

Tina Marcaccio (left), keyboards; 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 lead 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.

But 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.

Vocals are interspersed amid a series of grueling sets. 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 cram them to move to the music. Band members, though, are quick to refute the notion they're strictly American Bandsland 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 Pistols rendition of "Hello Daddy" with a swinging bebop number and then a reggae-laced tune.

Creativity, originally, 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 bonus 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 'O' guy," Campbell said. "We ate pepperoni and played football all day."

The latest coup, the top-20 rating in the Musician magazine competition, if anything lends further validation to the band's do-it-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 as 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."

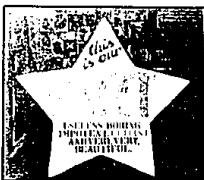
Also The Difference was picked in the top-20 out of 2,000 nationwide in

REVIEWS

SCENES FROM THE SOUTHSIDE — Bruce Hornsby And The Range



THIS IS OUR ART — Soup Dragons



IN CONCERT

• GREG STRYKER BAND

The Greg Stryker Band will perform Wednesday through Saturday, June 8-11, at Jagger's, 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 of the 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.

• ROB ROY

Rob Roy will perform Saturday, June 11, at The Hamtramck Pub, 3448 Caniff, off I-75. For more information, call 365-9760.

• 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 Jagger's, 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 Linton Smith and Noel Pointer at 8 p.m. Friday, June 17, at the Masonic Temple in Detroit. Tickets are \$15.

CD

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

1. "Power Play," Eddie Gomez.
2. "Yutaka," Yutaka.
3. "Passion," Norman Connors.
4. "Natural Elements," Acoustic Alchemy.
5. "Crazy Rhythm," Azymuth.
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.

COUNTRY

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

1. "Eighteen Wheels and a Dozen Roses," Kathy Mattea.
2. "I'm Gonna Get You," Eddie Rickenbacker.
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. "Lip of Luxury," Cheap Trick.
10. "Appetite For Destruction," Guns N' Roses.

TOMORROW MORNING — Tracy Lee & The Leonards



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

But even though Hornsby's R&B followup to the huge hit "The Way It Is" is not quite match up to that album, it is by no means dispensable.

Hornsby bridges the jazz, pop, rock and classical realms with his virtuous 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 slinging and dominant piano up front, leading 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 guested 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.

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

Jim McCulloch team up for a Mamas 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 tambourine rattling of "Vacate My Space." Dickson adds a few "bop de bops" for good measure.

The Soup Dragons don't make the mistake of sounding like cheap elastic. This Scottish quartet goes on the offensive early with thrash rocker "Kingdom Chair" 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.

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The writing here is fresh as well-boned vocals. 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

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 Stigel and vocalists in Tracy Lee Komarmy.

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

Fun is the key word here. Tracy Lee & The Leonards drive into such titles as "lost puppies and wanting to fly."

Komarmy leads the way with her well-boned 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 "Fleecle (Where Are You?)."

Stigel 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 deli guitar work.

"I Wanna Fly," for example, has all the elements of a very well-crafted pop song. It's well written and overall just well performed. Komarmy 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 is the rockabilly "Chevrolet" makes you feel you're alive for the ride.

Tracy Lee & The Leonards also straddle the line between the quirky and the outright weird. "Fleecle (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