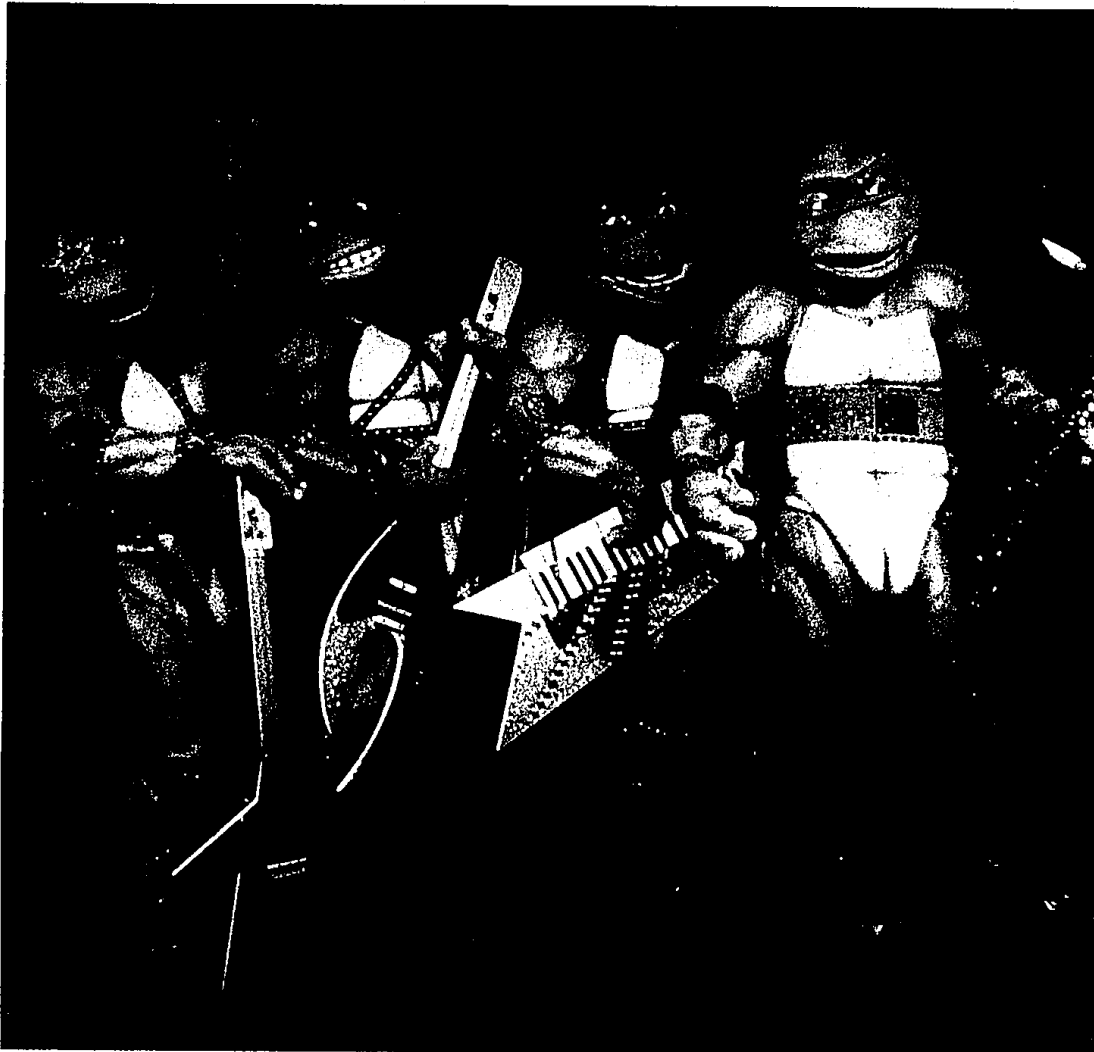


Crystal dishes, handpainted pottery, bejeweled collars . . . Sounds like something of "Dynasty," but it's not. It's just those extra special things pet owners buy for oh so pampered pooches and felines. No joke. See Page 6D.



Forget the mild-mannered stuff, the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles — Leonardo, Raphael, Michaelangelo and Donatello — are using music licks and karate kicks to fight crime.

'Cowabunga, dudes!'

By Sue Mason
staff writer

And my mother thought Alice Cooper was a freak. Well, she gets a load of these guys.

There's not much you can do with the color green, so that tortoise shell accent and colored high tops are nice touches. But guys, what's with the colored masks and matching knee and elbow pads?

And that "valley" talk. Didn't "awesome, dude" go out with Ronald Reagan? And I thought Bart Simpson's "Don't have a cow, man," had replaced "Cowabunga, dude."

Unless you live in a cave or lack basic television service, you've heard of them — the lean, mean, crime-fighting, pizza-chomping, sewer-dwelling superheroes. What Superman was to the '70s and Batman was to the '80s, the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles are to the '90s.

They've graced the pages of comic books (haven't all the superheroes of the past) and made it to the big screen (ditto on the comment), but what sets this group apart is their music. Yep, the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles can sing as well as they fight crime.

Or should I say, "Awesome, dude." Yep, these guys have talent. Their first album, "Coming Out of Their Shells," went double platinum last week. (New Kids on the Block take

'It's totally cool to have people screaming and yelling for you. It's been awesome. We've never really been able to meet people until now.'

— Michaelangelo

heed.) But don't rush out to your nearest record store to buy it. You have to shell out cold hard cash for pizza and the cassette at a Pizza Hut Restaurant. Get it?

"IT'S WHAT'S happening, dude," says Michaelangelo, TMNT's party turtle. "We try to keep our fingers on the pulse of America." (Yes, I interviewed a turtle. My mother warned me about the weirdness of this profession, but she never said anything about turtles.)

Seems with the inspiration of rockers Eric Clapton and Bruce Springsteen and rapper Fresh Prince, they've come up with a collection of songs like "Pizza Power," a tribute to their favorite food, "Tubin," an ode to subterranean skateboarding, and "Walk Straight," hyped as the next anti-drug anthem.

Well, to say the least, the boys' recording success has been so phenomenal that they teamed up with

two "cool dudes" — Steve Leber who did "Beatlemania," and Bob Bejan who came up with some of the tunes — to create a \$3 million, 46-city road show, aptly named the "Coming Out of Their Shells" Tour.

The boys have swapped karate kicks for guitar licks and are taking the country by storm.

"It's totally cool to have people screaming and yelling for you," Mich says. "It's been awesome. We've never really been able to meet people until now."

Before we go any farther, let's get one thing straight. What New Kids on the Block is to the pre-teen set, TMNT is to the elementary school crowd. We're talking rock stars for the post-dinner set.

AND WHILE grown women might dress like Madonna for her concerts, we have small fry showing up at Radio City Music Hall looking like a TMNT.

"It's really cool some of the

clothes they wear," Mich says. "I signed some kid's shell the other night."

Now, if I got the story right, TMNT started into music while waiting around in the sewer for a pizza delivery. Supposedly, "the bodacious appetite of Michaelangelo began to erupt in a spontaneous rap, 'Pizza Power.' Raphael seized his tenor saxophone and began riffing on Mich's ode to pepperoni. Donatello and Leonardo churmped in with some ersatz doo-wop a capella."

Well, Splinter, a rat who taught the boys their crime-fighting ninja tricks, encourage the quartet to pursue their music. A year of subterranean work on the album and creating custom instruments — hey, it's not easy playing a guitar with three fingers — TMNT were ready for the big time.

Splinter said we could do more with our music than our nunchuks," Mich recalls.

Splinter is joining the boys on their 40-week tour. He even jams with them as does their friend, April O'Neil. (Why do these superheroes all have media types as their compatriots. There was Superman and Lois Lane, Batman and Viki Vale and now it's TMNT and April O'Neil.)

When not jamming, April is doing news reports on the boys' travels.



Michaelangelo, who plays a three-string guitar, got the crime fighters into music with a "Pizza Power" rap song composed while waiting for a subterranean pizza delivery.