



An ad placed in the Metro Times brought Jugglers and Thieves together.

# Juggling karma makes band fly

By Jill Hamilton  
Special writer

"Fate drew us together," says singer Cirsty McCall of Jugglers and Thieves, describing how the band started two years ago. Actually she might not be far from the truth.

Formed by veterans of three different bands—drummer Colin O'Brien of The Frames, lead and rhythm guitarist Matt Sage of The Vandebites and vocalist Christy McCall, bassist Jill Zimba and rhythm and lead guitarist Paul Cortez of The Akwa Bats—Jugglers and Thieves met through a classified ad in the Metro Times.

"I made one phone call out of the 2,000 or so responses that I got to the ad," O'Brien recalled. "We started talking about karma."

It must have been pretty good karma because Jugglers and Thieves have enjoyed great critical acclaim since that fateful phone call.

In 1988, the Metro Times voted the band "Best Local Band Most Likely to Make It Big" and "Best Record by a Local Band" and in 1989 McCall was voted "Talent Deserving Wider Recognition."

Their debut LP, "Jugglers and Thieves" rode the charts on several college radio stations including WBMB in New York, WECI in Richmond Va., and WTUL in New Orleans, and is receiving air play on more than 90 stations across the country.

BUT PERHAPS their finest achievement was getting a mention in Bob Talbert's column in the Detroit Free Press.

"My mother didn't believe I was doing anything worthwhile," O'Brien said, "but when she saw the band in Bob Talbert's column, she finally believed that I was doing something good."

Their music has often been compared to Fleet-

wood Mac, but the comparison does not seem accurate. Although McCall, with her medieval clothing hinting of things metaphysical, does bear a passing resemblance to Stevie Nicks, the music itself sounds more like Janis Joplin or early Heart.

The Jugglers describe their sound as "souful folk-rock with a bluesy feel." Their music is perfect for the Detroit stations specializing in classic rock.

Too bad those stations are so unresponsive of local bands because Jugglers and Thieves' brand of early '60s/late '70s would fit in easily between hits by Led Zeppelin and The Who.

"That's really the common denominator of the group. We all like the music from that era," he added, "but each person in the band adds their own color to the sound."

McCall's passionate singing was modeled from the spirituals she listened to as a child and female blues singers like Janis Joplin. She grew up in a family of performers. Her mother was a church musician and her father was an emcee at a Vegas-style club—the Elwood—in Windsor.

The exposure must have paid off because she has a seemingly effortless knack of enchanting audiences with her dramatic flourishes and energetic singing.

At a recent performance at Paycheck's in Hamtramck, two devoted male fans were standing inches from the stage, gazing worshipfully at McCall.

ALL THAT attention could go to her head, but she takes it in stride, saying simply, "We're a democratic band."

Cortez nods, adding: "Everyone in the band is very talented. We literally have to take turns writing songs."

Jugglers and Thieves plan for the immediate future to continue touring in support of their album. They just returned from a three-week tour

that took them through the Midwest and into the deep South.

The highlight of the trip was a stop in New Orleans. There, they played in a concert with the Beat Farmers, did a live set on WTUL radio and performed at the legendary Tipitina's.

Since their record is getting a lot of air play in other cities, the fans already know the songs and are very responsive.

"When it goes well out of town, it's better than playing here because the people are familiar with us," Sage said. "The places we're playing on tour are like St. Andrew's Hall is here."

Another goal is to reach the day when they can finally quit their day jobs. McCall manages a metaphysical book store. Zimba runs a health food store. O'Brien works in a tofu factory. Sage is a house painter, and Cortez counsels developmentally disabled adults.

THAT DAY might not be too far off as the band becomes more successful. Even though Cortez still handles all the booking chores for the band, they've hired a lawyer to help secure a record deal.

"We can't really talk about it yet, but there is interest from record labels," Cortez said.

"Our goal is to become big, rich, famous rock stars," McCall said.

"So we can ignore everyone," Sage added.

"And hire a vegetarian caterer," Zimba said.

"And pay your road manager," said the band's road manager.

Everyone contemplated this for a moment. Then the silence is broken as they begin to get ready for the evening's show.

Jugglers and Thieves will perform on Friday, Dec. 22, at the Token Lounge in Westland.

## IN CONCERT

- **CULT HEROS**  
Cult Heros will perform on Monday, Dec. 18, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.
- **NO RIGHT NO WRONG**  
No Right No Wrong will perform on Monday, Dec. 18, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.
- **LAUGHING HYENAS**  
Laughing Hyenas will perform on Tuesday, Dec. 19, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.
- **IODINE RAINCOATS**  
Iodine Raincoats will perform on Tuesday, Dec. 19, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.
- **IN VAIN**  
In Vain will perform on Wednesday, Dec. 20, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.
- **BEER ON THE PENGUIN**  
Beer on the Penguin will perform on Wednesday, Dec. 20, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.
- **SEA MONKEYS**  
Sea Monkeys will perform on Wednesday, Dec. 20, at Club Heidelberg, 215 N. Main, Ann Arbor.
- **TRINIDAD STEEL**  
Trinidad Tripoli Steel Band will perform on Thursday, Dec. 21, at Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.
- **ON-XYZ**  
On-XYZ will perform on Thursday, Dec. 21, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.
- **ROBB ROY**  
Robb Roy will perform on Thursday, Dec. 21, 3-D Dance Club, 1815 N. Main, at 12 Mile, Royal Oak. For information, call 569-3344. The group also performs on Friday, Dec. 22, with guests, EFX, at the Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, east of I-75.
- **RED C**  
Red C will perform Thursday through Saturday, Dec. 21-23, at the Midtown Cafe, 159 S. Woodward, Birmingham. Cover is \$3. For information, call 642-1133.
- **GOODFELLOWS BENEFIT**  
Robb Roy, Civilians, Orange Roughies and See Dick Run will perform in a special benefit for Old Newsboys Goodfellows 6-9:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 21, at Clubland in Detroit. The after work concert takes place 7:30 p.m. Admission is \$5 with all proceeds going to the Old Newsboys Goodfellows.
- **PINETOP PERKINS**  
Pinetop Perkins will perform on Saturday, Dec. 21, at Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, Dearborn. For information, call 846-5377.
- **FAST AXION**  
Fast Axion will perform along with guests, Ghetto Jets and Rapunzel, on Thursday, Dec. 21, at Diodius, West Seven Mile Road, east of Telegraph, Detroit. For information, call 535-8108.
- **SILLIES**  
The Sillies will perform on Friday, Dec. 22, at Finney's Pub, 3965 Woodward, at the corner of Alexander, Detroit. For information, call 831-8970.
- **ASH CAN VAN GOGH**  
Ash Can Van Gogh will perform on Friday, Dec. 22, at Alvin's, 9765 Ceres, Detroit. For information, call 832-2355.
- **FRANK ALLISON**  
Frank Allison and the Odd Sox will perform on Friday, Dec. 22, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.
- **GENERATORS**  
The Generators will perform on Friday and Saturday, Dec. 22-23, at Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, Dearborn. For information, call 846-5377.
- **A.L.D.**  
A.L.D. will perform with guests, Regues and Digust, on Friday, Dec. 22, at Blondies, Seven Mile, east of Telegraph, Detroit. For information, call 555-9101.



The Civilians will perform along with See Dick Run and the Orange Roughies Thursday in a benefit for the Goodfellows at Clubland in Detroit.

## LIVE

### FRANK ALLISON — The Ark, Ann Arbor

Coolfolk ball came out at the Ark recently.

Frank Allison treated the patrons of Ann Arbor's cozy folk attic to a wonderful evening with his self-described "embylonian wit."

After a set from Birmingham Groves graduate and folk artist Ichabod Stowe, Allison performed about a 90-minute acoustic set, sans Odd Sox, the other three members of the rocking quartet that has been named local band of the year by both this newspaper and the Metro Times.

Thempty stage was a different setting for Allison, who usually sings over a lopping throng of "Frank-heads" at his Ann Arbor shows. Nobody was dancing tonight.

But they were laughing. Allison's tapping tales of hectic relationships and a depressing economy were a musiced monologue.

Between his witty lyrics and goofy facial expressions, the audience had more good laughs than a David Letterman rerun.

In "Some Cat's Dilemma," Allison's protagonist is unaffected that his girl was stolen by "some cat."

"Now there's no more veggie meals/ No more MTV/ No more facial magazines/ All that's left of her and me."

But they were laughing. Allison broke into a wide grin and concluded that "Some cat has his hands full/ Some cat, unaware/ Some cat should have noticed/ When he sees I do not care."

Allison's fidgety warmth on stage is hard not to like. He's just a "regular Joe" with a guitar who will spin

you a rocking tune about his lemon, a ballad about loneliness, or even a lullaby in a creaking falsetto. He entertained those at the Ark with his wisecracks and acknowledged them with Bullwinkle "thank yous," bows and the occasional curtsy.

Acoustic shows allow the crowd to understand the lyrics and appreciate their inherent, everyday humor.

Though the stock of Frank Allison and the Odd Sox is going up, Allison remains one of the more underrated songwriters around.

But you get the feeling he won't be for long.

— John Cortez

## COLLEGE

### Here are the top 10 albums receiving airplay on WDR-FM campus station of Oakland Community College Orchard Ridge Campus.

1. "Keylime Pie," Camper Van Beethoven.
2. "Feeling-Freedom of Speech . . ." Ice-T.
3. "King and Eye," Residents.
4. "Quickness," Bad Brains.
5. "Automatic," Jesus and Mary Chain.
6. "Bleach," Nirvana.
7. "Blow," Red Lorry, Yellow Lorry.
8. "Haus Der Luege," Elmatzerende Neubastel.
9. "Red Memo," David Byrne.
10. "Like a Girl . . .," various artists.

## LOCAL

Here are the top-10 songs on "Detroit Music Scene," which is heard 4-5 p.m. Saturdays (repeated 5:30-6:30 p.m. Tuesdays) on WDR-FM 90.3.

1. "Wonderland," Lab Animal.
2. "Electrical Stew," Rubber.
3. "Jingle Bells," Bad Vase.
4. "Right By My Side," George Edwards.
5. "New Year's Gooze," Sirius.
6. "Star is Mine," Strange Bedfellows.
7. "Chan Chan," Nemesis.
8. "Kicks for Sorrow," Hypnotics.
9. "On Christmas," Dog Latin.
10. "Doctor," Pest.

## REVIEWS

### GUESS YOU HAD TO BE THERE — The Idiots



We've been conked on the noggin and dragged off to a place where Suzy's a head, Sieve drives too fast and everyone has an attitude. But hey, we don't mind because this world is full of Idiots.

Except we like these Idiots, who are a snarling, raucous punk outfit that makes you laugh, yell and throw goods world as Glenn Scantlan, leads this outfit of madcap music men.

Scantlan beats the snout out of his drums and screams out such priceless lines as "People really think I'm dumb/ People always call me scum/ People say I'm rude . . . because I got an attitude."

Paul Liedel lets loose with some of the best scratching punk guitar sounds this side of Black Flag and bassist Steve Bauer (Sensitive Big Guys) thumps merrily along. Those are the Idiots.

To really know this band, though, is to throw its tape into the Walkman

and to belly flops. "Guess You Had to Be There" does say it all.

This is the follow-up to the Idiots' debut "The Tape With No Name" last year. The latest effort shows the Idiots diving head first into the spiky world of punk. Songs like "Slowdown" and "Another One" burf from the get go.

Let the first effort, "Guess You Hacto Be There" has its full quota of humor. When Scantlan croons to strumming acoustic guitar and chiding birds in the background, the tumbler "Only You" you can't help but out laughing. "Baby, I love you/ but you're screwed in the hen/ Sometimes my dear I wish you were dead."

Live the Idiots.

— Larry O'Connor

### SMOKING IN THE FIELDS — Del Fuegos



A few interesting things have happened to this Boston band since recording "Stand Up" in 1987. First, they switched labels— from Slash/ Warner Bros. to RCA. Second, co-founders Dan Zanes and Tom Lloyd have made some surprising personnel changes, replacing Dan's little brother Warren on guitar with Adam Roth and drummer Woody Giesman with Joe Donnelly. Finally, producer Mitchell Froom, who was at the controls for each of the Del Fuegos first three releases, is also gone, replaced by Dave Thoenen.

These sweeping changes may avert the in the nick of time, changing the band's potential collapse due to the commercial and critical failure of "Stand Up." The Del Fuegos' first two releases, "The Longest Day" and "Boston, Mass.," brought this raucous bar band waves of critical acclaim and a legion of underground fans.

Here is a band that seems more at home leaving their beers on the amps in a small club than playing in a more straight-laced arena format. Now, with Mitchell Froom's "Stand Up" laboratory experiment (complete with female backing vocalists,

a horn section and Tina Turner's former guitarist) behind them, it seems the band is rediscovering themselves and their roots.

"Smoking in the Fields" is a return to the more "bare bones" approach of the band's earlier work. The horn section is still there, but used sparingly throughout the album for a better effect. The horns bring out the upbeat grooves of "Move with Me Sister," "Dreams of You," and "The Offer." "Lost Weekend" is a kick-out-the-jams rocker full of bally solos, particularly from lime-keeper Donnelly. Zanes' vocals couldn't sound more Dylan-esque, and his lyrics have matured to include inspired ballads like "Part of this Earth" and "Stand by You."

This album may not make the Del Fuegos household names, but it should restore faith in the minds of their old fans and earn a few new ones.

— Bob Sadler

### PASTPRESENT — Clannad



After Larry Mullen Jr. walked off stage and the houselights went on, an incandescent and hypnotic sound would accompany people to the exit at U2 shows. The number over the P.A. was "The Theme From Harry's Game," and, if anything, further enhanced the mystical image U2 tried to convey.

The U2-Clannad connection doesn't end there, however. Later in 1986, Maire Brennan of Clannad and Mr. Bono teamed up for the rousing "In a Lifetime." The song was a chart hit in England while garnering considerable radio air play State-side.

Clannad's earlier records, though, have often been relegated to the ethic/ Irish bin between the Chieftins and Christy Moore discs at finer record stores while being non-existent at others.

Not so anymore. RCA has released a greatest hits package of the Irish sibling songsters (Clannad means family in Gaelic) work. Hallmarks "The Theme From Harry's Game" and "In a Lifetime," are in-

terspersed with Clannad's earlier and folkier offerings.

Clannad started out as a traditionalist group, singing a good portion of their songs in their natural Irish language Gaelic. But as Clannad's music evolved into soundtracks for British television productions and into the Irish mainstream, the music garnered more of a pop feel. The group's last studio album, "Sirius," was more of a downward turn in the New Age arena. All of that is well-documented here.

Old and new are back to back here, featuring the title track of the latest album "Sirius" and the acoustically rich "Coinleach Glas An Fhoma." Maire Brennan's voice is as nothing less than breathless here, as throughout the album. She is certainly by one of music's most underrated female vocalists today.

This is an LP to go along with a rainy afternoon and a good book.

— Larry O'Connor