



League of Nations may have gotten caught in rockers with a message movement of the 1980s, but in the '90s the group has decided that rock'n'roll is suppose to be fun.

Music sans meaning

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

League of Nations learned one thing about being known as rockers with message — they don't want to be.

"This having a conscience thing is real great, if you really mean it," said guitarist Mike Kushner of Southfield. "Rock'n'roll is supposed to be fun. Perhaps in their four-year history, League of Nations may not have been sincere."

"At the time, we were posters," said guitarist Mike Kushner of Southfield. "The joke was added. 'We still think we are.'"

League of Nations are certainly not the first Detroit rock'n'roll band to get a little caught up in the

euphoria of newly-found enlightenment about social issues in the 1980s. They are, however, one of the few honest enough to admit that it was a mistake (so much so, in fact, Canning asks not to bring up I-know-wh-2 much during the interview.)

That's not to say the League of Nations is about to pass up a good cause when they see one. The band is one of several groups involved in a three-day benefit, Feb. 5-7, at Clubland in Detroit in support of the Iraqis.

League of Nations will perform on the rock'n'roll night of the benefit Wednesday, Feb. 6. Net proceeds from the event will benefit the I.S.O. and other service organizations.

THOSE WHO haven't seen League of Nations in awhile are in for a surprise. Violin player Sarana Verlin left the band and one of its founders, Kushner, has returned.

And instead of performing a mind-opening brand of "new wave," the band has opted for a harder edge while maintaining its pop sensibilities.

Typically, League of Nations doesn't sound like they're trying to solve the problems of the world. Instead, they just want to explore the world, and more sincerely, the feelings that surround it all sung in Joe Schlim's powerful voice.

The band's recent demo, "Big Blue Water" and "Love Come

BLUE STAR BENEFIT CONCERT

Proceeds benefit music out of the blind at the Blue Star Theater, 2115 Woodward Detroit

Feb. 5

Blue Star Theater, 2115 Woodward Detroit
8:00 p.m. Tickets \$5-\$10
Call 961-2324 for more information

Feb. 6

Blue Star Theater, 2115 Woodward Detroit
8:00 p.m. Tickets \$5-\$10
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Feb. 7

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IN CONCERT

● **IRON MAIDEN**
Iron Maiden will perform with guests, Anthrax, 7:30 p.m. Monday, Feb. 4, at The Palace of Auburn Hills. Tickets are \$20. For information, call 377-0100.

● **KILLING JOKE**
Killing Joke will perform Monday, Feb. 4, at the Nectarine Ballroom, 510 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Doors open 9 p.m. Tickets are \$11.50 in advance. For information, call 99-MUSIC.

● **SMASHING PUMPKINS**
Smashing Pumpkins will perform with guests, Cult Heroes, Tuesday, Feb. 5, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● **DIFFERENCE**
Difference will perform Tuesday, Feb. 5, at Hick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● **POETRY SLAM**
Poetry Slam will perform Tuesday, Feb. 5, at Club Heidelberg, 215 N. Main, Ann Arbor. For information, call 994-3562.

● **HARABE**
Harabe will perform Wednesday, Feb. 6, at Hick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● **BIG DAVE & THE ULTRA-SONICS**
Big Dave & the Ultra-Sonics will perform Wednesday, Feb. 6, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● **JEANNIE & THE DREAMS**
Jeannie & the Dreams will perform Thursday, Feb. 7, at Hick's American Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● **PRIMAL SHELLS/SOUTHGOING ZAK**
Primal Shells will perform along with Southgoing Zak on Thursday, Feb. 7, at Club Heidelberg, 215 N. Main, Ann Arbor. For information, call 994-3562.

● **HOPE ORCHESTRA**
The Hope Orchestra will perform with guests, the Knave and Frankie Band, Saturday, Feb. 7, at Club, 1825 N. Main, near 12 Mile Road, Royal Oak. For information, call 969-3344.

● **GENERALS**
The Generals will perform Thursday, Feb. 7, at the Pub, 1942 Woodward, Detroit. For information, call 831-0076.

● **ORANGE ROUGHIES**
Orange Roughies will perform with guests, Shooting Club, Friday, Feb. 8, at Finney's Pub, 1942 Woodward, Detroit. For information, call 831-0076.

● **RHINO BUCKET**
Rhino Bucket will perform Friday, Feb. 8, at Saint Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Chicago, Detroit. For information, call 961-3611.

● **JUICE**
Juice will perform Friday, Feb. 8, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● **RED C**
Red C will perform Friday, Feb. 8, at



Anthrax will appear with Iron Maiden at The Palace of Auburn Hills at 7:30 p.m. Monday, Feb. 4.

Licks 21, 2936 Jacob, Hamtramck. For information, call 875-6555.

● **THE HUNTTONES**
The Hunttones will perform Friday and Saturday, Feb. 8 & 9, at Hick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● **GANGSTER FUN**
Gangster Fun will perform with guests, Vinyl Back, Friday, Feb. 8, at Club Heidelberg, 215 N. Main, Ann Arbor. For information, call 994-3562.

● **COLORFUL TRAUMA**
Colorful Trauma will perform with guests, Blue Nulfus, Saturday, Feb. 9, at Finney's Pub, 3565 Woodward, Detroit. For information, call 831-0076.

● **BLUES NIGHTS**
Harmonica Shab and Friends will perform Saturday, Feb. 9, at Trumbull Theater, 4216 Trumbull, Detroit. Show starts at 9:30 p.m. Appearing with Shab will be Blue guitarist Robert Noll. Tickets are \$5. For information, call 833-3632.

● **CIVILIANS**
Civilians will perform with guests, The Sky and Stewart Frankie Band, Saturday, Feb. 9, at the Majestic Theatre, 4140 Woodward, Detroit. Tickets are \$5. Doors open at 9 p.m. For information, call 833-2700.

● **MISS JONES**
Miss Jones will perform Saturday, Feb. 9, at the Licks, 21, 2936 Jacob, Hamtramck. For information, call 875-6555.

● **TRINIDAD TROPIC STEEL BAND**
Trinidad Tropic Steel Band will perform a special show 7:00 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 9, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● **CAPTAIN DAVE & THE LOUNGE CATS**
Captain Dave & the Lounge Cats will perform 9 p.m. to show Saturday, Feb. 9, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 994-3562.

● **HARN'S WAY**
Harn's Way will perform with guests, Noze That Hurts, Saturday, Feb. 9, at Club Heidelberg, 215 N. Main, Ann Arbor. For information, call 994-3562.

They're doing rap for the fun of it

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

Ed (a.k.a. Skeeter Murry) have released their own rap single — a kind of a quasi-tribute to funkmeister Rick James and a slap at MC Hammer — all Southfield-based Electric Ed Records.

To the music of "Can't Touch This," which actually is a sample from Rick James' late '70s hit "Super Freak," the duo has concocted "Can't Write This." The wacky yams speak for themselves.

"My my my my my music is so hard makes me say oh my

Lord, thank you for blessing me with song. I don't write but I can copy good.

MC Hammer's "Pray," which bears resemblance to Prince's "When Doves Cry," is pitched into "Pay" by these disc-spinning wackies.

BOTH DENY singling out the baggy pants purveyor of rap. "I don't know who you're talking about," MC Sampler said for their wrath of parody. "It's this sampling business that has them perturbed."

It's outright stealing," MC Sampler said.

According to MC Sampler, an artist can sample or borrow another's music if a percentage of royalties are paid to the originator. The problem is the practice doesn't lend itself to creativity or originality.

And as Def Jam Black Ed (you can call the DJ's points out, a large number of neophytes don't even realize the opening music in "Can't

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LOCAL

Here are the top 10 songs on Detroit radio, which is heard 4.5 p.m. Saturdays, repeated 5 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesdays on WDRB-FM 90.9.

1. Flicker Flame - Missionary Men
2. Misdies - Incubators
3. Trying to Be Somebody - Knave
4. Black Ink - Park the Karma
5. Lovestrong - Detroit Blues Band
6. Used to Think About It - The Gear
7. Expressions - The Dark Theater
8. Fat Bottom - Jimmy Bones of the Travellers
9. America - David Brain
10. Commandments - Wrath of Christian

CUTTING EDGE

Here are 10 albums in heavy rotation on the Cutting Edge, which is heard 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Saturdays.

1. John Lash
2. X-1000
3. Moxie - The Cure
4. Cake - Trash Can Sinistras
5. Red Dubs - The Pogues
6. One Simple Word - The Connells
7. Some Friendly - Charlatans UK
8. Pills N' Thrills - Happy Mondays
9. The Soul Cages - Sting
10. Rejuvenation - Flips & the Beans

REVIEWS

THE SOUL CAGES — Sting

From the Rolling Stone cover story to the special environmentally-conscious packaging, to Sting's immediate post-release appearance on Sunday Night Live, everything surrounding The Soul Cages (RCA) points out that this is a major release.

Yet this is an album that doesn't owe to the hype as much as recent releases.

In commercial terms, none of these songs are likely to burn up the nation's airwaves. But they're all intimate, well-crafted and moodily appealing. Traditional strength of Sting's music.

This is a much smarter album in that Sting's previous two solo efforts, "This Time" he's not taking on the world but examining his own self.

All This Time, Sting sings on a tune bearing that title, "the river flows." And that continuity and repetition — the album's central theme.

He examines his life after the recent deaths of his parents. Sting challenges his beliefs. On one hand, he finds traditional religion a waste



ONE SIMPLE WORD — The Connells

The Connells are a family of some hip MTV video jocks prefer to them, have become one of the last notable underground cult bands since their self-titled debut LP, "Darked Doves," and a 20-second slot on an MTV special about bands from the Southern states.

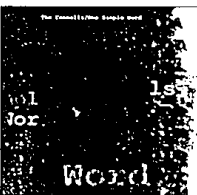
One Simple Word is their second release since their signing toTVT Records, home of the Fee-You-Tunes albums.

The opening notes of "One Simple Word" will strike anyone familiar with their earlier work as being disappointingly similar.

The first single "Stone Cold Yesterday" pushes in the distinctive sound of Mike Connell's cutting guitar and the tight textures of Doug MacMillan's songs pushed by Peete Wambler's driving drums.

While first impressions may be that this LP sounds just like all the other Connells albums, repeated listenings reveal a subtle difference.

There is a confidence in the band's playing, and in their handling of the material which only serves to forge their distinctive sound.



This is best exemplified by Doug MacMillan's strong vocal melody lines and the slight experimentation in using some instrumentation such as an oboe, a cello and a trumpet.

With only three exceptions in a 12-song list, Mike Connell writes the music. Herein lies the secret to their consistency.

The exceptions are the singer, MacMillan's "Another Souvenir," and guitarist, George Huntley's "What Do You Want?" and "The Joke" wherein his vocals are somewhat reminiscent of Al Stewart (remember "The Year of the Cat"?)

Without a doubt, Mike Connell's songs are consistently better with "Get a Gun" being a particular highlight, featuring the curious chorus of "She never listens to me at night. Get a gun, get a gun. We're losing altitude."

Chaque lyrics aside, this album is a great representation of The Connells. Strong songs, great melodies and no pretensions.

Connie Wright

TARA KEMP — Tara Kemp

Buy the girl a looker. That being said, there is no reason to buy this. Tara Kemp's self-titled debut release — the ultimate example of flash-over substance.

This is worse than the worst of the current swamp-soft edition.

Grant Records would have us believe that as long as a fine-looking songstress is packaged with a competent slick funk band that we won't notice they forgot the music, which in this case is at best mediocre and in most cases, insubstantial.

Stax seems off the 10 bucks and buy the poster instead.

As evidence of the lack of substance, even the label recognizes that the style is at least as important as the recording. Amongst the media packet with this release, there's Kemp's striking appearance with further elaboration from Kemp "My look and my music play off one another."

If you really need style more than substance, buy Madonna. This is an insult.

Marketers would have us believe that Kemp combines a sophisticated persona with a modern street-bred sound. Publishers: Shik R&B and lame



rap-influenced songs that even Vanilla Ice would pass by is not a modern street-bred sound. Instead, we have 10 indistinguishable tracks and a prologue and epilogue (as if there were some major work worthy of a prologue and supplement).

Promoted cuts like "Hold Your Tight," "Dance of My Heart," and "Too Much" are unfit for humor consumption. Particularly offensive are "Something to Groove To" and "Together."

Gerald Fraley