



Joe Henry: The singer/songwriter, who is a 1978 graduate of Rochester Adams, mixes country/folk musing in his new album, "Short Man's Room." He'll perform with the Jayhawks Sunday, July 19, at The Ark, 637½ S. Main, Ann Arbor.

Mystery behind his music

Joe Henry goes exploring without compass



Joe Henry, a 1978 graduate of Rochester Adams High School, returns to Michigan to perform his hearty blend of country/folk character sketches at The Ark in Ann Arbor.

BY LAIRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Joe Henry admits living in self-imposed obscurity. His musical fortunes have always been sought on the periphery.

All of which would serve to contribute to the mysteriousness of the singer/songwriter, who is a 1978 graduate of Rochester Adams. His music would seem to be as remote.

It's not. Henry's new album, "Short Man's Room," is a forthright hearty blend of country/folk musings, singular and vivid in their detail. Most are character sketches, the result of their writer lost in his own insular exploration without a compass.

"The more detached I get from myself, the easier it is to write," said Henry, who performs Sunday, July 19, at The Ark in Ann Arbor.

"Flannery O'Connor once said the more she wrote, the more mysterious writing became to her. I find myself feeling the same way. You can get so lost in it. Sometimes you feel you're at the wheel of a runaway car."

Sometimes in this internal search, Henry will turn up a number such as the title track, "Short Man's Room." The languid, somewhat sad folk narrative is a portrayal of an old man living out his final years alone.

Amid a lamenting violin in the background, Henry sings: "This is a short man's room, better you watch your head/I still got my one good eye. I keep it next to my bed/I keep my money down here, I dress it to look like a shoe/I'm saving up for a pair. Then I'll have more money than you."

Ironically, Henry says surreptitiously he found the sketch in his mind while trying to write another number. "It was like finding someone else's song," he said.

Though anchored in rich detail, "Short Man's Room" mirrors the stateless being many of Henry's numbers find themselves in. They are, perhaps, synonymous with an artist who has never felt grounded to any particular place or scene.

Henry's life has been transient, listing addresses in North Carolina, Georgia, Ohio, Michigan and New York. His family moved to Rochester while he was in high school. He later moved to Ann Arbor, graduating with a bachelor's degree in English from the University of Michigan.

Henry then went onto Brooklyn, N.Y., and currently calls Los Angeles home though he's been staying in Minneapolis to rehearse this upcoming tour with the Jayhawks.

In those areas, Henry established a recording career that has included four LP's starting in 1986 with "Talk of Heaven" on Profile Records. His next two, "Murder of Crows" (1989) and "Shuffletown" (1990) were released on A&M.

"As far as the disadvantages (of being in obscurity), you feel like you're beating your head against the wall if you're trying to take a song outside of your living room," he said. "The advantages are you're not beholden to anyone."

While living in Rochester, Henry perhaps established the closest thing to be called his roots. He met and later married Melanie Ciccone, sister of pop icon Madonna. Musically, those times were formative as well.

"In high school, looking back, I was going through my purest period," Henry said. "I wasn't listening to anything but Woody Guthrie and country and blues artists such as John Hurt, Leadbelly and Lightnin' Hopkins. It was so stripped bare. It was like a burning light."

"... I think everyone else was listening to Box Scaggs,"

Joe Henry will perform with the Jayhawks Sunday, July 19, at The Ark, 637½ S. Main, Ann Arbor. For information, call 761-1451.

STREET SENSE

Therapists differ on homosexuality



BARBARA SCHIFF

Dear Barbara:

I read with great interest the article in the April 20th issue. There is a member of my family who has recently disclosed to us that he thinks he may be homosexual. His feelings regarding this problem are identical to those expressed by the young man in your article. He desperately wants to be helped and — as he terms it — be part of the "main stream society." He wants to have a family and children and be a family man just like all his friends.

He is a brilliant young man and a professional. He, too, feels that the gay community is too quick to accept their sexual preference without trying to tackle this problem with a therapist. He is scared and unhappy and is willing to give it "his all" in order to be helped.

I would greatly appreciate your giving us some names and address. Also we would like the address of the psychotherapist, Charles Socarrades, which you mentioned in your article. Thank you

answer to today's letter is designed to amplify those replies.

The doctors' names and addresses this writer requests were mailed to her home.

Dear 'Thank You',

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to discuss this topic again. Homosexuality has always been hotly debated by mental health professionals. At present, the argument focuses on the desirability and feasibility of giving gay men any hope that they can change.

There are those who believe sexual orientation is unchangeable. With this as their philosophical position, they then believe that trying to re-orient a heterosexual position in a sickness in itself. They feel it is cruel and inhumane to give any credence to the possibility of being straight if you are gay, and insist that gay men must accept this as their destiny if they are to be healthy.

There are other mental health professionals who strongly disagree with this. They understand the enormous complexity of the issue and that there are often many factors which contribute to its determination. At the 1990 fall meeting of the American Psychoanalytic Association, there was a well-attended discussion group titled "The Sexual Deviations — Theory and Therapy: A Successful Treatment of an Overt Homosexual Patient." It was "well-attended" because many therapists understand the pain homosexuality can cause and are eager to find ways to help decrease the suffering. They do not want to take any moral position on homosexuality and they also don't want to deny the possibility of help to those in pain who deeply want to change.

Barbara

Readers eager to tell their favorite things



JILL HAMILTON

The other

day, after waking up at the usual none-too-bright and early hour of 11 a.m., I was sitting in the kitchen reading the newspaper when the sound of a loud lawn mower roared past the open door.

As I got up to shut the door, I glanced at the gruff-looking, burly dude mowing the lawn. He was wearing ear plugs and whistling a tune. It was that "These Are a Few of My Favorite Things" song from "Sound of Music."

It made my day. A column ago, I asked readers to send in a list of their favorite things, or if they were feeling grouchy, a list of bothersome things. Here are the results:

Matt Rogers of Westland sent a letter handsomely decorated by his young son with a blue highlighter pen. For this creativity (mistaken, I believe) as well as promptness and fine penmanship, Rogers should get a copy of a Steve Ray Vaughn video, "Live at the El Mocambo," as a prize. Unfortunately, he won't.

Writes Rogers: "I agree with a lot of your choices, especially singing loudly in the car or old couples holding hands. Great!"

What about... steamy wind-downs at the drive-in, birthday cakes, nature walks, Steve Ray Vaughn, holding a cold beer on a real hot day, the smell of freshly cut wood, the forum section of

Penthouse, new shoes and the Red Wings at Joe Louis Arena.

"Comedians George Carlin, George Wallace and the late Sam Kinison, Rhythm Corps, banging on my drum kit, homemade pizza, three-wheeling up north, J.R.R. Tolkien, carnivals, the Star Wars trilogy, mixed camcorder moments that will never be duplicated, seeing kids having fun and bubble baths."

"Flashlights that work, Rolling Stone magazine, well upholstered furniture, PB&J sandwiches, a good haircut, actors James Olmos and Cheech Marin, actresses Michelle Pfeiffer and Anne Archer, freshly picked apples and action movies ('007,' 'Die Hard,' 'Robin Hood'), people who make you laugh, that first cup of coffee in the morning, and people who believe and believe in themselves."

Lyndie Harris of Southfield responded to both questions. As for her favorite things, a good "Dear Abby," Henry Hook, knowing that my checking and savings accounts are as full as they can be, having something new to wear, Damon Wayans doing "Men On ...," Tom Cruise in the casino scenes in "Rainman," garage sales with a lot of stuff, winning at Euchre, "Northern Exposure" and "Rescue 911."

Not to forget: Axl Rose on the cover of "Rolling Stone," laughing hard, being right, being lost in profoundly deep thought, good dreams, tuna fish sandwiches that are all mayonnaise, diet caffeine-free Coke, getting everything done, a little plant that

See FAVORITE THINGS, 63

IN CONCERT

Monday, July 13

SOMETIMES
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.
996-2747

BIG BONE LICK
Cross Street Station, 511 W. Cross,
Ypsilanti.
485-5050

PARADISE VALLEY JAZZ JAM
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit.
832-2355

Tuesday, July 14

PRODIGALS
Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.
996-8555

CHISEL BROTHERS WITH THONNETTA DAVIS
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit.
832-2355

Wednesday, July 15

HIGH TEN
With Fully Loaded at Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.
996-8555

MIRROR IMAGE
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.
996-2747

PENTANGLE
The Ark, 637½ S. Main, Ann Arbor.
761-1451

BAD RELIGION
St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. Tickets are \$9.50.
961-MELT

Thursday, July 16

RICHARD THOMPSON
With Pentangle at The Majestic, 4120 Woodward, Detroit. Tickets are \$15.50 in advance.
961-MELT

THE DIFFERENCE
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.
996-2747

SLIT
Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.
996-8555

DESTRUCTION RIDE
With Griff's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac.
334-5150

BUSHMASTERS
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit.
832-2355

LEMONHEAD
With Juliana Hatfield at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit.
961-MELT

Friday, July 17

NELMET
St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit.
961-MELT

TRINIDAD TRIPOLI STEEL BAND
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.
996-2747

JUNIOR VALENTINE AND THE ALL STARS
Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.
996-8555

VOODOO CHILI
Cross Street Station, 511 W. Cross, Ypsilanti.
485-5050

LIVE BAIT MACHINE
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit.
832-2355

230 MAX
With The Dopes at Griff's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac.
334-5150

THE BLANKS
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit.
832-2355

THE OPAQUE
With Hope Orchestra at The Alley, Greektown, 508 Monroe, Detroit.
963-3357

GEORGE SEDARD
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit.
832-2355

Saturday, July 18

GOOFLESH
St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit.
961-MELT

STEVE MARDELLA ROCK N' ROLL TRIO
Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.
996-8555

MARCIA BALL
The Ark, 637½ S. Main, Ann Arbor.
761-1451

STONE SOUP
Cross Street Station, 511 W. Cross, Ypsilanti.
485-5050

THE MIND
With Spiral Dance at Lil's 21, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck.
875-6555

PARK THE KARMA
With Thunderbird Choir at Griff's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac. Park the Karma will release their new video.
334-5150

MISSIONARY STEW
With Radio Caroline and Mooshka at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit.
832-2355

THE EXCEPTIONS
With Blue Planet at The Alley, Greektown, 508 Monroe, Detroit.
963-3357

STUDEBAKER JOE
Sully's, 4158 Greenfield, Dearborn.
846-1920

Sunday, July 19

JOE HENRY
With the Jayhawks at The Ark, 637½ S. Main, Ann Arbor.
761-1451