

Mr. X and Idiots combine humor and punk guitar

By Larry O'Connor staff writer

Let it be said that the Idiots know one another. At least the musical ones do. Though new on the local music circuit, Mr. X and the Idiots go back a ways. Lets start with the main Idiot himself, Mr. X, who is also known as Glynn Scanlan. He's seen action as a drummer and as a guitarist in a number of bands, including the Regular Boys and the Madmen. Scanlan graduated from high school the same year as Steve Bauer, who is also bass player in Sensitive Big Guys. He also knew Mike Liedel. His brother, Paul Liedel, is Idiots' guitarist. But, for the time being, let's skip the formalities. Get to the issue—the name. "Just because we don't take ourselves too seriously, really," said Scanlan, who is a 1985 graduate of Livonia Franklin, "and because we are kind of idiots."

And the Mr. X handle? "Glynn Scanlan would've sounded stupid for a tape," he said. "I didn't want a stage name like Spike or Mal-let Head. Mr. X sounded silly enough."

THOSE Few fortunate souls who have a copy of Mr. X's "The Tape With No Name" might disagree. A low-budget production, the seven-song cassette is a humorous blast of guitar punk at its quirkier best. Even the Diamond man himself would likely have a chuckle at Scanlan's rendition of "Song Sung Blue."

There's also an acoustic spasm of a "Kick," in which Mr. X whines about being ill all the time. Another tune from the tape, "I Was Abducted By a UFO," will find its way on Rick Anderson's compilation of local artists due out in the next few weeks.

Which is more than even Scanlan expected when he took some songs

into The Tempermill Studios in Livonia last summer. He did most of the instrumentation on the tape. Scanlan financed the project himself, emptying his bank account to the tune of nearly \$600. About 50 copies of the tape were made. He's given 35 to friends and radio people and sold five copies at Desirable Discs in Garden City.

The Billboard charts are not quaking, but interest in the tape has Scanlan cracking a smile of optimism. "The Tape With No Name" is receiving airplay on college stations, such as WORB-FM at Oakland Community College and WHFR-FM at Henry Ford Community College.

"Some guy named Shane from Garden City called me after he bought the tape," Scanlan said. "He said, 'Wow, I really enjoy the tape... I've even brought a couple of his friends to one of our shows at Paycheck's (Lounge in Hamtramck)."

"I DON'T know if he liked our show. I haven't heard from him since."

People are hearing from Mr. X and the Idiots, though. The band is playing regularly on the Hamtramck circuit at The Pub and Paycheck's Lounge.

As refreshing as the tape itself is Scanlan's and the band's attitude. While most talk of record deals and other cosmic debris, Mr. X and the Idiots are keeping things in perspective.

"We just like to have a good time," Scanlan said. "When I start thinking big, like why not make this tape into an album, I wake up and say to myself there's so many bands around that are going nowhere. I'm more realistic about this band."

That easy-going attitude perhaps can be attributed to the quality of "The Tape With No Name." There's no pretension, no catering to record labels.

Another factor was the guy behind the boards. Dave Penny of the Orange Roughies and owner of Tempermill Studios in Livonia provided the right atmosphere.

"He was really helpful," said Scanlan, who also is a soundman for the Orange Roughies. "He'd say, 'Let's put this in there.'"

"He'd get a phone call and talk for 15 minutes or we'd go out and get doughnuts. It was really relaxed."

Onstage, Mr. X and the Idiots are said to be anything but. Scanlan has



There's nothing idiotic about Mr. X, better known as Glynn Scanlan, and the Idiots, who play regularly on the Hamtramck circuit at The Pub and Paycheck's Lounge.

the yeoman's task of not only singing, but playing drums at the same time.

Mr. X found beating drums while punishing his vocal chords difficult at first.

"I know I put my parents through hell," he said. "I used to sit down in the basement and scream (The Romantics' hit) 'What I Like About You.' One day, it came together."

Ellis sings the blues on way to top

By Larry O'Connor staff writer

B.B. King supplied the string. For Tinsley Ellis, it was the rope of hope. And the Georgia-based blues guitarist continues to tug as an upstart bluesman on the rise.

Thanks to B.B. King, Ellis got the notion to pursue the blues. It was at a show in Miami Beach when the blues great broke a guitar string and handed it to a wide-eyed Ellis. He was only 14.

"It's still here somewhere," said Ellis, in a telephone interview from his home in Atlanta, Ga. "I have part of it (the string). Four people went with me to that show and the string was broken into four different pieces. The piece I have is taped to an autographed photo."

Whenever King sees Ellis, he still

kids him about the souvenir. But more than idolizing legends, Ellis is preoccupied with making a name for himself.

Already Ellis has been called "one of the three top white blues guitarists in America today," third only to Stevie Ray Vaughan and Johnny Winter. Yet he has never received one-third of the notoriety of those two.

Ellis has sought to rectify that. With his last album, "Georgia Blue," (Alligator) he's played more than 200 dates in 31 states. Included was two tours of Europe.

WITH NO radio play to count on, the bluesman has to tour the clubs.

"If you want to make a living, it does," he said. "We don't make a lot of money. We make money a lot of times, if that makes any sense."

Relatively speaking, Ellis is new

on the blues scene. He performed with The Alley Cats, an Atlanta band that included current Fabulous Thunderbird bassist Preston Hubbard.

After a successful stint as guitarist for The Heartbreakers, Ellis ventured out on his own with the Ellis Tinsley Band. "Georgia Blue" was his first solo album, which is ripe with a funky blues style.

Some of the cuts on the album were covers of Freddie King and Tampa Red songs. On his next album, Ellis wants to go the all-original route.

That's not easy for a guy who describes the songwriting process as "like going to the dentist."

"When I do someone else's song, I tend to get into it and do a reading of it," he said. "When I write my own

IN CONCERT

- **JUGGLERS AND THIEVES**
Jugglers and Thieves will perform along with special guests, Ash Can Van-Gogh, on Monday, April 24, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555. The group will also perform on Friday, April 28, at Lili's 21, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck. For information, call 975-8555.
- **BROKEN YOYO**
Broken Yoyo will perform on Tuesday, April 25, at Flick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.
- **IDYL ROOMERS**
The Idyl Roomers will perform on Tuesday, April 25, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.
- **FRANK ALLISON**
Frank Allison and the Odd Sox will perform on Wednesday, April 26, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.
- **HOWLING DIABLOS**
Howling Diablos will perform on Thursday, April 27, at Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, north of Michigan Avenue, Dearborn. For information, call 846-5377.
- **FIGURE 4**
Figure 4 will perform on Thursday, April 28, at the 3-D Dance Club, 1815 N. Main, near 11 Mile Road, Royal Oak. For information, call 589-3344.
- **TINSLEY ELLIS**
Tinsley Ellis will perform on Thursday, April 27, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.
- **FIGURES ON BEACH**
Figures on a Beach will perform on Friday, April 28, at The Ritz, 17580 Frisco, Roseville. For information, call 778-8162.
- **SUN MESSENGERS**
Sun Messengers, featuring new member Lyman Woodard, will perform on Friday, April 28, at Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, north of Michigan Avenue, Dearborn. For information, call 846-5377.
- **DIFFERENCE**
The Difference will perform on Friday, April 28, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.
- **MOTOR CITY ROCKERS**
Motor City Rockers will perform on Friday, April 28, at Bloodies, 21139 W. Seven Mile, Detroit. For information, call 535-8108.
- **FIREHOSE**
Firehose will perform along with guests, Screaming Trees, at 10 p.m. Friday, April 28, at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. Tickets are \$12.50. For information, call 961-MEET.
- **THRESHOLD**
Threshold will perform Friday and Saturday, April 28-29, at Jameson's, 1818 N. Main, Royal Oak. For information, call 547-5479.
- **MITCH HYDER**
Mitch Hyder will perform along with special guests, Impact and Outer Drive, on Saturday, April 29, at The Ritz, 17580 Frisco, Roseville. For information, call 778-8162.
- **SLAPSHOT**
Slapshot will perform on Saturday, April 29, at Bloodies, 21139 W. Seven Mile, Detroit. For information, call 535-8108.
- **MAD CAT**
Mad Cat Ratty's Pressure Cooker will perform on Saturday, April 29, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.
- **BOOTSIE X**
Bootsie X will perform on Saturday, April 29, at Lili's 21, 2930 Jacob, off Jon, Campus, Hamtramck. For information, call 975-8555.
- **DETROIT BLUES**
Detroit Blues Band, featuring Jimmy McCarty, will perform on Saturday, April 29, at Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, north of Michigan Avenue, Dearborn. For information, call 846-5377.
- **THE TOLL**
The Toll will perform at 10 p.m. Saturday, April 29, at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. Tickets are \$7.50 in advance. For information, call 961-MEET.
- **TOMMY KEENE**
Tommy Keene will perform at 10 p.m. Tuesday, May 2, at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. For information, call 833-2355.
- **NIXON/ROPER**
Mojo Nixon and Skid Roper will perform at 10 p.m. Saturday, May 6, at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. For information, call 961-MEET.
- **BUCK PETS**
Buck Pets will perform at 10 p.m. Monday, May 8, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$7.50. For information, call 996-8555.
- **THROWING MUSES**
Throwing Muses will perform at 10 p.m. Friday, May 19, at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. For information, call 961-MEET.
- **COWBOY JUNKIES**
Cowboy Junkies will perform at 8 p.m. Saturday, May 20, at the Power Center, Fletcher and Huron, Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$15.50 and \$14.50. For information, call 99-MUSIC.

COUNTRY COLLEGE

- Here are the top-10 songs receiving air play on WJXX-FM.
1. "I'm No Stranger to the Rain," Keith Whitley.
 2. "Is It Still Over?" Randy Travis.
 3. "Well It Like It Is," Billy Joe Royal.
 4. "From the Word Go," Michael Martin Murphey.
 5. "The Church on Cumberland Road," Sheryl Crow.
 6. "I Feel Fine," Sweethearts of the Road.
 7. "You Got It," Roy Orbison.
 8. "After All This Time," Rodney Crowell.
 9. "Don't Toss Us Away," Patty Loveless.
 10. "Which Way Do I Go (Now That I'm Gone)," Wayne Jennings.
- Here are the top-10 songs receiving air play on WJXX-AM, campus station of Oakland University in Rochester.
1. "Tied Up in Gear," Yellow.
 2. "Mayor of Simplicity," NYC.
 3. "Stop," Erasure.
 4. "In the New Hillville," The Gear.
 5. "You Ain't Seen Nothing Yet," Figures on a Beach.
 6. "Till Be You," The Enplacements.
 7. "Obsession," XMOX.
 8. "Riddle of the '80s," Pirene.
 9. "She Drives Me Crazy," Fine Young Cannibals.
 10. "Last of the Famous International Playboys," Marquee.

REVIEWS

LIKE A PRAYER — Madonna

If Madonna's perfume wasn't so distracting, I'd already be telling you a bit about her new album. No, she hasn't come a-visitin'. But the sleeve to her new album, "Like a Prayer," is sprayed with her favorite perfume.

Well, right then, on to the review.

First, your reviewer realizes that while Madonna is a big star, most people he has met dislike Madonna as he was in his "Wonder Years."

Still, he hears in Madonna's music some of the things he's always liked best about good pop music.

For starters, her voice has a pleasing young sound. The rhythm backing is simple and dance oriented, but interesting and original. And some of



her song melodies are darn catchy. Madonna's hit "Into the Groove" best illustrates these things.

On her new album, the Madonna dance sound is effectively revived on "Like a Prayer," "Express Yourself" and "Cherish."

On "Promise to Try" and "Dear Jessie," Madonna flirts with some bluesy sounds, and even a hint of flourish in "Penny Lane" on "Dear Jessie."

Madonna gets into some more personal subjects on this album — the breakup of her marriage, and memories of a stormy relationship with her dad.

Recording those songs may have helped Madonna feel more the expressive artist, rather than just a pop singer. But it's the playful, young sounding songs that she does best. And there's no shame in that.

Because, as Woody Guthrie once said, "I don't want to be more like grown-ups. I want grown-ups to be more like kids."

— Kevin Brown

EVERYTHING'S DIFFERENT NOW — 'Til Tuesday

Love gone bad. Yes, I know it's a subject that has not exactly been ignored in popular songwriting. But it has been quite a while since there has been a collection of songs that has relayed the hurt involved so well as this album.

This is 'Til Tuesday's third album for Epic/CBS, although nothing has garnered real attention since the single, "Voices Carry," from their debut.

I must admit to not being a fan of that song but this new album is a horse of a different kettle of fish. The overwhelming theme throughout this record is the break-up of singer Almee Mann's relationship with Jules Shear, who has written for the Bangles, Cindy Lauper and has a track on this LP also.

I can only imagine that he must be squirming because Ms. Mann's lyrics pull no punches: "But my world became this one boy/It's the way that I am made/Do you think I enjoy it/I'm from 'Why Must I' Or even/It's not that I'm frightened of being alone,



it's just that I know what a burden this grief can be" from "Long Gone (Buddy)."

Actually, I could give a quote from every song, one of which, by the way, is a collaboration with Elvis Costello, whose lyrics blend perfectly with the album's austere lyrical atmosphere.

While musically, the songs are of an acoustic/light-pop nature, Almee Mann's vocals convey all the poignancy, pain and vulnerability demanded by her words. Such personal revelations that would have a John Lennon seal of approval.

It's enough to make you cry.

— Cormac Wright

VOICES OF BABYLON — The Outfield

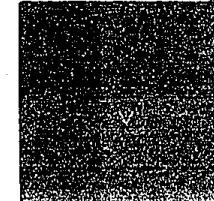
After encountering the sophomore jinx with their "Bangin'" LP in 1987, The Outfield returns with their third release, which, if anything, answers a couple of burning questions.

Burning question No. 1: Which direction would the trio, who labeled themselves as "too rock for pop and too pop for rock" two years ago, travel musically? The inclination seemed to be in the rock direction, based on the group's affinity for cranking up the amps while on the road.

It's much for inclinations. It appears the answer to this question is a resounding "POP goes The Outfield" (Forgive me... I just couldn't stop myself).

New producers David Kahne and David Leonard join guitarist/songwriter John Spinks at the controls of "Voices," and the results are obvious, almost calculated, softening of The Outfield's heretofore fun sound.

Track and track goes by with little noticeable deviation from a simple



pop formula begun in the opening title track, in which Spinks shares his impressions of present-day London (where all three band members grew up).

The only readily discernible difference is when the music slows down for a ballad, like "Inside Your Skin" (which works) or "Shelter Me" (which doesn't). Gone is the hard-crust guitar edge of the group's first two releases, replaced by some key-boards and (oh no!) synthesizers. That spells T-R-O-U-B-L-E.

It also makes the answer to burning question No. 2 that much easier to figure out: Is the band ready to climb out from under the shadow of the dreaded sophomore jinx?

Well, as likeable as their early stuff was, "Voices" doesn't quite cut it. Fault the new blood in the production chair, because playing it safe when following a disappointing record release is not a highly intelligent move.

— Bob Soder