

Street

Roach's 'Lane' is his life

■ It has taken Archie Roach a long time to come to grips with his life. But he has in the understated collection of songs on his "Charcoal Lane" LP. Through his recordings, he has found he was not the only Aborigine child taken from his parents at the age of 3.

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Through a collection of understated folk and country styled songs, Archie Roach has made a definitive statement about sorrow and anger and the power of music to heal those festering emotions.

More so, Roach's "Charcoal Lane" LP is a harrowing story of a person's life torn asunder: Taken away from his Aboriginal family at 3 and passed around to several foster homes during his youth in an overall attempt to meld his people into the white Australia way of life. At 14, a long-lost sister writes to tell him his natural mother has died.

Older, he's left to grapple with his own lack of identity. Unanswered questions ulcerate into rage and self-destruction.

Along this ruinous path, he lives destitute on the streets, he drinks and fights.

"I couldn't talk to people about things — not even my wife," said Roach, 37, whose 1990 album is an autobiographical sketch. "My uncle knew I played guitar and I had written some songs. He told me to go home and write about my experiences."

The result is "Charcoal Lane," which has been hailed in Australia for its call for human rights and bringing a heightened awareness to the Aborigine cause.

Stripped away of the pain, though, there's an underpinning of hope in songs such as "Took the Children Away" that gives the LP a universal appeal.

In a resonant, heartfelt voice Roach tells the story of what he and several Aborigine children encountered in a chilling government sponsored assimilation program



Look at life: Archie Roach, singer/songwriter and an Aborigine, tells of his life torn asunder in his native Australia through a collection of understated folk and country styled songs in his "Charcoal Lane" LP.

that lasted until 1964.

The song concludes with the lyric, "One sweet day all the children came back. . . . Back where their hearts grow strong/Back where they all belong."

The plaintive folk song received an Australian Human Rights award, but it is a testament of Roach's attempt to come to terms with what has happened to him.

"At first, I thought it was myself and a few other people that it had happened to and it was an isolated incident," said Roach, who is married and is, ironically, a foster parent to several children. "A lot of people have been coming up to me and telling me how it happened to them. People as old as my grandparents were taken away from their families as children."

"It shocked me. . . I didn't realize this was happening until I started singing the songs on this album. Nobody ever talked about it before."

They are now. So, too, are people

discovering Roach's bountiful musical talents. He's quick to clarify he's not an Aborigine singer/songwriter but a singer/songwriter who is an Aborigine.

Citing people like Jimmie Dale Gilmore and Hank Williams as inspirations, Roach has always been enamored with the country artist's ability to tell a poignant story in a song. He played in a country type band for awhile, performing cover songs before venturing out on his own.

He expresses a familiar country refrain in "Charcoal Lane," a number depicting his own battle with alcoholism ("And we'd stagger home, all alone/And the next day we'd do it again/Have a revival in Charcoal Lane.")

Homelessness is aptly captured in the singular observation "Down City Streets I would roam, used my fingers as a comb" in the number "Down City Streets," which was written by his wife Ruby Taylor.

"I think he's got a tremendously

soulful voice that bridges between the black and white type of voice. . . ." said Dave Brogren of Birmingham, who promotes folk performances as part of the La Casa Folk Music Series. "There's not a lot of performers who can do that nowadays."

In Roach's voice is hurt, the kind of pain that finds itself only to be released through music. There's also that sense of being lost in things that can never be explained. But it's in his music, ironically, where Roach has finally found himself.

"In our culture, singing is healing," he said. "We believe the earth is created through singing."

"People are becoming more aware. There's hope. The children are coming back."

Archie Roach will perform 8:30-10:30 p.m. Friday, Aug. 7, at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. Admission is free. For information, call 832-2355.

IN CONCERT

Monday, Aug. 3

PARADISE VALLEY JAZZ JAM

Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit.

8:30-2:35

THE

Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.

9:00-2:47

Tuesday, Aug. 4

DAD BLASTED

Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.

9:00-2:47

CHISEL BROTHERS WITH THORNETTA

Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit.

8:30-2:35

BANGOR SHIR

With Tringer Happy at Blondies, 21139 W. Seven Mile, Detroit.

8:30-2:35

Wednesday, Aug. 5

UNCLE CHUNK

Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.

9:00-2:47

MARY MCQUIRE AND MYK RISE

Royal Oak, 358 0207

8:30-2:35

DAD BLASTED

Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.

9:00-2:47

LIVE

St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit.

9:01-MELT

GUILTY PARTY

With Jerry Black and Mean Street Alliance at Blondies, 21139 W. Seven Mile, Detroit.

8:30-2:35

Thursday, Aug. 6

ROLLINS BAND

Phoenix Plaza Amphitheatre, 10 Water St., 334-1999

8:30-1:00

SCOTT CAMPBELL

New Way Bar, 23130 Woodward, Farmington Hills.

5:41-9:07

CAROLYN STRIHO AND THE DETROIT ENERGETICS

Town Lounge, 28949 Joy Road, Westland.

5:22-10:45

THREE DANCING FEET WITH HEAD

Vision and Lesson Chorus at Psychick's Lounge, 2932 Canfield, Hamtramck.

8:30-2:47

DR. KAHN

With Restroom Poets at Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.

9:00-2:47

SCOTT STERN AND TRUST

Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit.

8:30-2:35

HOLY COWS

Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.

9:00-2:47

WHERE I STAND

Griff's, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac.

3:34-5:10

DANCING FEET WITH HAT

Psychick's Lounge, 2932 Canfield, Hamtramck.

8:30-2:47

POWER OF GLORY

With Mothers Angel at The Ritz, 17580 Frisco, Roseville.

7:18-8:10

DARK REIN

With Misconception and J.P. Dead at Blondies, 21139 W. Seven Mile, Detroit.

8:30-2:35

Friday, Aug. 7

PLYMOUTH MUSICAL CELEBRATION

With Motor City Blues Project (5 p.m.), Chisel Brothers featuring Thelma Davis (6:15 p.m.), James Wain's Blues Band (7:30 p.m.) and Legendary Blues Band (8:30 p.m.) in Kellogg Park, downtown Plymouth.

4:59-11:43

MENTAL LANDSCAPE

With Chockchuck Jazz Quartet at Finney's Pub, 3963 Woodward, Detroit.

8:31-9:07

CAROLYN STRIHO AND THE DETROIT ENERGETICS

Town Lounge, 28949 Joy Road, Westland.

5:22-10:45

LUTHER JOHNSON

At 4758 Greenfield, Dearborn.

8:45-19:20

CHARM FARM

Industry, 15 S. Saginaw, Pontiac.

3:34-1:00

EASTSIDE JAMMERS

Soup Kitchen, 1585 Franklin St., Detroit.

2:59-13:74

LUCY'S ALBI

Coconut Jax, 225 Jos. Campau, Detroit.

2:59-3:07

HIGH CALIBRE

New Way Bar, 23130 Woodward, Farmington Hills.

5:41-9:07

SIG DADDY ROMANCE & THE HEDGECOCKERS

Detroit Bar, 655 Beaubien, Detroit.

9:03-3:05

MARY MCQUIRE AND MYK RISE

Backseat Saloon in Keego Harbor.

6:02-11:19

GROOVE SPOON

Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.

9:00-2:47

8 FEET DEEP

With Vertical Park Fish and Lung Hammer at Blondies, 21139 W. Seven Mile, Detroit.

8:30-2:35

EXCEPTIONS

With Bigger Than Mass at Lil's 21, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck.

8:15-6:55

ANNIE ROACH

Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. Free concert.

8:30-10:30 p.m.

6:30-2:35

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

With the Pedestrians at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. From 10:30 p.m. to 2 a.m.

8:30-2:35

RHYTHM CORPS

Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.

9:00-2:47

SCOTT STERN AND THE TRUST

Griff's, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac.

3:34-5:10

CLAIM TO FAME

With Roland B. at Finney's Pub, 3963 Woodward, Detroit.

8:31-9:07

Saturday, Aug. 8

PLYMOUTH MUSICAL CELEBRATION

With Missionary Stew (4:35 p.m.), Chisel Brothers (6 p.m.), Back Market (7:30 p.m.) and Bugs Beddow (9 p.m.) in Kellogg Park, downtown Plymouth.

4:59-11:43

DOOKER & THE PEAS

Phoenix Plaza Amphitheatre, 10 Water St., 334-1999

8:30-1:00

NICK CAYE AND THE BAD SEEDS

St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit.

7:51-14:51

MTD BOYS

The Ark, 6374 S. Main, Ann Arbor.

7:51-14:51

MASTER

With Blasted Corpse and Castration at Blondies, 21139 W. Seven Mile, Detroit.

2:55-6:08

KINSEY REPORT WITH BIG DADDY KINSEY

With guest Robert Noll at Suzy's, 4758 Greenfield, Dearborn.

8:45-19:20

LEGENDARY BLUES BAND

Soup Kitchen, 1585 Franklin St., Detroit.

2:59-13:74

LUCY'S ALBI

Coconut Jax, 225 Jos. Campau, Detroit.

2:59-3:07

HIGH CALIBRE

New Way Bar, 23130 Woodward, Farmington Hills.

5:41-9:07

SIG DADDY ROMANCE & THE HEDGECOCKERS

Detroit Bar, 655 Beaubien, Detroit.

9:03-3:05

MARY MCQUIRE AND MYK RISE

Backseat Saloon in Keego Harbor.

6:02-11:19

CLAT HEROES

Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.

9:00-2:47

MISSIONARY STEW

With Water 4 at Lil's 21, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck.

7:51-6:55

TRUCKEDONS

With Carians at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit.

8:30-2:35

CYLINDERHEAD

With Happy 44 Clams and Boian Star at Psychick's Lounge, 2932 Canfield, Hamtramck.

8:31-9:07

NUKEMEN

Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.

9:00-2:47

YUDD HOPKINS

Griff's, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac.

3:34-5:10

Sunday, Aug. 9

MARY MCQUIRE AND MYK RISE

The Q Club, North Saginaw, Pontiac.

3:34-7:11

Sonic Youth does it again with 'Dirty'



LARRY O'CONNOR

"Dirty." Sonic Youth: Fiends, these Sonic Youth people. They lure you unsuspectingly into dark corners under the pretense of bassist Kim Gordon's seductively sardonic vocals or serenading sound Lee Ranaldo and Thurston Moore (as in the beautiful "Theresa's Sound-world").

Lured into a false sense of security,

Sonic Youth proceed to bludge-

son the ear with a dissonant,

pounding aural assault to leave you

coiled in the fetal position. But you

love every minute of it.

"Dirty" is about drone, feedback

and other majestic manipulations

of sound but it also speaks to such

topical subjects as sexual harass-

ment in the workplace ("Swimsuit

Issue"), despair on the street

("100%") and "On the Strip")

in a cogent manner.

As with their previous releases

"Daydream Nation" and "Goo"

(not to mention the "Whitey Al-

bum") under the name Ciccone

Youth), caustic sarcasm flatters

throughout this 15-song, 69-minute

urban cacophony. Their obsession

with the obsessive — be it with pop

icons such as Marilyn Monroe in

"Sugar Kane" or primal lust in

"Wish Fulfillment" — makes Sonic

Youth sound like willful voyagers to

life's seediest scenery.

But it's when these often disdain-

ful images are unceremoniously

framed by a continual edgy and