

STREET SCENE

The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers

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Not only can Keri Leigh sing the blues with the Blue Devils, she's also can write about them. The Austin, Texas, resident is also quite the student.

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Devil of a way to sing the blues

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

A listen to Keri Leigh and the Blue Devils' "Blue Devil Blues" reveals a resonant voice steeped in the blues tradition. Keri Leigh is a singer, but the 23-year-old Austin, Texas, resident is also quite the student.

Her quest for blues knowledge remains insatiable.

Leigh is an author and is writing two books, one on late blues guitarist Stevie Ray Vaughan. The other book is on Elvis Presley through the words of bodyguard Lamar Fike.

Just the mere mention of her wide range of influences — Etta James, Bessie Smith, Big Mama Thornton and Billie Holiday — produces a coo of delight from her over the phone.

This reverence for past masters serves as a catalyst, sparking a hue throughout the outfit's burning up-tempo blues debut on Amazing Records. Leigh's throaty howls are at the forefront of an unrelenting R&B guitar attack.

On the opening track, Leigh covers Willie Dixon's "I'm Ready" in raucous fashion — showcasing one aspect of her wide vocal range that draws comparisons from Janis Joplin to Etta James.

Leigh and her musical collaborator (and husband) Mark Lyons also rekindle numbers associated with Robert Johnson, Muddy Waters and Slim Harpo.

"WE ARE sort of revisionists in that sense," said Leigh, whose Blue Devils perform Thursday,

"Everything you hear today is contemporary, which is good because blues has to change with the times."

— Keri Leigh

Feb. 27, at Sully's. "I think what it's called is the new tradition. We're trying to keep this tradition alive because I don't think there's enough folks out there who are interested in preserving the traditional forms of the blues — the Delta, acoustic Texas blues and the Chicago style."

"Everything you hear today is contemporary, which is good because blues has to change with the times. Then again, it's hard to know to where you are going unless you've been there."

Leigh has been there, though her youthful 23-year-old blues tale.

Leigh began singing at 13, performing in night clubs while still going to high school. An ardent archivist of the blues, she formed the Blues Society in Oklahoma.

Much like the masters she revered, though, Leigh indulged in ancillary aspects of business. She would belt out sets and abuse her throat with cigarettes and drink. In the process she developed nodes, which required surgery and made her leave the business for four years.

Her biggest hero, Stevie Ray Vaughan, a person whom Leigh had interviewed several times, became her mentor. And, later, the guitarist

served as an inspiration to stop her in a path of self-destruction.

"I WAS sinking fast," she said. "I went through a bout with cocaine to just about everything: pills, alcohol and all that stuff. I really had to calm that down. I was going nowhere fast and killing myself."

"When I saw Stevie go clean... it all of sudden made sense to me. It was sort of like finding the steering wheel of a car."

When Leigh and Blue Devils guitarist Mark Lyons transplanted to Austin, Vaughan helped in the process. He showed her what places to live, where to play.

Austin served as the perfect springboard for Leigh and the Blue Devils. The competition is fierce as the Texas city is a haven for musical talent.

Leigh and the Blue Devils also signed with Austin-based Amazing Records, promptly releasing "Blue Devil Blues."

There is a dynamic on the LP, mainly the result of Leigh's traditional blues purism and the rest of the band's contemporary influences. "Everybody gets along. There is a little bit of tension in that most of player in the band were raised in rock backgrounds and one of them has a country background. I'm always preaching the blues. Blues, blues, blues... Sometimes, I'm sure they'd like to try something else."

Keri Leigh and the Blue Devils will perform Thursday, Feb. 27, at Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, Dearborn. For information, call 348-1920.

IN CONCERT

Monday, Feb. 24

- **The Point**
Cross Street Station, 511 W. Cross, Ypsilanti. 483-5050.
- **The Prodigals**
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. 996-2747.
- **Paradise Valley Jazz Jam**
Alvin's, 5756 Cass Ave., across from Wayne State University, Detroit. 832-2355.

Tuesday, Feb. 25

- **Full Moon Rising**
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. 996-2747.
- **Deconstruction Ride**
With Culture Shock at Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. 996-8555.
- **Chisel Brothers with Thornette Davis**
Alvin's, 5756 Cass Ave., across from Wayne State University, Detroit. 832-2355.
- **David Menofree and Kirby**
The Ark, 637 1/2 Main, Ann Arbor. 761-1451.

Wednesday, Feb. 26

- **Urbaltions**
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. 996-2747.
- **Restroom Pools**
Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. 996-8555.
- **Motor City Music Cartel**
Alvin's, 5756 Cass Ave., across from Wayne State University, Detroit. 832-2355.
- **Altan**
The Ark, 637 1/2 Main, Ann Arbor. 761-1451.

Thursday, Feb. 27

- **Skyles**
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. 996-2747.
- **Monster Ball**
With Inside Out at Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. 996-8555.
- **Kiss Me Screaming**
Podiatrists at Alvin's, 5756 Cass Ave., across from Wayne State University, Detroit. 832-2355.
- **Keri Leigh & the Blue Devils**
Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, between Michigan Avenue and Ford Road, Dearborn. 846-1920.
- **Chenille Sisters**
Griff's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac. Tickets are \$15. 761-1451.
- **King Friday**
With Yellow No. 5 and Silence at Pay-

checks, 2932 Canfield, Hamtramck. 874-0254.

Friday, Feb. 28

- **Frank Allison and the Odd Sox**
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. 996-2747.
- **Howling Diablos**
Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. 996-8555.
- **Only a Mother**
Alvin's, 5756 Cass Ave., across from Wayne State University, Detroit. 832-2355.
- **Chenille Sisters**
The Ark, 637 1/2 Main, Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$15. 761-1451.
- **Screaming Savage and the Cavemen**
With Hellbenders at Lili's 21, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck. 875-8555.
- **The Knaves**
Griff's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac. 334-9292.
- **Texas Heat**
Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, between Michigan Avenue and Ford Road, Dearborn. 846-1920.
- **Detroit Blues Band**
Moby Dicks, 5452 Schaefer, north of Michigan Avenue, Dearborn. 581-3650.
- **Claim 2 Feme**
With Lilly Sunday and 27th City at Paychecks, 2932 Canfield, Hamtramck. 874-0254.

Saturday, Feb. 29

- **Blues Jubilee**
With Detroit Blues Band, Harmonica Shah & the Bluesantics, Kenny Miller and The King Snakes at Moby Dicks, 5452 Schaefer, Dearborn. 581-3650.
- **Silb**
Cross Street Station, 511 W. Cross, Ypsilanti. 483-5050.
- **Chisel Brothers**
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor. 996-2747.
- **The Rationals**
Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. 996-8555.
- **Moby Power Reggae**
Podiatrists at Alvin's, 5756 Cass Ave., across from Wayne State University, Detroit. 832-2355.
- **Chenille Sisters**
The Ark, 637 1/2 Main, Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$15. 761-1451.
- **Funhouse**
Griff's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac. 334-9292.
- **Texas Heat**
Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, between Michigan Avenue and Ford Road, Dearborn. 846-1920.



The Knaves will be at Griff's Grill in Pontiac Friday, Feb. 28.

Sue Summers brings Chaos to the music scene

By Larry O'Connor
staff writer

Amid the discord and fragmentation of any local music scene, one thing can at least be counted on here — Chaos.

The label operated out of the Detroit home of area promoter Sue Summers has turned confusion into collaboration and has quickly become this community's most viable and productive source for creative music.

Since its informal start in 1990, the Chaos Network & Records has released two stellar compilation efforts — the most recent being "A Fist Full of Chaos." Also, LPs by The Generals ("You'll Eat What We're Cookin'") and by Blue Nimbus

("Jaded") have been issued by the local label.

More so, Chaos Network & Records has become a sterling example of what an aggregate effort by several bands can accomplish.

"She (Summers) has made things move a lot faster," said Ken Haas of Livonia, a member of the Culture Handits. "Instead of having bands chasing each other's tails, she's pulled us together."

Chaos grew as an extension of Summers' unshakable belief in local music and of Detroit itself.

A 1984 graduate of Detroit Dominican High School, Summers became enamored in the hardcore punk scene of the early '80s when bands such as Negative Approach, Repetitions and Mutants ruled and clubs such as the Red Carpet and the Punch and Judy were popular haunts.

SUMMERS LATER operated a clothing and record store, also named Chaos, inside Todd's nightclub in Detroit.

Three years ago, she began booking bands into the cozy confines of Finney's Pub in Detroit. In retrospective, her efforts became something of a catalyst.

As the club's popularity increased, so did the fortunes of the bands who regularly performed there. Summers and the handful of groups de-

cided to take things a step further.

"Everyone was keeping secrets and not helping each other," Summers said. "Bands are all in the same boat. They should be helping each other out."

Chaos Network & Records became an epicenter of movement, taking care of bookings, accounting, promoting bands and releasing albums. Chaos Network & Records has evolved into a support system. Each month, Summers and members of Grady Hazy or Skinhorse congregate at the home of Generals member Tony Cole to share their insights and their frustrations.

"Up until Sue put this together," Cole said, "everybody was so suspicious of one another. I'm not going to tell you how to get booked into

Paychecks because you'll cut into my piece of the pie. That's backwards thinking."

"Instead it's my buddy owes me a favor. You've got a contact and you let them in on it. Then they say, 'I've got this cool club in Pittsburgh.' Now you're doing two clubs it's straight out of kindergarten. Share your toys."

Chaos Records & Network will present a record release party for "A Fist Full of Chaos" on Saturday, Feb. 29, at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. The show will feature The Generals, Blue Nimbus, Grady Hazy, Watershed, Culture Handits and Skinhorse along with special guests Flyin' Saucers and Vavoom. For information, call 961-MELT.



It has been because of Sue Summers that Chaos Network & Records has grown from an informal start in 1990 to the epicenter of the music movement in Detroit.

CANTON ROTARY CLUB
MILLIONAIRE'S PARTY
Friday, February 28th, 1992
7:00 P.M. - 12:00 MIDDNIGHT
New Hawthorn Valley Golf Course
Auburn, North of Warren, MI
7.00 Combinations tickets 5.00 Is Chips
Minimum Cash Paid Per Person 500.00
Cash In By 6:00 P.M.
Auction 8:00 P.M.