



The Detroit Blues Band has made a name for itself as a gritty, urban blues outfit primarily by performing in the tri-county area.

Blues band burns with 'Real Life'

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

The rock'n'roll dream made Jimmy McCarty sing the blues.

After nearly 20 years of performing on guitar for such legendary Motor City rock outfits as the Detroit Wheels and The Rockets, McCarty changed his tune. Tired and fed up with the peripheral nature of the rock'n'roll business, he landed with the Detroit Blues Band four years ago.

"It's (the blues) just closer to what I feel musically," said McCarty, who band performs Friday, April 26, at the Other End Lounge in Taylor. "I just reached a point with rock'n'roll that I just wasn't satisfied anymore."

"There's so many things in rock'n'roll that are just as important or more important than the music itself. I couldn't deal with that after a while."

Rather than letting his dissatisfaction turn to bitterness and sullenness, McCarty turned to the style of music where honesty and introspection burn passionately. "Real Life," the Detroit Blues Band's first release, documents McCarty's transformation from the plasticity and facade of rock'n'roll excess to the soulful renderings of the blues. The release confirms this blues thing is not just a passing fancy for McCarty.

But while McCarty has found creative solitude, "Real Life" marks a turning point for the Detroit Blues Band itself, whose time has finally come. The band originally formed in 1976.

CURRENT MEMBERS. guitarist/vocalist Emanuel S. Garza and drummer Thomas "T-Bone" Wagner, were in the first incarnation of Detroit Blues Band. William "Billy" Landless plays bass in the band.

Both have seen bandmates come and go in 15 years, including a harp player who left three years ago.

Detroit Blues Band has always had an unsullied reputation as a gritty, urban blues outfit. The band was chosen as the Best Blues Band in 1987, 1988 and 1989 in the annual Metro Times Music Poll.

Yet word of the group's musical talents never filtered beyond the Motor City. Part of the problem was the band hardly traveled outside the tri-county area to perform, except for a brief excursion to Texas.

More than anything, though, the immobility stemmed from not having a product. "Real Life" is the band's first release after 15 years of performing.

Understandably, band members are quite proud of the release. "The fact it's our stuff," said Garza, who composed "Go Down-town" and "Scandalous Behavior"

on "Real Life." "Years ago, we would have done all cover stuff. Except for the Muddy Waters cover, this is all original stuff."

"It's got a little of everything in it. It's not totally a blues album and it's not totally a rock album."

Some blues aficionados might grumble about the release's rock stylings while rock'n'roll purists might "Real Life" is too bluesy. "The ones that just take the CD for what it is enjoy it the most," McCarty said.

INITIALLY, the band didn't enjoy recording of "Real Life," McCarty said. What should have been a month's worth of work was turned into six because the project was recorded in a small studio. Producer Gary Spanola did the final mixing at Seller Sound, giving the CD an undeniable professional gleam.

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Firehose douses notion of sell-out

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

Bill Wyman, John Entwistle, Adam Clayton and Sid Vicious — definitely bass players by Mike Watt's definition.

Sling! No, the blond zen leader of The Police is too cool, sort of the anti-bassist.

"Think of the kazoo, man," said Firehose bassist Watt, summing up a just-completed dissertation on the instrument and its place in rock'n'roll history. "It's funny. It's where you put the lame guys."

Frustrated guitar players, Watt calls them. The lot of them are finger-picking dweebs who were the afterthought in most bands, according to the Firehose leader.

Not women bassists, though. People like Kim Gordon of Some Youth are all right in Watt's book.

This rhetoric from Watt could be misconstrued as an indictment against those who perform on the four-string instrument.

Rather it's more a call to arms, a purposeful slap for bassists across the world to unite against the bourgeoisie of the guitar-controlled conspiracy of rock'n'roll.

Firehose's funk-jazz-rock-laden music Watt's putting the dream into motion.

ASIDE FROM bassist's revenge, Firehose's latest release "Flyin' the Flame" marks a radical change for the California-based three-piece. The product is the band's first on a major label, Columbia.

This development — more precisely any mention of a sellout — turns Watt just a tad defensive. He's quick to point out the brilliant 16-song effort was paid for with the band's own money, recorded before the band even landed a deal with the Sony-owned label.

"I haven't changed in any way," said Watt in a telephone interview from Providence, R.I. "Have you listened to it yet? Does it sound much different than our other albums?"



Members of Firehose are Ed Crawford (from left), Mike Watt and George Hurley.

Watt said he's been asking others, who are quick to bring up the band's switch to a major label, that question. The main reason for going from SST to Columbia was better distribution.

"Hopefully it gets in the chain stores," Watt said.

The thought of Firehose perhaps being featured in a window display at a giant record store in some strip mall is a bit much to fathom. This band's meld of melodic and edgy music has been something of a tucked-away treasure, shared discreetly only with those who deserved

to be enlightened.

ASIDE FROM the three-prong attack of Ed "From Ohio" Crawford's growling guitar, George Hurley's synopical drumming and Watt's groove-infused bass, there's a refreshing exuberance in Firehose. Such enthusiasm has sustained this band whereas a lot of other groups would have long since been rendered to historical footnotes.

Formed in 1986, Firehose was formed by the surviving members of

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IN CONCERT

● FULLY LOADED

Fully Loaded will perform Monday, April 22, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● BUGS BEDDOW & PARADISE VALLEY JAZZ BAND

Bugs Beddow & the Paradise Valley Jazz Band will perform Monday, April 22, at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, across from WSO, Detroit. For information, call 832-2355.

● PONTIAC

Pontiac will perform Tuesday, April 23, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● THE ATTIC

The Attic will perform Tuesday, April 23, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● ONLY A MOTHER

Only a Mother will perform Tuesday, April 23, at The Performance Network in Ann Arbor. For information, call 663-0696.

● CHISEL BROS.

Chisel Bros. will perform Tuesday, April 23, at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, across from WSO, Detroit. For information, call 832-2355.

● WEATHER VANS

Weather Vans will perform Wednesday, April 24, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.

● MOD

Mod will perform Wednesday, April 24, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● LUIS RESTO & THE IMPALA DOGS

Luis Resto & the Impala Dogs will perform Wednesday, April 24, at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, across from WSO, Detroit. For information, call 832-2355.

● GENERALS

The Generals will perform Thursday, April 25, at 3D Club, 1815 N. Main, north of 12 Mile, Royal Oak. For information, call 589-3344.

● HWASEEM

Hwaseem will perform with guests. All You Can Eat, Thursday, April 25, at Club Heidelberg, 215 N. Main, Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$3. For information, call 994-3562.

● LA TRINITY

La Trinity will perform Thursday, April 25, at Cross Street Station, 511 W. Cross, Ypsilanti. For information, call 485-5050.

● SOUTHBENDING ZAK/GOON SKWAD

Southbending Zak will perform Thursday, April 25, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. Goon Skwad will perform 9 p.m. to close. For information, call 996-8555.

● TROPICAL CONNECTION

Tropical Connection will perform Thursday, April 25, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

● DEAD HEAD NITE

Assembly Required and Box of Phish will perform Thursday, April 25, at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, across from WSO, Detroit. For information, call 832-2355.

● MARK HYNES-PAUL FINKBEINER QUINTET

Mark Hynes-Paul Finkbeiner Quintet will perform Friday and Saturday, April 26-27, at Bird of Paradise, 207 S. Ashley, Ann Arbor. For information, call 862-8310.

● FIREHOSE

Firehose will perform Friday, April 26, at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. Tickets are \$10 in advance. For information, call 99-MUSIC.

● WIG

Wig will perform with Blue Nimbus Friday, April 26, at Finney's Pub, 3965 Woodward, near Alexandria, Detroit. For information, call 831-8070.

● CATS IN THE BASEMENT

Cats in the Basement will perform Friday, April 26, at Cross Street Station, 511 W. Cross, Ypsilanti. For information, call 485-5050.

● DETROIT BLUES BAND

Detroit Blues Band will perform Friday, April 26, at Other End Lounge, 5855 Monroe, Taylor. For information, call 278-5340.

● BIG DADDY ROMANCE & THE HEDGE TRIMMERS

Big Daddy Romance & the Hedge Trimmers will perform Friday, April 26, at the Attic, 11667 Jon Campau, Hamtramck. For information, call 365-4194.

● GRANFALLOON

Granfalloon will perform Friday, April 26, at Lila's, 2330 Jacob, Hamtramck. For information, call 875-8955.

● MITCH WOODS

Mitch Woods and his Rocket 88s will perform Friday and Saturday, April 26-27, at Lila's, 2330 Jacob, north of Michigan Avenue, Dearborn. For information, call 846-5377.

COLLEGE

Here are the top-10 albums on WJFM-FM 89.3, campus station of Henry Ford Community College in Dearborn.

1. "Tame Yourself," various artists
2. "Out of Time," R.E.M.
3. "Doubt," Jesus Jones
4. "Kill 'Em," Morten
5. "Best of the Damned"
6. "Blasphemy," Human Flower, Danielle Day
7. "Drive That Fast," Kitchen of Distinction
8. "Vision Thing," Sisters of Mercy
9. "Grady Hazy," Grady Hazy
10. "Ray," Frasier Chorus

LOCAL

Here are the top-10 songs on "Detroit Music Scene," which is heard 4-5 p.m. Sundays.

1. "Tomorrow's Just Another Day," Son of Sam
2. "Because of You," The Generals
3. "Switch on Fire," Grins
4. "When Pauli Rocked," Dave Rave
5. "Pyramids of Passion," Park of the Karma
6. "Almost Chinese," Bruce Nichols
7. "The Seed," David Brian
8. "Bagful of Bones," Grady Hazy
9. "Don't Slow Me Down," The Gear
10. "Time Will Tell," Jimmie Bones

REVIEWS

YOU'LL EAT WHAT WE'RE COOKING

— The Generals



The first full-fledged LP from this Detroit band picks right up where they left off last year with their self-titled EP. A lot of the same rough edges are there, but then again so is the potential.

The majority of the album is blistering, raw rock'n'roll, driven by speed guitar and percussion work. It's no wonder that these guys have been compared to those Motor City icons, Iggy and the Stooges.

"Til the Day You Spoke" opens the album with an example of The Generals' rawness when it works. Unfortunately, for every tune like "Spoke," "I've Been There" and "I'll Run," are wastes of time like "Can't Go On" and "If Tomorrow."

As with the EP, it is the changes of pace throughout "You'll Eat What We're Cooking" that stick with the listener. "One More Night" and "Because of You" show the band's bluest side and leave you hungry for more.

"Dirt Roads, Old Friends" is an

acoustic guitar interlude that adds a new dimension to The Generals' sound (not to mention clearing up any misconceptions about their guitar playing versatility).

"You Weren't Much of a Lady" is another bluesy favorite worth mentioning by itself due to its classic chorus. "You weren't much of a lady but now you're making one-bella song You weren't much of a woman but I'm gonna play you all night long."

A ballad called "The Road" closes the album with a nifty harmonica intro by lead vocalist Tony Cole.

All in all, The Generals are a local band worth watching.

Rob Sadler

SOUL HITS OF THE '70s

— various artists

They're at it again — hot on the heels of "Have a Nice Day," a 15-volume compilation, re-releasing 1970s pop hits, the folks at Rhino Records are now mining the vaults for '70s soul classics.

The first five volumes of "Didn't It Blow Your Mind" cover on the years 1969-71, just as Motown was ebbing and just before Philly International caught fire.

In retrospect, it was a rich time for black popular music. Groups and soloists jockeyed for chart position in a surprising variety of styles.

While the Chitlites and Deltones delivered the sweetest of sweet soul music, Tina Turner tore it up with her sassy, southern-style.

While Friends of Distinction politely delivered their brand of L.A. pop soul, Flaming Ember offered Sly Stone-derived funk.

Turner aside, none of these artists managed any kind of lasting stardom. But there were some magnificent one-shots — "O-o-h Child" by the Five Starsteps, the Edwin Hawkins Singers' "Oh Happy Day" and Jean Knight's "Mr. Big Stuff" among them.

Several of the songs are drawn from Invictus Hot Wax — post-Motown labels founded by ace Motor City songwriters Lamont Dozier and



Eddie and Brian Holland.

These songs, including Freda Payne's "Band of Gold," "Somebody's Been Sleeping," by 100 Proof Aged in Soul and "Give Me Just a Little More Time" and other, lesser-known followups by Chatterbox of the Board, form the basis of an overlooked second chapter in Detroit's illustrious soul history (could a full Invictus Hot Wax retrospective be far behind?).

Whatever their source, few of these songs have been anthologized before. That makes this collection a welcome addition for those who remember — and maybe for some of those who don't, too.

— Wayne Peat