

His Name is Alive triumph on stage

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

"Livonia" by His Name is Alive is a brooding masterpiece, bordering on apocalyptic. An undertone of redemption through its heavenly vocals only adds to its brilliance.

But is His Name is Alive real or are they Memorex?

Many have pondered this since the release of the stunning "Livonia" on the British independent label 4AD.

After all, the LP in all its tape-splattered glory and nuances — ghostly moans, soft hitting caskets, dun-

geon echoes and angelic whispers — wouldn't seem to translate the restrained boundaries of a live show.

Added to the intrigue on this night at the Majestic Theatre is the anonymity surrounding the band itself. His Name is Alive is faceless, the sum total of many diverse musical talents coordinated by Warren DeFever of Livonia.

After inside out's rousing set, the cloud of mystery only expands. A woman dressed head to toe in black goes around lighting candles (making us wonder if this instead is a séance to bring back Houdini). DeFever strategically places a sol-

emn figure of a dead tree and of a creature on the stage.

AT 12:50 A.M., the house lights go off. A shadowy figure emerges against a white backdrop and begins some Cocteau Twins-inspired guitar strumming.

An eerie creep into these proceedings, only enhanced by the burning wax that sings our nostrils. Another figure appears.

From the darkness comes a voice — so soothing, almost celestial. It's become clear Karin Oliver will take us by the hand and lead through the ominous tunnel of this musical journey. Fears are al-

laid, trepidations annulled — at least for the moment.

After the opening strains of "Hincarnacion," the duo is joined on stage by the rest of the band. From the onset, it's quite apparent this is not the usual "Hey-dude-let's-rock'n'roll"-play-12-songs-don't-obligatory-encore" type of show.

Another thing is apparent. This is not an exact duplication of "Livonia." Some numbers bridge naturally, others veer off into their own fiefdoms. The presentation, itself, is far more electric and pulsating than the LP.

DeFever and his guitar playing cohort, Jynn Auge, delve into the realm of psychedelia at times. Other guitar lars comes across as atmospheric, almost pristine in its haunting introspection.

ON THIS night, "Fossil" is unrelenting. DeFever and his band mates feed off one another's amplifier feedback. The crescendo is complete with DeFever breaking off into a mesmerizing guitar solo as Mellisa's acoustic guitar tempers the mood. "Charmer," a new tune in the His Name is Alive arsenal provides a well-needed respite.

The rhythm section is in sync. Darian Lang provides the thunder and an overall feeling the demons are approaching only a few steps behind. Auge and DeFever, switching out on bass, judiciously interpret the proper trund of intensity.

Then there is Oliver, our appointed guide on this trip. She becomes totally enraptured in the music, contorting herself wildly to the psychosis-induced beat between vocal lines.

She seldom interacts with the audience, only to apologize for an aborted gig at Saint Andrew's Hall and to mention that T-shirts will be on sale afterwards in the lobby. Also, as with the rest of band, Oliver's face is barely visible against the shadows and the surreal images flashed on the backdrop by the projectionist.

With the all-black garb and rigid dance steps, one would hazard to guess Dieter from "Sprockets" is her choreographer. Her ethereal voice, though, is her saving grace.

If people arrived expecting to better know His Name is Alive, they left disappointed. A few ticks after 2 a.m., the band exited the stage. No encore, a smattering of awkward applause.

Instead as the house lights came on, there was a quiet uneasiness. His Name is Alive had done their job.



SCOTT MICK

Karin Oliver may not have interacted with the audience, but her ethereal voice, her saving grace, was there to entertain the audience.

MUSIC NOTES

In these times of corporate mergers it only seems natural some local bands do the same. Bits and pieces other groups have pooled efforts recently. The results are a bit intriguing.

The hard-rocking Trueteens with Karen Monist joining forces with Vertical Pillow alumnus Paula Boafford and Monte Reynolds and former Plasma Band member Raquel Salasay is the best known of these conglomerates.

Another one to develop is Thunder

Harp Choir, featuring former members of Robb Roy (Graham Strachan, Mike Martin and Jay Kahn) and Jugglers and Teaves (Chris McCull). The group performed an eclectic, not to mention enjoyable, folk-rock set in the recent WLZ-FM's "Meals for Wheels" benefit at Key West in Detroit.

Also, Vicious Prunes is a new outfit that includes Scott Campbell, Robert Gillespie (Mitch Ryarri), Rich Cole (Romaine) and Glynn Scanlon (Mister X and the Idiots).

For now, the group is a studio outfit. Though Campbell added playing live gigs is not being ruled out.

From Chaos Network's Sue Summers comes word that power-chord gonzo outfit Culture Bandits has been selected one of 16 semifinalists in the annual Snickers New Music Search '90.

The trio of Ken Haas, Terry Bradley and Jason Bowen was selected from hundreds of tapes sent by radio stations across the country. Winners will be featured on a compilation album that is distributed to 300 radio stations nationwide.

Also, a vote from a recent broadcast was taken to determine the top five acts of the finalist pool. The band bringing in the most talleis receives a recording contract with EMI Records.

Those merry hipsters at WOUX-AM, campus station of Oakland University, sponsored the band. Culture Bandits are expected to

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IN CONCERT

LEGAL TENDER

Legal Tender will perform Monday through Sunday, Dec. 24-30, at the Studio Lounge, 6921 Wayne Road, Westland. For information, call 722-2540.

GETTA GRIP & FRIENDS

Getta Grip & Friends will perform Wednesday, Dec. 26, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

SEE DICK RUN

See Dick Run will perform Thursday, Dec. 27, at Club 3.0, 1815 N. Main, north of 13 Mile Road, Royal Oak. For information, call 559-3344.

JAMES GLASS

James Glass will perform Thursday, Dec. 27, at Jameson's, 1812 N. Main, Royal Oak. For information, call 547-8470.

TRINIDAD TRIPOLI

Trinidad Tripoli Steel Band will perform Thursday, Dec. 27, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555. The band also performs Friday, Dec. 28, at Club Heidelberg, 215 N. Main, Ann Arbor. For information, call 994-3562.

HAPPY ACCIDENTS

Happy Accidents will perform with guests, The Dilords, Friday, Dec. 28, at Pinney's Pub, 3965 Woodward, Detroit. For information, call 831-8070.

THE DREAM

The Dream will perform Friday, Dec. 28, at Jameson's, 1812 N. Main, Royal Oak. For information, call 547-8470.

PHINEAS GAGE

Phineas Gage will perform Friday, Dec. 28, at Lil's 21, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck. For information, call 875-6555.

SCOTT MORGAN

Scott Morgan will perform Friday, Dec. 28, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

ORANGE ROUGHIES

Orange Roughies will perform Friday, Dec. 28, at Paycheck's, 2932 Caniff, off Jos Campau, Hamtramck. Missionary Stew opens. For information, call 872-8334.

BLUESMATTICS

Bluesmatics will perform Friday, Dec. 28, at Auburn Lanes/Village Pub, 27 South Squirrel, Auburn Heights. For information, call 852-1710.

TRACY LEE & THE LEONARDS

Tracy Lee & the Leonards will perform Saturday, Dec. 29, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

THE GENERALS

The Generals will perform with guests, Amoeba Men, Saturday, Dec. 29, at Pinney's Pub, 3965 Woodward, Detroit. For information, call 831-8070.

BOP (HARVEY)

Bop (Harvey) will perform Saturday, Dec. 29, at the Majestic Theatre, 4120 Woodward, Detroit. The Sun Messengers



Missionary Stew will open for Orange Roughies Friday, Dec. 28, at Paycheck's Lounge, 2932 Caniff, Hamtramck. For information, call 872-8334.

will open. Tickets are \$10. Doors open 9 p.m. For information, call 833-9700.

ELVIS HITLER

Elvis Hitler will perform Saturday, Dec. 29, at Club Exit, 2941 John R, near 12 Mile, Madison Heights. For information, call 569-5344.

PASSENGERS

Passengers will perform Saturday, Dec. 29, at Jameson's, 1812 N. Main, Royal Oak. For information, call 547-8470.

JEANNE AND THE DREAMS

Jeanne and the Dreams will perform Saturday, Dec. 29, at Club Heidelberg, 215 N. Main, Ann Arbor. For information, call 994-3562.

HARMONICA SHAH

Harmonica Shah will perform Saturday, Dec. 29, at Moby Dicks, 5452 Schaefer, Dearborn. For information, call 581-3550.

HANNIBALS

The Hannibals will open for See Dick Run Saturday, Dec. 29, at Lil's 21, 2930 Jacob, off Jos Campau, Hamtramck. For information, call 875-6555.

THE KNAVES

The Knaves will perform Sunday, Dec. 30, at Lil's 21, 2930 Jacob, off Jos Campau, Hamtramck. The Covingtons will open cover is \$2. For information, call 875-6555.

FRANK ALLISON & THE ODD BOX
Frank Allison & the Odd Box will perform New Year's Eve Monday, Dec. 31, at Club Heidelberg, 215 N. Main, Ann Arbor. For information, call 994-3562.

GEORGE BEDARD AND THE KINGPINS
George Bedard and the Kingpins will perform Monday, Dec. 31, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

NINE INCH NAILS
Nine Inch Nails will perform Monday, Dec. 31, at the Latin Quarter, 3047 E. Grand Blvd., Detroit. Tickets are \$20 in advance. For information, call 99-MUSIC.

CUTTING EDGE

Here are the top 10 albums receiving air play on "The Cutting Edge," which is heard 8 p.m. to 3 a.m. on CIMA-FM 88.7.

- 1 "Ritual de Habitual." Jane's Addiction
- 2 "Gala." Link
- 3 "Brick by Brick." L.A. Pop
- 4 "Mixed Up." The Cure
- 5 "Heart-Shaped World." Chris Isaak
- 6 "Ghost of a Dog." Edie Brickell & New Bohemians
- 7 "Cake." Trash Can Sinatras
- 8 "Bona Drag." Morrissey
- 9 "Hell's Kitchen." The Pogues
- 10 "One Simple Word." The Connells

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 WDR-FM 90.9.

- 1 "Drain." The Gear
- 2 "I'm Free." Knaves
- 3 "Precious Margold." Wrath of Christias
- 4 "Roomful of Train." Hannibals
- 5 "The Spider on My Arm." Raganar Kvaran
- 6 "Ask Me Another Day." Inside Out
- 7 "On Christmas." Dog Laith
- 8 "Whipping Boy." Blue Nimbus
- 9 "The Passion." Walrus/Stuck
- 10 "Railroad Bill." Andy Breckman

REVIEWS

FROM CAN TO CAN'T — The Hannibals

All the elements are there for comparisons: jangly guitars, guys from a college town and, well, do we have to spell it out for you? R.E.M.

More often than not, though, comparisons are lazy. They supply an easy-to-affix label for those lost for descriptive words.

"From Can to Can't," the East Lansing-based outfit's latest release, will bring to mind the Athens, Ga., rockers just in terms of the guitar-based sound, which is a pleasant blend of acoustic folk and electric strumming, bountiful without being busy.

Aside from that, the Hannibals chart their own course with a canny knack for putting forth some unrelenting hooks and lyrics that are quite vital in scope.

And, besides, you can hear what Chris Johnston is singing. With no political axes to grind, Chris Geherin's songs take the boundless feel of pencil sketches done in an open field. "Hammer of Rain," for example, arches and parishes the throat as Johnston yearns for some precipitation.

"Sway Like a Reed" possesses a similar heartland feel, but the Hannibals' songs are by no means anemic in the John Cougar Mellencamp sense of the word.

SOUTHGOING ZAK — Southgoing Zak

Let's go out on a limb here. Southgoing Zak's debut six-song cassette is one of the best local releases of the year.

No kidding. This Zak is an Ann Arbor-based group and was named after a Dr. Seuss character, the Southgoing Zak. Southgoing Zak changed the spelling so Dr. Seuss wouldn't get mad. They probably needn't have bothered — Dr. Seuss doesn't seem like he'd be a big meanie about the matter. But I digress.

On to the music. Imagine the Pogues fronted by Elvis Costello. Or the English Beat with less of a reggae sound. Somewhere in between there is what Southgoing Zak sounds like.

The lyrics of the three song writers in the group — Per Boland (guitar, backing vocals), John Marshall (backing vocals, guitar, harmonica) and Mike Heasler (bass, guitar) are consistently strong and of equal quality, so the words seem to come from a single source, instead of from three different writers. Of course, when someone with as strong a voice as singer Dan Bellus handles the words, they could be about anything and still sound good. Bellus' deep, passionate voice is the sort that could make a song like "Row, Row, Flow Your Boat" sound like a great tune.

The band recorded the cassette at

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HOLD ME UP — Goo Goo Dolls

Well, with the Replacements releasing "All Shock Down," essentially a Paul Westerberg solo project, the world is looking for a replacement for the Replacements.

Enter the Goo Goo Dolls.

This trio of musicians — George, Johnny and Bobby — sound more like the Replacements than the current version of the Replacements sound themselves. The Goo Goo Dolls have got that garagey, rough-hewn Minneapolis sound down pat. Plus, one of these three first-name-only guys (I don't know which — they all take turns singing) has a gravelly Paul Westerberg-esque voice. A fun game idea: Play the Goo Goo Dolls' "Just the Way You Are" or "There You Are" for a friend and have them try to guess the band.

The one major difference between the two bands is that the Goo Goo Dolls don't have the recurring penchant for writing ballads that Westerberg does. Save for "Two Days in February" and the 22-second long ditty "22 Seconds," the Goo Goo Dolls eschew anything that hints of mellowness.

The rest of the album is pure raggedy rock'n'roll. "So Out of Line" starts at a frantic pace and doesn't let up. Same with raucous tunes like "Hey" and "Out of the Red."

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