAZZ BUTCHER

Jazz Butcher will perform Friday, June 10, at Saint Andrew's Hall, Congress, east of Woodward, Detroit. Tickets are \$12.50. For more information, call 99-MUSIC.

• ROBB ROY

Robb Roy will perform Saturday, June 11, at The Hamtramck Pub, 2848 Caniff, off I-75. For more information, call 355-9760.

• FRANK ALLISON & THE ODD SOX

Frank Allison & The Odd Sox will perform Monday, June 13, at Rick's American Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For more information, call 996-2747.

• MICK FURLOW BAND

The Mick Furlow Band will perform Tuesday, June 14, at Jagers, 3481 Elizabeth Lake Road, Pontiac. For more information, call 681-1700.

• JOHNNY ALLEN & THE APPEAL

Johnny Allen & The Appeal will perform Tuesday, June 14, at Rick's American Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For more information, call 996-2747.

• MONSTERS OF ROCK

Van Halen's Monsters of Rock tour, featuring Van Halen, Scorpions, Dokken, Metallica and Kingdom Come will take place at 1:30 p.m. Friday, June 17, at the Pontiac Silverdome. Tickets are \$25.

• MILES DAVIS

Miles Davis will perform with special guests Roy Ayers, Ronnie Liston Smith and Noel Pointer at 8 p.m. Friday, June 17, at the Masonic Temple in Detroit. Tickets are

\$22.50. For more information, call 832-2232.

• THE POGUES

The Pogues will perform at 10 p.m. Friday, June 17, at Saint Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. Tickets are \$12.50 in advance. For more information, call 99-MUSIC.

• THE CHURCH

The Church will perform at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, June 18, at the Royal Oak Music Theatre. Tickets are \$16.50. For more information, call 546-7610.

• HANK WILLIAMS JR.

Hank Williams Jr. and the Bama Band will perform with special guest Restless Heart, at 7:30 p.m. Friday, June 24, at Joe Louis Arena in Detroit. Tickets are \$17.50. For more information, call 587-6000.

• SUMMER BLUES MELTDOWN

The first-ever Summer Blues Meltdown will take place at 7:30 p.m. Friday, June 24, at the Michigan Theatre, 603 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Featured will be Koko Taylor & Her Blues Machine, Lonnie Brooks Blues Band and special guest Robert Jr. Lockwood. Tickets are \$13.50 and \$11. For more information, call 99-MUSIC.

JAZZ

Here are the top-10 albums receiving airplay on WJZZ-FM, a jazz station in Detroit.

1. "Power Play," Eddie Gomez.
2. "Yutaka," Yutaka.
3. "Passion," Norman Connors.
4. "Natural Elements," Acoustic Alchemy.
5. "Crazy Rhythm," Asymuth.
6. "Short Stories," Bob Berg.
7. "Reflections," George Howard.
8. "Super Live," G.R.P.
9. "Living Colors," Dave Samuels.
10. "Driving on the Edge of the World," Kit Walker.

CD

Here are the top-10 selling compact discs at Musicland in Livonia Mall.

1. "Lovesexy," Prince.
2. "Kick," INXS.
3. "More Dirty Dancing Soundtrack," various artists.
4. "Faith," George Michael.
5. "Scenes from the Southside," Bruce Hornsby.
6. "Open Up and Say Ahh," Poison.
7. "25th Anniversary Classic," Cat Stevens.
8. "Introducing the Hardline . . .," Terence Trent D'Arby.
9. "Lap of Luxury," Cheap Trick.
10. "Appetite For Destruction," Guns N' Roses.

COUNTRY

Here are the top-10 songs receiving airplay on WWWW-FM, a country station in Detroit.

1. "Eighteen Wheels and a Dozen Roses," Kathy Mattea.
2. "I'm Gonna Get You," Eddy Raven.
3. "Strangers Again," Holly Dunn.
4. "True Heart," Oak Ridge Boys.
5. "I Told You So," Randy Travis.
6. "Wildflowers," The Tinseltown.
7. "It's Such a Small World," Rodney Crowell and Rosanne Cash.
8. "Always Late (With Your Kisses)," Dwight Yoakam.
9. "I'll Always Come Back," K.T. Oslin.
10. "The Best I Know How," Statler Brothers.

REVIEWS

SCENES FROM THE SOUTHSIDE — Bruce Hornsby And The Range



Some people want to believe that Bruce Hornsby is rock music's latest savior, with his piano mastery and word weaving. Perhaps a new-age Dylan/Ellon combination. Perhaps not.

But even though Hornsby's RCA followup to the huge hit "The Way It Is" doesn't quite match up to that album, it is by no means dismissible. Hornsby bridges the jazz, pop, rock and classical realms with his virtuoso playing. And the songs — mostly little musical tales about life in the heartland — require a careful listen and reflection, quite unlike most of today's assembly line record industry.

The problem with this set is many of the songs sound too much alike, with Hornsby's homogenized singing and dominant piano up front, lending little variety to the mid-tempo offerings. There's plenty of outstanding music, but little emotion. Only on "Defenders Of The Flag," the seventh of

nine tracks, does the electric guitar plow through the slickness.

Elsewhere, there's Hornsby's blue-collar anthem "The Valley Road," the syncopated, quirky "The Old Playground," and a pale remake of Huey Lewis' "Jacob's Ladder." Actually, Bruce and John Hornsby wrote the tune, not Lewis, who incidentally, guests on "Scenes From The Southside."

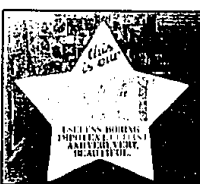
The visual imagery of Hornsby's lyrics is evident throughout. On "Look Out Any Window," the singer croons: "There's a man working on a boat, pulling lines from the water. Just trying to stay afloat, filling the net is getting harder."

That is a verse to make rock poets proud. His piano playing ain't bad either.

But Hornsby will need to be less predictable on his next album to reach "legend" status. Doing away with guitar consultants and drum programmers also wouldn't hurt.

— Tim Smith

THIS IS OUR ART — Soup Dragons



Yes, they are from Europe. And, yes, they wear the tag of new music.

But low and behold, The Soup Dragons really have something to offer. "This Is Our Art" (Sire) has an abundance of energy, life if you will. Yes, this album is alive, unlike some of the synthesized ooze that arrives DOA from across the Atlantic.

The Soup Dragons take pop and stretch its boundaries like cheap elastic. This Scottish quartet goes on the offensive early with thrash rocker "Kingdom Chairs" and the equally raunchy sounding "Great Empty Space."

This group takes the hard rock route often, establishing a raw edge with "Passion Protein." But the Soup Dragons are merely flexing muscle here.

The group's strength lies in sweet acoustic, melodic offerings. Lead singer Sean Dickson and guitarist

Jim McCulloch team up for a Mammas and Papas sound in "The Majestic Head." "Turning Stone" and "On Overhead Walkways" are both excellent pop tunes, both featuring a free and easy beat.

And there's more than a touch of '60s sentimentality here and there, especially in the tamborine rattling of "Vacatio Mispic." Dickson adds a few "bops de bops" for good measure.

The Soup Dragons don't make the mistake of sounding totally like a '60s nostalgia trip. Instead, they're able to take the raw energy culled from the '70s punk movement and accent it with a dash of the '60s. The end result is a new sound.

The writing here is fresh as well. Dickson does an excellent job, avoiding clichés. "Soft As Your Face," in addition to having a good melody, has a nice flow to it.

— Larry O'Connor

TOMORROW MORNING — Tracy Lee & The Leonards



Creativity is certainly not a problem in the Tracy Lee & The Leonards camp. This group features one of the area's finest songwriters in Dick Siegel and vocalists in Tracy Lee Komarny.

Together, along with the excellent guitar work of George Bedard, drumming of Richard Dishman and bass work of Dan Billich, the Leonards are able to harness their creative impulses into a neat package "Tomorrow Morning" (Boo Kay).

Fun is the key word here. Tracy Lee and company delve into such silliness as lost poodles and wanting to fly.

Komarny leads the way with her well-honed vocals. She can sound like the daughter of Patsy Cline as she does in "Chevrolet" and then go to a child-like whisper as she does in "Fleece (Where Are You?)."

Siegel puts his trademark of humorous, concise writing on such pop gems as "Tomorrow Morning," "I Wanna Fly," and "Let Me Touch

Your Dress." George Bedard highlights each tune with his deft guitar work.

"I Wanna Fly," for example, has all the elements of a well-crafted pop song. It's well written and overall just well performed. Komarny sings with passion while Bedard takes the number an extra step with his guitar work. He provides the hook just when one's ready to bite.

This group shows quite a bit of depth as well. Singing about cars is hardly breaking any new ground, but the way Tracy Lee & The Leonards tackle the subject in the rockability "Chevrolet" makes you feel you're along for the ride.

Tracy Lee & The Leonards also straddle the line between the quirky and the outright weird. "Fleece (Where Are You?)" falls into the strange category. But stretching the limits is what it's all about.

And few do a better job of it than Tracy Lee & The Leonards.

— Larry O'Connor