



Special Beat includes Ranking Roger, former singer with English Beat and General Public, and ex-Specials members John Bradbury, Neville Staples and Horace Panter.

Today's special

Beat goes for broke with its own tour

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

Ranking Roger plays at a ska festival in San Francisco. He sees 150,000 people go mad. The former singer with English Beat and General Public hooks up ex-Specials members John Bradbury, Neville Staples and Horace Panter. Special Beat is born.

"It's not The Special Beat," said Ranking Roger, correctly like a school teacher. "It's just Special Beat."

If things sound a bit rushed that's only because Ranking Roger and his crew has chosen to hit the fast-forward button with their newly formed ska group. Special Beat have embarked on 45-date, two-month tour going coast to coast (which stops Monday, Dec. 10, at the Nectarine Ballroom in Ann Arbor).

Perhaps this is nothing unusual except in the mad dash, Special Beat didn't get a record contract before going out. You know, those people in glass towers in New York and Los Angeles who finance such whims.

Conventional wisdom states bands get record deals before such coast-to-coast excursions. Instead, Special Beat members have broken

SEEING THE SHOW

Who: Special Beat with guests The Toasters

Where: Nectarine Ballroom
510 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor
Tickets to \$15 at the door. Phone 99-MUSIC for more info.

When: Monday, Dec. 10. Doors open at 9 p.m.

their piggy banks and underwritten this tour themselves. So, needless to say, band members are not dining on smoked clams and drinking champagne ordered through room service on this tour.

FRIVOLITY, THOUGH is secondary. Ranking Roger, the two-toned haired singer who graced the stage with early '80s British new wave bands English Beat and General Public, believes he's on to something.

"I can't really tell you what I like about ska," Ranking Roger said. "I can only tell you what I see in other people who go to ska shows."

"I like to see them jumping up and down and going mad. That's what I love about ska — the danceability."

Ska is a fast-paced brand of dance music influenced by reggae, jazz and funk beats.

Special Beat adds a twist to the sound, which is often referred to as mixture music. Bobby Bird lays some heavy duty rock'n'roll guitar riffs on the music, pulling away from the early blues beat.

Roger sees ska growing in popularity in the United States, mainly due to the resurgence of reggae and world music here. Today, ska is largely relegated to the underground. Locally, Gangster Fun is perhaps the best known ska outfit, which also performed at the San Francisco ska festival in April.

AT THEIR initial shows, Special Beat appears to be drawing a mixture of ska fans and those of the English Beat who were too young to see the band the first time around. In a sense, it's like starting over for Roger whose solo career is on hold.

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IN CONCERT

- **TALL MIDGETS**
Tall Midgets will perform Monday, Dec. 10, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.
- **SPECIAL BEAT**
Special Beat will perform Monday, Dec. 10, at the Nectarine Ballroom, 510 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. For information, call 994-5835.
- **MOL TRIFFID**
Mol Triffid will perform Tuesday, Dec. 11, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.
- **BOB CANTU AND THE BIG DEAL BAND**
Bob Cantu and The Big Deal Band will perform Wednesday, Dec. 12, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.
- **CAPTAIN DAVE**
Captain Dave and the Psychedelic Lounge Cats will perform Thursday, Dec. 13, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.
- **RHYTHM CORPS**
Rhythm Corps will headline a "WLZ for Meals" benefit Thursday, Dec. 13, at Key West, 24230 W. Six Mile, Detroit. Other bands performing include DC Dfivive, John D Lamba, Caruso, The Knaves and Thunder Harp. Admission is \$4 or four cans of food. For information, call 592-0090.
- **JIMMY BONES AND THE GRAVE ROBBERS**
Jimmy Bones and the Grave Robbers will perform Thursday, Dec. 13, at 3-D Club, 1815 N. Main, north of 12 Mile, Royal Oak. For information, call 589-3344.
- **GREENHOUSE**
Greenhouse will perform with guests, Ward, Thursday, Dec. 13, at Club Heidelberg, 215 N. Main, Ann Arbor. For information, call 994-3562.
- **CULT HEROES**
Cult Heroes will perform with guests, Destruction Ride and Culture Shock, Friday, Dec. 14, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.
- **ANNE DE DAVIS**
Anne De Davis will perform with guests, Morning Glories, Friday, Dec. 14, at Club Heidelberg, 215 N. Main, Ann Arbor. For information, call 994-3562.
- **JOHN D. LAMB**
John D. Lamb will perform Friday, Dec. 14, at Union Street Station, 4145 Woodward, Detroit. For information, call 831-3965.
- **BLACK PLANET**
Black Planet will perform with guests, Beat the Machine and Neo Dada, Friday, Dec. 14, at Finney's Pub, 3965 Woodward, Detroit. For information, call 821-8070.
- **DAVID JANEWAY TRIO**
David Janeway Trio will perform Friday and Saturday, Dec. 14-15, at Bird of Paradise, 207 S. Ashley, Ann Arbor. For information, call 662-8310.
- **RED C**
Red C will perform 10 p.m. Friday, Dec. 14, at Cross Street Station, 511 Cross St., Ypsilanti. For information, call 485-0500.
- **THE TRUNCHEONS**
The Truncheons will perform Saturday, Dec. 15, at Lili's 21, 2930 Canfield, Hamtramck. For information, call 875-6555.



Captain Dave and the Psychedelic Lounge Cats will perform Thursday, Dec. 13, at the Blind Pig in Ann Arbor.

CUTTING EDGE

Here are 10 albums in medium rotation on "The Cutting Edge," which is heard nightly 9 p.m. to 3 a.m. on CIMX-FM 88.7.

1. "Hinds Love Gods," Hinds Love Gods
2. "All Shook Down," Replacements
3. "Some Friendly," Charlatans UK
4. "Third Eye," Redd Kross
5. "Life," Inspiral Carpets
6. "Sister Monica," John Hiatt
7. "Wrong Way Up," Eno/Cole
8. "An Emotional Fish," An Emotional Fish
9. "Cake," Traxx Coo Sinistras
10. "Bona Drag," Morrissey

LOCAL

Here are the top 10 songs on "Detroit Music Scene," which is heard 4-5 p.m. Sundays (repeated 5:30-6:30 p.m. Tuesdays) on WDTN-FM 90.9.

1. "Europe Has a Number," Blue Angel
2. "Hammer of Rain," Hanaabai
3. "Up Against You," Blue Numbas
4. "Precious Marigold," Writs of Christian
5. "I Had a Good Day," Andy Breckman
6. "Meat," Vampire Rodents
7. "10,000 Paper Cranes," Ragnar Kvaran
8. "On Christmas," Dog Latin
9. "Mirrors," Inside Out
10. "Innocent Lost," Chain Reaction

Bands are good fellas for Goodfellows

The Civilians, Goober and the Peas, Fun Club and the Stewart France Band will team up Thursday, Dec. 13, for the fourth annual Old Newsboys Goodfellows Rock Benefit at Saint Andrew's Hall.

The concert takes place 8:30 p.m. to 2 a.m. Tickets are \$5.

All proceeds will be donated to The Detroit Old Newsboys Goodfellows, which provides underprivileged children with toys and clothes.

The line-up features some of Detroit's top rock'n'roll bands:

● The Civilians are back from a successful stint in New York where they performed at CBGB's with An Emotional Fish from Ireland and The Posies from Seattle. The band has an LP in the works, "Detonate to Explode!"

● Goober and the Peas were voted "Detroit's Best Rock Band" in the 1990 Metro Times Music Awards and recently opened for Bob Dylan at the Fox Theatre.

The bay throwin', cow kickin' band of musicians play what they term "Wyoming Cowboy Punk." They are producing a country rock opera, Nashville's answer to the Who's "Tommy" on behalf of the Old Newsboys Goodfellows.

● Fun Club features a potpourri of sound, including soul, funk, world beat and rock. The female duo of Sarah and Marissa combine to produce vocal harmonies for a band that has become a regular on the Hamtramck club scene.

● The Stewart France Band presents an interesting blend of blues and folk stylings, straight ahead rock'n'roll and the power vocal tones. The group's first album, "Across Decker's Field," has been released.

Saint Andrew's Hall is at 431 E. Congress, Detroit. For information, call 961-MELT.

REVIEWS

LIFE

—Inspiral Carpets

Here we go again. Another "British Invasion." This one is of substantially less substance than those of yore.

Grab yer partners 'n' swing them round, 'cos we're all gon' dancin'. The so-called Manchester scene is the impetus for this influx of the likes of Stone Roses and Charlatans UK and the inspiration for the psychedelic gyrations of those hip-shakin', hip-shakin', club-lovin' groovers Dee-Lite and has even pushed the likes of the Cure into releasing a "dance-mix" album of their old hits with that shuffling drum beat.

The Inspiral Carpets are currently riding high on their grooving single "Commercial Rain," which is included on this recording "Life," from Elektra.

But hold on a second. Don't let that dance-floor hit fool you into thinking that Inspiral Carpets are another concoction of studio whizzes tossing samples of other people's music about like pizza toppings. "Life" kicks off at a frantic gallop with manic guitars and that singularly annoying, klisch and cliched '80s sound — the cheap psychedelic K mart special keyboard whine.

The song "Real Thing" is more akin to the '60s guitar thrash than the dance oriented "Commercial Rain." As a matter of fact, "Commercial Rain," misrepresents the band entirely.



Most of the songs align themselves more to the sound of a young guitar/keyboard band than a fashionable hip dance band. Hey, maybe the Hysterical Narcotics could still make a comeback!

Vocalist, Tom Hingley, who sometimes sounds similar to Soft Cell's Marc Almond (remember "Tainted Love") and organ player, Graham Lambert, who sometimes sounds like he raided his mother's '60s record collection, give the band their indistinct sound.

High points on the album are: "This Is How It Feels," which is in the same vein as the Mighty Lemon Drops, the previously mentioned "Commercial Rain," and "Sun Don't Shine," a relatively straight-forward piano to lost love.

Somebody please get rid of that organ sound.

— Cormac Wright

SOME FRIENDLY

—Charlatans UK

Charlatans UK have been said to capitalize off the success of the neo-psychedelia craze brought forth by Stone Roses. Perhaps this is so.

Yet judging by "Some Friendly" (Beggars' Banquet/RCA), one can argue this Merseyside five-piece has left Stone Roses counting pedals.

Yes, Charlatans UK encompass all the required elements of psychedelia — pulsating Hammond organ, crashing power chords on guitar and vocals that go with the flow.

Somewhat, though, we don't remember '60s/'70s music sounding this good.

One of the reasons is simply Charlatans UK know a good pop tune when they hear one. "The Only One I Know," which has seen the light of day on MTV and college radio, is easily in the top 10 songs of the year.

Rob Collins' Hammond organ pumps an endless stream of delirium on this number while vocalist Tim Burgess tempers the mood by remaining calm while singing. Jon Baker's crashing guitar provides the right amount of electricity to give this floating cloud of psychedelia a neon sparkle. Impressive, to say the least.

But there is a darker, far more brooding side to Charlatans UK. "109 pit" is a searing instrumental complete with throbbing bass and arena-strewn drumming. The song touches the outer limits with its un-



relenting odyssey of keyboards and guitars.

When such exploratory surgery is mixed with the band's pop sensibilities, the Charlatans' prove unbeatable.

"Flower," for example, is a beautiful piece of music caressed ever so delicately by Baker's cascading guitar and Burgess' dipped-in-honey vocals. "Sonic" is suspended in ecstasy, partly due to the Burgess-Baker-Collins trioka and, also Charlatans' rhythm section of drummer Jon Brooks and bassist Martin Blunt who give the song an urban twist.

The band fails to reach the musical juggernaut, however, putting forth two rather throwaway pop numbers "You're Not Very Well" and "White Shirt." Only here do the Charlatans UK resemble a repetitive bell bottoms and poppy act.

Forget peace signs, though. Just latch on to a piece of this group's better music.

— Larry O'Connor

ANYWAYAWANNA

—The Beatmasters

Here we have one of the latest bands to surface out of the British dance/rap scene. This American debut release from the Beatmasters is called "Anywayawanna." I suppose that can be taken anyway you want it.

Their music features all the latest musical mechanics. This is to say, they have a lot of special audio effects.

Vocalist Manda Glamford packs a heck of a wallop. She sounds a bit like Block Box's Katrin Quinol, even their music style is similar. Their sound is quite typical of today's British-American dance music scene.

The other two members of the trio are Paul Carter and Richard Walsley, but the band's songs feature many stand-in vocalists and musicians.

One of their more popular cuts called "Rock Da House" is an amalgamation of electronic wizardry, synthesized vocals, and a dash of respect drum beat. The Beatmasters made this song in collaboration with London's female rap duo called The Cookie Crew. It's a very danceable piece of music.

But their biggest hit to date is the 1989 smash hit in the UK called "Who's in the House?" This one is a lively little piece. The Beatmasters made this song with the well-known British rapper named Merlin.

Another song entitled, "Sarayat-



Sarayat-Semite" is worth a mention. It has an unusual calypso style about it.

Before this band went to the studio to record their own album, they comprised "Stand Up for Your Love Rights" for the popular English group Yazoo (aka Yazoo in the UK).

One of the Beatmasters' biggest American successes is their funky dance concoction called, "Hey DJ/I Can't Dance (To That Music You're Playing)." All together there are 11 funky and feisty tunes in this package. If funky and feisty is your bag, and you're looking for something new in that department, then maybe "Anywayawanna" should be your next musical selection at the record bin.

— Joseph S. Hoffmann