

STREET BEATS



Psycho-pop is the iodine Raincoats sound.

Raincoats define own brand of pop

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

What is psycho-pop? Is it something that only Norman Bates can dance to? "Don't ask us," said Damien McCann, drummer of the Ann Arbor-based rock band Iodine Raincoats. "We don't know."

The Iodine Raincoats actually know more than they're letting on. Band members, however, are content to let the music listener define what exactly is psycho-pop. So don't call in the guys with the white coats just yet.

"I Wonder," a recently released four-song EP, perhaps offers a clue into all the madness of the psycho-pop sound. An eclectic mix of danceable rhythms and raunchy guitars can be heard on the EP.

On the EP, the Raincoats question everything from the government to their own relatives. The title track,

"I Wonder," deals with the latter. "I was with my sister during Thanksgiving with all the folks," said Robert McKenzie, lead singer of the group. "I was wondering 'here you are with all these people that you love and yet you can't stand to around them for very long.' Know what I mean?"

More than anything, it means the Iodine Raincoats aren't exactly the tie-dyed-in-the-wool pop rock outfit. Not even close.

THE BAND doesn't sing about girlfriends or fast cars. Instead members are more likely to croon about aunts and uncles or muffers. The picture of psycho-pop comes more into focus.

Jazz, blues and even hardcore punk influences can be found in the Iodine Raincoats' music. Sort of like a Sybil-sound, if you will.

"I think we have a garage edge," McKenzie said. "I think our songs are written much better, though.

When we first started out, we had more hardcore influences. Now it's not so basic."

The group started out with the basic four-man line-up two years ago. In January, a new bass player was brought in and another guitarist was added.

Along with McCann and McKenzie, the group features guitarists Andy Solomon (recently added) and David Amir and bassist Chris Noteboom (also new). Amir is from Rochester.

McKenzie said the fifth member has made the band more professional, more focused.

"And I'm not playing the guitar anymore," he said. "It's hard enough for me to remember words, sing lines, play the guitar and try to move at the same time. Forget it."

As a result, McKenzie has been able to concentrate solely on singing. And the band has been able to concentrate on garnering an audience.

ANN ARBOR venues, such as Rick's Cafe and the Blind Pig, are regular haunts for the band. Lately, the group has appeared at Saint Andrew's Hall in Hamtramck and Alvin's in Detroit.

The band has opened for The Golden Palominos, The Bolshoi, Little America and Thelionis Monster. A tour of the East Coast is in the works for September.

The Iodine Raincoats are one of handful of talented bands to emerge from Ann Arbor, Tracy Lee & the Leonards, Map of the World, Frank Allison & The Odd Sox and The Difference all hail from there. And all are highly-regarded music acts in both Ann Arbor and Detroit.

Band members said audiences in Ann Arbor expect more in terms of creativity. Also, they're less likely to fall for a group portraying an image.

"I've tried to do it," McKenzie said, "and people laughed."

IN CONCERT

- **NEW ADVENTURES**
The New Adventures will perform Monday, July 18, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For more information, call 996-8555.
- **SUN MESSENGERS**
Sun Messengers will perform at 4 p.m. Wednesday, July 20, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For more information, call 996-2747.
- **ROBERT NOLL**
Robert Noll and the Blues Mission will perform Monday through Wednesday through July 27 at Plymouthtown Saloon, 8825 General Dr., Plymouth. For more information, call 455-9800.
- **GREG STRYKER BAND**
The Greg Stryker Band will perform Wednesday through Saturday, July 20-23, at Jagers, 3481 Elizabeth Lake Road, Pontiac. For more information, call 681-1700.
- **ERASURE**
Erasure will perform at 10 p.m. Thursday, July 21, at Saint Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. For more information, call 99-MUSIC.
- **THE RASCALS**
The Rascals will perform Friday, July 22, at Meadow Brook Music Festival in Rochester. For more information, call 377-2010.
- **TOBY REDD**
Toby Redd will perform Friday and Saturday, July 21-22, at the Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, off I-75. For more information, call 365-9760.
- **NINA HAGEN**
Nina Hagen will perform Friday, July 22, at Saint Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. For more information, call 961-MELT.
- **HOT TUNA, TIMBUK 3**
Hot Tuna will perform with special guests, Timbuk 3, at 8 p.m. Wednesday, July 27, at the Michigan Theater in Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$14.50. For more information, call 99-MUSIC.
- **JIMMY CLIFF**
Jimmy Cliff will perform Wednesday, July 27, at Saint Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. For more information, call 961-MELT.
- **SUGAR CUBES**
The Sugar Cubes will perform Tuesday, Aug. 9, at Saint Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. For more information, call 961-MELT.



Timbuk 3 will perform along with Hot Tuna on Wednesday, July 27, at the Michigan Theater in Ann Arbor.

JAZZ

- Here are the top 10 jazz albums receiving airplay on WJZZ-FM.
1. "If This Bass Could Only Talk," Stanley Clarke.
 2. "Close Up," David Sanborn.
 3. "Bird of Paradise," Djavan.
 4. "Killimanjaro," Rippington.
 5. "Day by Day," Najee.
 6. "Politics," Yellowjackets.
 7. "Life in the Modern World," Crusaders.
 8. "Doo Dee Doo Wop Bop," Take 6.
 9. "Power Play," Eddie Gomez.
 10. "Stronger Than Pride," Sade.

MUSIC NOTES

Remembering the greatest bluesman

If you're a blues fan, the current blues revival has got to do your heart good.

After all, back in the disco-crazy late '70s, interest in any sort of roots music — blues included — had slipped to new lows.

But the blues is cool again, especially in metro Detroit. Not only can you find more blues bands at clubs these days, some are now strictly blues oriented.

Typically, roots music fans speak reverently about past masters who set the traditions guiding today's performances. For example, country has Hank Williams and Jimmie Rogers, among others.

And blues lists Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Jimmy Reed and Elmore James among its most legendary players and singers. They were

the first electric bluesmen, pioneers who used the newly-perfected electric guitar to get their stories across.

As important as these players were to the blues tradition, some of us find their predecessors, the country bluesmen, the most expressive of that.

But it's been 50 years since the heyday of the country blues singers. Maybe that's why you don't hear their names recalled as much as they should, considering there's a blues revival going on.

If you're unfamiliar with the country bluesmen, you should at least know one who traditionally has stood above the others.

Columbia Records, which owns the rights to his recordings cut in the mid-'30s, has never taken them out of print since their re-release in the

'50s. That's something, considering that even the great Muddy Waters' records have sometimes gone out of print.

In fact, they're talking about releasing this country bluesman's records in a new boxed set, amid talk of a new biography of the singer.

We're talking about Robert Johnson, long held as king of the Delta blues singers.

Johnson, who sang in a haunting voice and sometimes broke into an eerie falsetto, backed himself on acoustic guitar, his thumb thumping out the bass notes, while his fingers laid down clear guitar figures lifted by everyone from Elmore James to Keith Richards.

Some of Johnson's songs are still blues standards today, including

"Dust My Broom," "Sweet Home Chicago" and "Crossroads."

Johnson left just two LPs' worth of material before he died in his early '20s, in 1937. Was he poisoned? Stabbed? There are stories, but no one's sure.

Then again, a writer who recently researched Johnson's life claims he spoke with the singer's murderer. By legal agreement, publication of a planned biography is being withheld until the aging murderer dies, according to Rolling Stone magazine.

When that book is released, interest in Robert Johnson's blues is bound to rise again.

Until then, if you're a blues fan who has yet to hear the bluesman himself call the greatest of all, check him out.

—Kevin Brown

CD

- Here are the top 10 selling compact discs at Musicland in Livonia Mall.
1. "Roll With It," Steve Winwood.
 2. "Now and Zen," Robert Plant.
 3. "Richard Marx," Richard Marx.
 4. "Dark Side of the Moon," Pink Floyd.
 5. "Kick," INXS.
 6. "00812," Van Halen.
 7. "Appetite for Destruction," Guns N' Roses.
 8. "Dirty Dancing Soundtrack," various artists.
 9. "Open Up and Say Ahhh," Poison.
 10. "Hysteria," Def Leppard.

COUNTRY

- Here are the top 10 country songs receiving airplay on WWWW-FM 106.7.
1. "Another Place, Another Time," Don Williams.
 2. "If It Don't Come Easy," Tanya Tucker.
 3. "What She Is (Is a Woman in Love)," Earl Thomas Conley.
 4. "Setem Up Joe," Vern Gosdin.
 5. "Satisfy You," Sweethearts of the Rodeo.
 6. "Fallin' Again," Alabama.
 7. "We Don't All Have the Right," Ricky Van Shelton.
 8. "If You Change Your Mind," Rosanne Cash.
 9. "Chill Factor," Merle Haggard.
 10. "Out of Sight And on My Mind," Billy Joe Royal.

REVIEWS

CHICAGO 19 — Chicago



OK, campers, what three things are most commonly identified by number?

Answer: Popes, Super Bowls and, of course, Chicago albums.

While never exactly the most venturesome band (witness the album titles), Chicago nonetheless has undergone some subtle changes since it burst forth nearly two decades ago.

Synthesizers and programmed drum machines are now as much a part of the sound as Chicago's trademark horns. And in many cases this latest installment, the horns are reduced to just that — a few quick bursts to alert the listener that this isn't Starship, Toto or any of the other bands working the same general pop/rock territory.

But if experimentation means the band's disastrous high tech remake of "Sé or 8 to 4" a few years back, then safe predictability is preferable every time.

That's exactly what this album delivers.

By the fourth track, one has already heard the big Chicago ballad, "We Can Last Forever" with its

booming drums and plaintive vocals. It varies little from the mold established with "Love Me Tomorrow" some six years ago.

"Heart in Pieces" is the album's cuttiest track, with a burping bass line directly lifted from the "Top Gun" sound track — but even that "innovation" is nearly two years old. Talk about a bunch of cautious guys.

As for the rest, it pretty much fits the Chicago mold, too hard for pop, too soft for rock, too slow for dancing.

Overall, Chicago 19 should please the band's legion of fans, while leaving the rest of us free to chase down the next big noise from Winnetka.

— Wayne Peal

REG STRIKES BACK — Elton John



The outer sleeve of Elton John's new album says it all: The colorful flamboyance of this mid-'70s superstar period is back, and so is Reg.

Although the album cover is wonderful, listeners should find the music itself pretty good, too, from the snappy single "I Don't Want to Go on With You Like That," to a feverish remake of Honky Chateau's original "Mona Lisa and Mad Hatters."

Besides wild art and rock roots, this outing also reunites Elton with long-time colleague Bernie Taupin, several old band mates — Johnson, Murray, Cooper — and MCA Records, the label of his greatest success.

Happily left behind, for the most part, are those saccharine ballads ("Sad Songs Say So Much," "Nikita," etc.) which marked much of his output on Geffen Records.

That John wants to rock again is evident the moment the stylus meets the first groove of opening track "Town of Plenty."

Though bailed in '80s technosound, it features Pete Townshend on guitar and Elton, who quickly

puts to rest any thought that his 1985 bout with a raspy voice and subsequent throat operation would be too much for his career.

After ballad breather "A Word in Spanish," he kicks into high gear again on the "Mona Lisa" remake, which has a lyrical/musical toughness which comes much closer to describing New York City life than the original.

The two opens with a bang with "Goodbye Marlon Brando," a straight-ahead kicker where Elton tosses a multitude of subjects into his lyrics blender and quickly spews them out.

Unfortunately, he ends with the lackluster "Since God Invented Girls" with wimpy backup from the Beach Boys. Not surprisingly, the lyric includes a reference to Brian Wilson.

Nonetheless, Reg Strikes Back is proof enough that Elton is the latest in a long list of aging rock veterans who have successfully walked the comeback trail.

— Tim Smith

OPEN ALL NIGHT — Georgia Satellites



From the Allman Brothers Band to Lynard Skynard to the Georgia Satellites, the Olympic torch of southern fried rock 'n' roll has been passed successfully to the next generation.

The bands may change, but the tunes essentially remain the same.

That's not all bad, mind you. Screaming guitars and whiskey-tinged vocals will always have a place in the rock spectrum, as well they should.

And with "Open All Night," their second album for Elektra/Asylum Records, the Satellites certainly prove worthy of carrying the Confederate banner into the '90s.

This record, particularly the six-cut first side, includes enough first-rate picking from Dan Baird and Rick Richards to please even the most ardent Les Paul and Stratocaster fanatics.

So, if things fall a little flat on side two — and they do — you're almost too busy playing air guitar and thumping your foot to notice.

Although the Satellites have their

own, indefatigable style, certain songs will no doubt trigger memories of the Van Zant brothers and their dearly departed Lynard Skynard band. The title cut, with Baird, Richards and bassist Rick Price delightfully stretching out the syllables in the chorus is one example.

Then there are well-executed, typical southern rockers like "Sheila," a song which features sex, sex, sex and, oh yeah, more guitars.

The boys do a passable cover version of Jerry Lee Lewis' "Whole Lotta Shakin'," with some excellent boogie woogie piano work by Ian McLagan.

And as unlikely as it may seem, a Richard Starkey (AKA Ringo Starr) composition, "Don't Pass Me By," fits right in here with its eclectic, twangy, almost country sound.

Side two, as we mentioned, doesn't really work with its slew of slower, heavy-handed numbers.

But then, the old South wasn't all hoop skirts and smooth bourbon either.

— Tedd Schneider