

STREET SCENE

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Building on past success

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

The Difference should not be releasing "Groundswell" with its \$30,000-plus price tag. At least not with their own money.

Past accolades would have people predicting a better fate for the five-man band of funkmeisters. After all, wasn't the band that MTV called "Best College Band in the Nation" in 1988? The Musi-club magazine plucked as one of top 10 best unsigned bands in the country the same year?

Drummer Tom Campbell wears a head yes.

"We sort of sat back and thought record companies would approach us," said Campbell in the living room of his Whitmore Lake home. "They didn't."

"We were a little naive about it. What we should have done was walk into their offices and crammed it down their throat."

Major labels better invest in some new challenges, as "Groundswell" is headed for the industry's collective tonsils.

The self-produced compact disc was 2½ years in the making, recorded and mixed at three different studios, such as Producer's Col- or in Southfield and the Schoolhouse and Solid Sound in Ann Arbor. The band, instead of a record label, is paying the bill for its re-lease.

YES, THIS is crunch time. Yes, this is the release to either put the band over the top or leave them languishing as one of those who could, should've but never did.

Any recall of past history is unlikely, especially judging by the infectious energy emanating throughout "Groundswell."

The Difference has always been able to tap the source in live shows, which have always been sultry groove-infested affairs burning the wax off of dance floors. Bassist Randy Martin double-jointed gyrations alone are a sight to behold.

But try getting that on record or as Campbell put it, "Energy is tough to capture in binary code."

The Difference's previous two projects have been wayward at best, including a fivesong EP "Culture Shock" that was recorded in New York with studio time won in the MTV contest. The project was never released.

"Our first couple of projects we didn't feel represented our music the way we liked," Campbell said. "People also commented that they thought the live show was better."

"Groundswell" reveals a group as something more than a funk-inspired aerobics session. Stirring rhythm blues, mystical Celtic soul and flat-out rock 'n' roll are detected on the 13-song effort on the band's own label, Bad Dog.

VOCALIST/GUITARIST Ham-
sey Gouda has been in New York



Difference has spent 2½ years and more than \$30,000 to produce "Ground Swell," meant for the group.

shopping the compact disc. Already the CD is getting air play on college radio.

If anything, "Groundswell" is an injection of morale for a band whose members were glum. The studio offered rejuvenation.

"This time it was a lot more creative," Gouda said. "We had a better engineer (Geoff Michael). He was working real hard to get our ideas across."

"It was nerve-wracking," Campbell added. "Being in the studio

was a joy. We opened our minds to what they wanted. We had fun."

The nerve-wracking part was the differences in opinion over the remixing. "It's like writing a book but writing it with four other authors. All of you have to agree."

Through the bleak times, live shows helped sustain the Difference. The group continued to forge ahead, performing up to 10 shows a month across the Midwest and the East Coast.

"There are some hard times

when you start wondering what's wrong with the music industry or what's with your music," Gouda said. "If you're sincere about your music and it's a part of you, it won't burn out."

With the CD, the band wants to make up the difference between live shows and a recorded product.

"I think it's a contract; we've attempted to merge them instead of separate them," Campbell said. "I think we go with what we go with on stage. That's one of the ways we've grown up."

—SOUTHGOING ZAK

Monday, Aug. 18 — Southgoing Zak will perform at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

—PARADISE VALLEY JAZZ JAM

Monday, Aug. 19 — Paradise Valley Jazz Jam will perform at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. For information, call 932-2355.

—HELMET

Tuesday, Aug. 20 — Helmet and Jaxbox will perform at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. Tickets are \$35. For information, call 961-2747.

—WUSHING FIELD

Tuesday, Aug. 20 — Wushing Field will perform at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

—CHISEL BROTHERS

Tuesday, Aug. 20 — Chisel Brothers will perform at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. For information, call 932-2355.

—XVMX

Tuesday, Aug. 20 — XVMX will perform with Charm Farm at Industry, 15 S. Saginaw, Pontiac. For information, call 334-1999.

—YELLOWMAN & THE SAGITTARIUS BAND

Wednesday, Aug. 21 — Yellowman & the Sagittarius Band will perform at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

—WATER FOR THE POOL

Wednesday, Aug. 21 — Water for the Pool at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

—INCURABLES

Friday, Aug. 23 — Incurables will perform at the Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, off I-75, Hamtramck. For information, call 365-8289.

—CATFISH HODGE

Thursday, Aug. 22 — Catfish Hodge will perform at Sally's, 4758 Greenfield, north of Michigan Avenue, Dearborn. For information, call 846-1920.

—STEVE WOOD QUARTET

Thursday, Aug. 22 — Steve Wood Quartet will perform with guest Eileen Orr at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. For information, call 932-2355.

—AL GREEN

Thursday, Aug. 22 — Al Green will perform with guests, Mighty Clouds of Joy, at Pine Knob Music Theatre, Sashay-Boat Head and 175, Clarkston. Tickets are \$17 for pavilion and \$12 for lawn.

—FUNHOUSE

Thursday, Aug. 22 — Funhouse will perform with guests, Jimmy Bones, Ann Arbor. For information, call 662-8310.

—RED C

Friday, Aug. 23 — Red C will perform with guests, Spiral Dance, at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. For information, call 932-2355.

—ANNE BE DAVIS

Friday, Aug. 23 — Anne Be Davis will perform with guests, Weather, Vanes, at Club Helene, 213 N. Main, Ann Arbor. For information, call 994-3562.

—BEFORE OR AFTER

Friday, Aug. 23 — Before or After will perform at Paycheck's, 2932 Caniff, at Jos Campau, Hamtramck. For information, call 872-8351.

—MARC FALCONBERRY

Friday, Aug. 23 — Marc Falconberry will perform at the Moon Lounge, 3311 Michigan, north of Merriman, Royal Oak. For information, call 221-3860.

—ORIENTAL SPAS

Friday through Sunday, Aug. 23-25 — Oriental Spas will perform at The Studio Lounge, Wayne Road, south of Warren Road, Westland. For information, call 732-2340.

—RON BROOKS TRIO

Friday and Saturday, Aug. 23-24 — Ron Brooks Trio will perform at Bird of Paradise, 207 S. Ashby, Ann Arbor. For information, call 662-8310.

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