

StreetSCENE

Farm finds its 'charm' for dancing

■ With its unbridled pop music filled with expressive hooks and melodies, Charm Farm has moved to the head of the pack of the burgeoning dance scene ready to sweep this area with raves.

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER



The Charm Farm founder Dennis White raps his fingers against the table. He's seething with impatience in search of the common reward every producer seeks at the end of a tire-some day in the studio.

Something cold to drink. "When I was asking if you had Diet Coke, I wasn't just checking to see if you had it or not," said White within ear shot of the dilatory counter help in the steamy Coney Island restaurant.

In these moments, one wonders if Charm Farm is a moniker of contradiction. White and his four cohorts promptly prove themselves quite patient when exhorting the virtues of dance music to a knock-kneed neophyte.

Charm Farm is at forefront of the burgeoning dance scene ready to sweep this area with raves at Industry and Club X nights at the State Theatre.

There is an unbridled pop music, sprinkled lavishly with expressive hooks and melodies. Those elements combined with a rousing stage show, which includes a dancer — Birmingham resident Mikki Lutes — has Charm Farm being lauded in many circles.

In a genre synonymous with faceless production and technically induced soul, White quickly attaches a personality on Charm Farm.

"It's a trip," said White beginning a discourse on dance music. "The weird thing is, the guys who invented dance music are from this city. . . they had been doing that for three years before the house music scene in England. It didn't catch on in Detroit until much later."

The irony of which White says is an embarrassment. He goes on to add Detroit has yet to experience an authentic rave, which he says by definition is an unsanctioned dance party in nontraditional settings such as warehouses and fields.

Raves hit their peak in England in the late '80s, especially in Manchester where bands such as Happy Mondays were conceived.

Around that time, White was busy forming Charm Farm with fellow Berklee College of Music student Tommy Onyx on this side of the pond.

As the story goes, the outfit included Tin Machine guitarist Reeves Gabrels and they released an album, "Unharned" in 1988. Restless, White and Onyx came to Detroit. Charm Farm activity was put on hold as the duo landed with Inner City, a rolling dance outfit that released a record and toured Europe and Japan.

White left Inner City to follow up with Charm Farm while Onyx stayed with the band. When Onyx returned, he promptly linked up with White to reform Charm Farm. The musical partnership is a trade-off on talents.

"I can't tie a Windsor knot to save my life," Onyx said. "But this guy (White) can."

The outfit, which has an album coming out in the fall, includes bassist Dino Zoyes, guitarist Steve Zuccaro and drummer Eric Hogomaster along with dancer Lutes. White and Onyx are the producers, writing all of the songs.

No secret exists to what they're trying to achieve.

"At the end of the day if you can write a song that people can hum," White said, "that's all you need to do."



Charmed, I'm sure: Turning on the dance sound are Tommy Onyx (from left), Dennis White and Steve Zuccaro, members with Dino Zoyes of Charm Farm.

Lampoons fit into musical sound of Joy

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Raucous rib ticklers or musical revisionists? Too Much Joy adroitly hopscoches between both labels and transcends them as well.

"We have the perception of four white kids growing up in the suburbs," said guitarist Jay Blumenfeld. "Our (view of the world) is reality. CNN's is skewed."

Their sound is slapped together, bonded with the dripping epoxy of suburban punk and musical grit. The third installment of the New York foursome's pili-tary-inspired mayhem will be released on Tuesday, Sept. 1 (The band also performs Labor Day at Pine Knob).

"Mutiny" is an endless whirlwind of frenetic songs, hitting on the continual self-effacing theme in accordance with being anti-rock heroes. According to band members, "Mutiny" was recorded in mad-dash fashion. One member would come up with a song title and the rest would have two hours to hammer out a salable number.

The process reaped 14 tracks good enough for the album. "There are 73 others that weren't," cracked Tim Quirk.

Along with the thump and crash, Too Much Joy does produce some mercurial pop standards such as the infectious "Donna Everywhere," which sounds like a '60s garage classic. The band is collaborating with Illusionists (sic) Penn & Teller on a video for the single.

"Mutiny" is highly anticipated by the devoted followers Too Much Joy has amassed since their 1988 major label debut "Son of Sam I Am."

The band's ungilded zeal was enticing enough for MTV to put its video "Making Fun of Bums" into rotation and had the foursome performing with "Weird" Al Yankovic at the Whiskey Club.

If those items didn't garner Too Much Joy enough publicity, getting arrested and spending a night in a Florida jail for performing 2 Live Crew covers certainly did. There was more to it than just fattening the press kit, according to band members.

"We got a bunch of publicity for the stunt," said Blumenfeld, who entertained inmates on acoustic guitar along with other band members. "What were we supposed to do, not do it because all these people were writing about us? . . . I don't buy that argument at all."

What no one will argue, though, is Too Much Joy seeks to destroy the rock'n'roll myth, especially the clichés. Band members admits this presents constant inner-conflict.

After all, the very platform from which they lampoon others is the vehicle of their success. One band member said they've come to realization they must ultimately also destroy Too Much Joy.

"And we're well on our way, believe me," Blumenfeld added.



Band plays on: Band mates Sandy Smallens (from left), Tommy Quirk, Tommy Vinton and Jay Blumenfeld have their act together as the tuneful Too Much Joy.

Who's playing when and where

Here is the line-up for "Miller Lite and 89XXXing Out the Summer" Labor Day, Sept. 7, at Pine Knob:

MAIN STAGE

3 p.m. The Hoolapoppers
4 p.m. Electronic Dream Factory
5 p.m. Charm Farm
6 p.m. Too Much Joy
7 p.m. Goobar & The Peas
8:15 p.m. Material Issue
9:30 p.m. Concrete Blonde

PLAZA STAGE

2:30 p.m. Brave New World
3:30 p.m. Verve Pipe
4:30 p.m. Oriental Spas
5:30 p.m. Thunderchief
6:30 p.m. Crossed Wire
7:30 p.m. Brotherhood Recipe
8:30 p.m. TBA

Tickets are \$8.90 for pavilion and lawn. For information, call 377-0100.

IN CONCERT

Monday, Aug. 31

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

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

Tuesday, Sept. 1

DAD BLASTED
Band Pk. 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.
996-8555

CHIEF BROTHERS WITH THORNETTA
Ann's, 5756 Cass, Detroit.
832-2355

MARY MCQUIRE AND MYK RISE
Mr. B's Farm, Novi and Wattles roads.
Novi.
349-7038

Wednesday, Sept. 2

ALJANDRO ESCOBEDO
With The Stewart Franche Band at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. Advance tickets are \$5.50.
961-MELT

METAL ZONE
With Velocity Jones and Chivalry at Griff's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac.
334-5180

JOHN D. LAMB
Band Pk. 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.
996-8555

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

DON'T LOOK NOW JAG BAND
Ann's, 5756 Cass, Detroit.
832-2355

Thursday, Sept. 3

CAPUCHIN BENEFIT
With Higher, Why Pleasant and Jason McCauley Berry at Li's 21, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck.
875-6555

LOST TREE
With World of Hurt and Full Moon Rising at Paychecks, 2932 Caniff, Hamtramck.
874-0254

HOOLOPPOPPERS
With Westhervanes at Griff's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac.
334-5180

RESTROOM PORTS
Band Pk. 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.
996-8555

BILLY GOAT
With Ugly Stick at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. Tickets are \$5.
961-MELT

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

HOLY COWS
Ann's, 5756 Cass, Detroit.
832-2355

Friday, Sept. 4

JESUS LIZARD
With Tar at the Marquee, 8139 E. Seven Mile, Detroit.
366-8633

HOLY COWS
Band Pk. 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.
996-8555

POP STAR RIDDLE
With Johnny Allen and the Ham Kings and the Ziffel at Paychecks, 2932 Caniff, Hamtramck.
874-0254

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS
With Spiral Dance at Li's 21, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck.
875-6555

J.C. WHITELAW
With Blue Dogs at Griff's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac.
334-5180

BLUESMATHICS
Soup Kitchen Saloon, 1585 Franklin St., Detroit. Cover is \$5.
259-1374

NEP CATS
Coconut Jss', 225 Jos. Campau, Detroit.
259-3675

LITTLE ED AND THE BLUES IMPERIALES
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.
996-2747

HOWLING DIABLOS
Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, Dearborn.
846-1920

MINN HARRIS AND THE SHAKES
New Detroit Bar, 655 Beaubien, Detroit.
863-3355

ROCKIN' GREEKTOWN
With Rhythm Corps, DC Drive, Black Market, Howling Diablos, Thunderbolt Choir, Trunchcons, Chivalry, Hannaball, Wild Catz and Fun Club in Greektown at the Old Shiloh, Bush and Monroe streets, Detroit. The show takes place through Labor Day, Sept. 6. Tickets are \$5 in advance; \$7 at the door.
846-0007

GALVIN BROOKS & HARRIS PARS
The Alley Jam, Beaubien and Monroe, Greektown.
863-5445

Saturday, Sept. 5

MAJESTY CRUSH
With Thrifty Forest Animals and Spectacle at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. Cover is \$5.
961-MELT

HAPPY ACCIDENTS
With Ziffel and Johnny Allen and the Ham Kings at Paychecks, 2932 Caniff, Hamtramck.
874-0245

TEARSH BRATS
The Marquee, 8139 E. Seven Mile Road, Detroit.
366-8633

POLISH BRUINS
With Third Nature at Li's 21, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck.
875-6555

TEN LOST YERRES
With McKinley Berry at Griff's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac.
334-5180

WARFIELD BLUES BAND
Soup Kitchen Saloon, 1585 Franklin St., Detroit.
259-1374

NEP CATS
Coconut Jss', 225 Jos. Campau, Detroit.
259-3675

CULTURE BANDITS
With Craschouse Jazz Quartet, Salt Mines and Dandelion at Finney's Pub, 3965 Woodward, Detroit.
631-8070

FRANK ALLISON & THE ODD BOX
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.
996-2747

NICHOLAS ON FIRE
Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, Dearborn.
846-1920

MINN HARRIS AND THE SHAKES
New Detroit Bar, 655 Beaubien, Detroit.
863-3355

BLUE BOGS
The Alley Jam, Beaubien and Monroe, Greektown.
863-5445

BAND TANGO
The Ritz, 17580 Frazer, Roseville.
778-6404

Sunday, Sept. 6

GRUNGE GROOVE
Featuring Brotherhood Recipe, Phunozzz, Groove Spoon and One Man's Trash at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. Cover is \$5.
961-MELT

ARNE HONKETS
Li's 21, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck.
875-6555

Monday, Sept. 7

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

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