

Scott Morgan: On his album and his music

By Kevin Brown staff writer

Scott Morgan has an impressive past. But like many creative musicians, he'd rather talk about the present.

The Scott Morgan Band recently released its first album, "Rock Action," on Revenge Records, a French label. It highlights Morgan's soul-rock vocals and songwriting, introduced on albums and singles by the Rationals in the late '60s.

That Detroit-based band scored a local hit with "Respect," covered later by Aretha Franklin. In the mid to late '70s, Morgan was an integral part of Sonja's Rendezvous Band. That group was fronted by ex-MC's guitarist Fred "Sonja" Smith, who these days plays guitar with wife Patti Smith.

But when you recall the old days — Morgan was invited to join Blood Sweat and Tears and Janis Joplin's band, Big Brother and the Holding Company, as lead singer in the early '70s — he says, "I'm tired about talking about the old days. I want to talk about the new record."

THAT RECORD, in limited distribution in the United States and Western Europe, features his best songwriting to date. And the album's only single so far, "Sixteen with a Bullet," backed by "Detroit," has an mention in Billboard Magazine, the Village Voice and Rolling Stone. Rock critic and Bruce Springsteen biographer Dave Marsh gives over the album in its liner notes.

On a recent afternoon, Morgan talked about several of the 10 songs recorded in Ann Arbor and included on "Rock Action."

"Sixteen with a Bullet." "There was an incident that was in the news papers three or four years ago before the teen violence thing became a big issue. A couple of kids got busted stealing some chips or candy."

The incident ended in a shoot-out, and one youth was killed. "It seemed so ridiculous, I wanted to write something about it," he said.

After the song sat around a while, another local band had planned to record it, then, "The teen violence thing started getting out of hand," Morgan said.

Driven by a hard back-beat from former Stooges drummer Scott Ashten, harmony from Kathy Deschaine and Gary Rasmussen's bass — he played on Patti Smith's latest album — the single was released to national critical acclaim last year, even though it was on a local label.

The catchy descending guitar riff Morgan plays on the chorus was suggested by the engineer at the session. "He thought it needed a strong guitar hook for people to play 'air guitar' along with," Morgan said.

"Eagle Dance." "I had read a story, in the newspaper again, about an eagle that was migrating through the area, and was seen flying around Ann Arbor."

A few days later, "About a mile from my house it flies in front of my car and lands in a tree, then it took off and started circling higher and higher." Morgan and Deschaine evoke an image of soaring high, as they hold a long note on the chorus over Ashten's solid drum beats.

"Say Yeah." "It's supposed to be a pop tune with a little bit of the Motown feel, kind of a blues artists' Albert King or (Paul) Butterfield kind of feel... It's the only song



The Scott Morgan Band's recently released album, "Rock Action," features Morgan's best songwriting to date.

like that really on the album.

"Heartland." "The term heartland has been bandied about a lot. I thought it would be good for somebody from the heartland to write something about it, instead of somebody from the East Coast."

"Hilackin' Love." "That's a (soul artist) Johnny Taylor song, from 1971. We played it in Sonja's Rendezvous, but we stopped playing it when we started playing a lot of originals."

"Pirate Music." "I wrote it for Sonja's Rendezvous Band. I presented it to the band, but I don't think Fred liked it. It was recorded for an EP (extended-play record) but it was never released."

The song recalls the pirate stations that broadcast progressive rock from offshore ships to the English mainland in the '60s. It's well-received at the band's live shows.

"Joie's Well." "It's about a distillery where they make single-malt scotch. They get their water in the highlands from a spring called Joie's Well. It could be the name of a

place, or a bar where you go to get elixir or water of life," he said, adding it could also stand as an image for a woman. "What it really is is a song about alcoholism."

"Detroit." "I was working for this company, kind of like an assembly line job, there was a lot of young kids out there, big heavy metal fans. Somehow we got talking about Detroit music."

"When a band comes through Detroit and says, 'Hey Detroit, let's rock and roll!' they probably don't know anything about the scene, I thought maybe somebody should document something about it, give some encouragement to the local scene. I think it's kind of gets lip service basically."

In the song's verses, Morgan lists the names of Detroit soul and rock artists from the late '50s to the present. "Detroit" has received the most local FM airplay of any song on "Rock Action."

"The media should be more supportive of local artists," Morgan said.

IN CONCERT

- **DORAX** Dorax will perform Monday, July 17, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.
- **C.J. CHENIER** C.J. Chenier and the Red Hot Louisiana Band will perform Tuesday, July 18, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.
- **CULTURE BANDITS** Culture Bandits will perform along with special guests, Unwashed and Unclean, Wednesday, July 19, at Blondie's, 21139 W. Seven Mile, east of Telegraph, Detroit. For information, call 535-8108.
- **CLASTERS** The Clasters will perform Wednesday, July 19, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.
- **INSIDE OUT** Inside Out will perform Thursday, July 20, at the "Rock'n Bowl" at Garden Bowl, 4120 Woodward, Detroit. Doors open at 9 p.m. Admission is \$4. For information, call 833-9850.
- **ROXX** Roxx will perform Thursday, July 20, at Blondie's, 21139 W. Seven Mile, east of Telegraph, Detroit. For information, call 535-8108.
- **TRACY LEE** Tracy Lee and the Leonards will perform Thursday, July 20, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.
- **ROBERT NOLL** Robert Noll Blues Mission will perform Friday and Saturday, July 21 and 22, at the Lake Pointe Yacht Club, 37604
- Ann Arbor Trail, Livonia. For information, call 581-3650.
- **TRINIDAD TRIPOLI** The Trinidad Tripoli Steel Band will perform Friday, July 21, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.
- **DIAMOND REXX** Diamond REXX will perform with One-Way and Bludshot on Saturday, July 22, at Blondie's, 21139 W. Seven Mile, east of Telegraph, Detroit. For information, call 535-8108.
- **VOLEBEATS** Volebeats will perform Friday, July 21, at the Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, off I-75.
- **YARD DOG BLUES** Yard Dog Blues Band will perform Friday and Saturday, July 21 and 22, at Jameson's, 1812 N. Main, Royal Oak. For information, call 547-4470.
- **THE SHY** The Shy will perform Friday and Saturday, July 21 and 22, at the Skylights, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac. For information, call 334-7451.
- **DETROIT BLUES** Detroit Blues Band, featuring Jim McCarty, will perform Saturday, July 22, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.
- **LOUIE LOVE** Louie Love and the Kisses will perform Saturday, July 22, at the Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, off I-75.
- **KATIE WEBSTER** Katie Webster will perform Sunday, July 23, at Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, north of Michigan Avenue, Dearborn. For information, call 846-5377.



Katie Webster will bring her brand of music to Sully's in Dearborn Sunday.

Inside Out finds musical maturity

By Larry O'Connor staff writer

When we last checked in with Inside Out, Lynda Marie wanted to do modern dance numbers. Cathy was leaning toward more rock'n'roll and Karen was standing firm with punk. How does it all work?

"Compromise," they said in three-

part harmony.

The buzzword for the day doesn't describe the music of this three-woman outfit. Snarling, guitar grinding power-packed venom might be a start.

Despite some obvious creative differences, the group has been together for three years — no small feat.

They even have an album due out soon. "In As Much As" (Wanghead Records), an EP set for release in England, and a certain undercurrent that perhaps even suggests maturity.

Lynda Marie believes. OK, correct that. Perhaps musical maturity is more of an apt description. On that front, there is agreement.

"We were punky at first," said Cathy Cassell, who is the drummer. "We've gotten better. The punk has been filtered out."

"My philosophy is the older you get the better you become at performing and writing songs," added Lynda Marie, who is guitarist and vocalist with the band.

ALTHOUGH relatively young (age ranges 20-23), Inside Out is certainly experienced at performing locally. They are one of the few bands remaining from what once was a thriving punk scene at the Greystone Ballroom in Detroit.

A scene, for the most part, that has dried up. Nonetheless, Inside Out has continued to evolve with its own spiral, largely free of music's trends.

Today, Inside Out can be found performing at Paycheck's Lounge, Hamtramck Pub and, occasionally, at Blondie's. With countless shows under their belts, the band has plenty

of anecdotes. Karen Neal, lead singer and bass player, no sooner finishes up relating how she scared off a would-be purse snatcher in Detroit when she talks about a less than cultured patron of anecdotes.

"This girl spat on me one time," said Neal, whose soft lilt goes against the grain of what she sings onstage. "Then the same girl tried to start a fight with Cathy... and she (Cathy) beat the pulp right out of her. It was great!"

"It was," said Cathy gleefully. Inside Out is one of a few all-female lineups in the Detroit area. And, like others, they hear the constant stereotypes. "You guys play like men." We hear that a lot, "one member said."

Yet this threesome didn't set out to be an all woman band. Members profess they're a music band, not an image band.

"We're not cutesy; we're not butch," Lynda Marie said. "We're kind of asexual really."

Inside Out will perform on Thursday, July 20, at "Rock'n Bowl" at the Garden Bowl, 4120 Woodward, two blocks north of Mack Avenue, Detroit. Cover is \$4. For information, call 833-9850.

COLLEGE

Here are the top 10 singles receiving airplay on CJAM-FM 91.5, campus station of the University of Windsor. Music director is Vera Colley.

1. "Electricity," Mescaline Ritual (Independent)
2. "Codine," Ultra Vivid Scene (A&D)
3. "Natural," Free Sex (Independent)
4. "On the Street Where I Live," Basala (Hedda)
5. "Beer Gut," Drums Along the Garden (Independent)
6. "Hello Girls," Happy Mondays (Factory 222)
7. "Khae Sho," Sarcastic Mannequins (Independent)
8. "Get Twisted," The Gear (Independent)
9. "Bike," Love and Rockets (Vertigo/Beggars Banquet)
10. "Party of God," 10,000 Maniacs (Elektra)

LOCAL

Here are the top 10 songs receiving airplay on "Detroit Music Scene," which is heard 4-8 p.m. Sundays (repeated 5:30-6:30 p.m. Tuesdays) on WDFW-FM 90.8.

1. "Wish I Was You," Dancing Scombies.
2. "Sidewinder," Funhouse.
3. "Two Steps Ahead," World State.
4. "Hard Life," Rubber.
5. "In the New Littleville," The Gear.
6. "Burn the Crack House Down," Cley-cye.
7. "Long Time Waiting," Missionary.
8. "Nightmares," Joey Harlow.
9. "This is John Galt," Figure 4.
10. "Get Off My Train," Karen Monster.

REVIEWS

MIND BOMB — The The

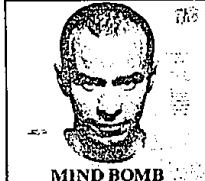
Matt Johnson is The The. This is his third LP, the others being "Soul Mining" and "Infected," and there have been a multitude of 12-inch dance mix singles taken from those.

While Johnson is the brains, lyricist and chief bottlewasher behind the band, he uses a variety of session musicians for his albums.

On "Mind Bomb," he has employed the services of the most hip and everybody's favorite guitarist, ex-Smith, ex-PreTender, ex-Talk Talk Johnny "I Hate Morrissey" Marr, and on the majestic "Beautiful Hate" the guest co-vocalist is Sinead "I Hate U2" O'Connor.

Johnson's lyrics have always had a hard edge to them, be they dealing with personal or party politics. This time, he turns his attention to things religious. But don't imagine that this is going to be played at the next church outing. Check this out from "Armageddon Days Are Here."

"But if you think Christ is coming, honey you've got another thing coming," or "God doesn't live in Israel or Rome/God doesn't belong to the Yankee dollar/God doesn't plant bombs for the Hezbollah/God doesn't even go to church."



MIND BOMB

dating in the opening lines where he sends up that famous call-and-answer introduction from The Sweet's "Ballroom Blitz" ("Are You Ready, Stevie?... Uh, huh").

The music still has his signature driving drum beat, but this time has more emphasis on piano motifs while Johnny Marr plays havoc on the backing tracks with his unique brand of guitar hysterics and wailing mouth organ. This is particularly effective on one of the most exciting songs I've heard in a long time, "The Violence of Truth."

BOOM BOOM CHI BOOM BOOM — tom tom club

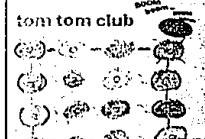
A friend of mine said she considered this album too cold, mechanical and too much like a record.

I disagreed. Maybe it is, maybe it isn't. I like the recording anyway, and my friend eventually warmed up to it.

"Boom Boom..." is the third album from the tom toms, who released their first in 1980, and their first release on Sire. Seems hard to believe the band had label and release problems, but it has.

The tom tom club core is Tina Weymouth and Chris Frantz of Talking Heads fame — she on bass etc, he on drums etc. Here they are joined by guitarist Mark Roule, keyboardist Gary Posner and a host of others. Tina's sister Laura, an original tom, appears only briefly.

Talking Head mates David Byrne and Jerry Harrison show up with Lou Reed on one selection, a Reed-authored song called "Femme Fatale."



"Boom..." is full of good stuff. The CD contains an extra track, a Dylan tune called "She Belongs to Me," though I haven't heard it because it's a stereophonic dinosaur, I'm still buying albums.

The two previous tom tom albums have been showing up with frequency in cutout bins, which may indicate where this one is headed.

It may deserve better. "Boom..." is good. It's quirky, it's funny and fun. It's got a great beat, which is what you would expect from a bassist and drummer who are husband and wife and bandmates.

Some tracks, like "We Belong to Me" and "Don't Say No" are more subtle.

Mostly, the songs here work well, in part because of Tina Weymouth's quirky vocal style. She's not a natural singer. She reminds me of an improved Marilyn Monroe.

WHO CARES? — Static Alphabet

Who cares? We care, Static Alphabet. In fact, we care more than Oprah Winfrey, Phil Donahue and Sally Jessy Raphael combined.

There are plenty of reasons to take more than a casual interest in this rather understated live-song cassette tape. First and foremost is that Static Alphabet is one of the few local groups who can sit down and honestly assess their weaknesses.

And unlike most bands, who either ignore or attempt to play over such deficiencies in their music, Static Alphabet has found a way to turn whatever is lacking into positives.

From a pure musical standpoint, one might be able to single out a less than crystalline vocal or a guitar note out of sync on this tape. Those people, though, don't deserve to listen to Static Alphabet.

They are truly missing out at what's at the heart of the matter — the final creation that features simple melodies, hooks and delightful lyrics. Two songs stand out from this tape — "Don't Count On Me" and "Tripping Over the Things in Her Room" — with those attributes.



"Tripping Over the Things in Her Room" moves along like a child skipping home from school. The number deals with a rather eccentric woman, who is admired from a distance.

"Maybe she's writing fiction, maybe she's eating popcorn," Paul Einhaus sings. "All of these things are no place, when she is kissing my face." The simple lyrics are backed by some equally endearing guitar lines.

In some cases, Static Alphabet misses the mark. Either the guitar is too crunchy or the singing somewhat muddled. "Too Much Hallelujah Around" seems to fall under that category.

But, hey, we'll take a few unpolished stones among the gems. This tape is worthwhile. Static Alphabet has latched on to something. We hope we'll be able to hear more of it in the future.

For information, write: Stone Management, 5103 Ingotgate, Bloomfield Hills 48303. —Larry O'Connor