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Street

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STREET CRACKS



Drew Carey

Comics joke with an aim to help center

By Bob Sadler
Special Writer

One is on the verge of big-time comedy success; the other refers to himself as "a baby on the scene."

One hails from Cleveland; the other grew up in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

Both still look like their high school yearbook picture — one by choice, the other simply because not much time has elapsed.

And now, they will appear on the same stage together, as part of a Dec. 6 benefit for the Epilepsy Center of Michigan at Mark Ridley's Comedy Castle in Royal Oak.

Drew Carey, wearing his crew cut, glasses and dark suit with this tie, looks like he could have been a volunteer for the 1968 Hubert Humphrey campaign. He is one of the stars of the upcoming NBC series "The Good Life," and will headline the benefit. "The First Annual Laugh Revue."

Born and raised in Cleveland, Carey has been practicing the stand-up craft since 1985 — and now, his star is truly on the rise. "The Good Life" has been billed as an "Odd Couple" for the '90s." NBC has high hopes for the show, which is currently slated for NBC's mid-season schedule and may premiere in the enviable post-Super Bowl time slot.

In addition, Carey also recently appeared in an October Showtime cable special, "Human Cartoon." In addition, he is a veteran of several guest appearances on "Late Night with David Letterman" and "The Tonight Show." In fact, it was Carey's appearance on "The Tonight Show" with Johnny Carson that served as his big break.

"Friends who were there told me Carson was laughing so hard that he had to hold on to his desk so he wouldn't fall out of his chair," Carey said in an interview with "The Hollywood Reporter."

"He called me over at the end of the set, sat me down and kept me there the whole show. Within weeks, I was turning down offers I would have crawled across broken glass to get before that appearance."

In contrast to Carey and his national notoriety, Joel Zimmer of Plymouth is definitely the "baby on the scene" he proclaims himself to be. His

See COMEDY, 7A

At The Mike

■ THE SOUNDS OF COMEDY ... Some people just have the look of "funny" some undefinable quality that just exudes humor. Ed Fiala is one of those people. Sound effects are a major part of his act, so you can be assured of a totally sensory comic experience when Fiala brings his humor to Chaplin's East in Clinton Township Tuesday through Saturday, Nov. 30-Dec. 4. Call 792-1902 for reservations.

■ RETURN OF CHONG ... B.Y.O.B. takes on new meaning when Tommy Chong returns to Mark Ridley's Comedy Castle Friday and Saturday, Dec. 3-4. Bring your own bong! If you ask him nicely, he might do a few bars of "Santa Claus and His Old Lady." 'Tis the season. Call 542-9900 for reservations.

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Street Scene next week:

- Christina Fuoco's report on Groove Spoon and its new CD "Psychic Gyration."
- John Monaghan's look at the latest in alternative movies.

Luddites: Proud of uniqueness

■ It probably wouldn't be polite to say they're unconventional, just because The Luddites defy musical pigeonholing. Whatever, the group has found unique a style they enjoy.

By Mark Gallo
Special Writer



You can't call it folk rock, not in the conventional sense. Convention and the Luddites are complete strangers. Sometimes they bring to mind bands like Pol Dog, Pennington or Throwing Muses, but don't think you have them pegged. They do a drop-dead perfect rendition of Jonathan Richman's "Nature's Mosquito," a hilariously twisted new country original called "My Ex" that sounds like Austin's Joan Carrino a bit, and another original, "Lucy and the Dervish," that features a harmonica-trombone duet.

Live, you'll usually find them augmented by Frank and George Schuster. If they aren't available, the horn section from the local skaters the Exceptions are employed. This is not a ho-hum band that's crawled into a warm and fuzzy little musical pigeonhole.

STREET BEATS

Bassist David Giovannucci, who used to front Happy As Claims and is a possessor of one of the two Ph.D.s in the group (the and harmonic player David Turner are biologists), calls their sound "minimal" and "big acoustic."

Let anyone make a false assumption that this is a bandwagon-hopping "unplugged" thing going on, a movement which he says they predated by a couple of years anyhow, guitarist Michael Levitt matter-of-factly proclaims that the Luddites "don't sound like anything you've heard before."

Lisa Pisarkiewicz-Goedert, a photographer/fate major at Wayne State (where the core members came together a few years ago) and a classically trained vocalist who used to do lead throat chores for synth-rockers Liquid ID, calls the Luddites a "theatrical" and "anti-mainstream" conglomerate. Summing up the band, she says: "They write good songs and they don't take themselves too seriously."

"We kind of like each other," she adds.

That last statement is almost the band manifesto.

According to Giovannucci, who calls the Luddites "the latest band in Detroit," the appeal of being a member is "as much social as it is art."



Truly unique: The Luddites are David Giovannucci (from left), David Turner, Lisa Pisarkiewicz-Goedert and Mike Levitt.

They rehearse sporadically, but may only play a couple times per month.

"We're a pretty casual lot," Giovannucci said with typical understatement. "When we play, it's fresh. We have a good time."

That's apparent by their growing legion of fans, who have taken them out of the coffeehouses, where Giovannucci says the band took up half of the available space, to "playing bars now, which is kind of a new venue for us."

Percussionist Alfredo Berdayes praises the band for its "total freedom," pointing out that "there is no ego that dominates." While he allows that his congas, bongos and timbales "probably took it into a slightly different direction," it's the "great collaboration" of the members that he feels creates their uniqueness.

All the songs are "designed for the lineup of the band," according to

Levitt, which also adds to their unique allure.

Giovannucci, who doesn't offer any obvious influences, says "stylistically, we're all over the place." He does, however, point to Paul Simon, Elvis Costello and John Hiatt as the sort of people of whom he aspires to "emulate their freedom." Given the country, acoustic rock, jazz and folk elements, not to mention the occasional bluesy licks that pop up here and there, the Luddites certainly seem to have worked themselves into a one-band niche.

"I have a deep passion for a lot of different kinds of music," says Stuart Tucker, the latest addition to the Luddite lineup. The former drummer with Nova Owens still plays the traps for a handful of local blues bands, like Chicago Pete, Little Mae Collins and Back Door Blues, so his resume is as impressive as you'll find hereabouts. His taste in music is also something to trust. When he came on board, he

knew full well what he was getting into.

"They're lots of fun," he says of the band. "The fun never stops."

The fun slowed down a tad in November so they could concentrate on recording. By the time of their Dec. 3 Finney's show, they expect to have an eight-song cassette ready. When they return to Alvin's on the WSU campus later in the month, they'll be putting the finishing touches on a CD that they hope to have in the hip local stores by Christmas, or the beginning of the year.

As Stuart Tucker sees it: "They're a bunch goofballs, but they really know how to play. It swings."

Indeed.
The Luddites will perform Friday, Dec. 3, at Finney's Pub, 3965 Woodward, Detroit. Call 831-8070 for more information. They will also play Saturday, Dec. 18, at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. For more information, call 832-2355.



Sons of Soul: Tony Toni Tone — from left, Timothy Christian Riley, D'Wayne Wiggins, and Raphael (Ray) Wiggins — opens for Janet Jackson at Joe Louis Arena on Saturday and The Palace of Auburn Hills on Sunday.

Musicianship important to Tony Toni Tone

By Christina Fuoco
Staff Writer

Three years ago, Tony Toni Tone redefined hip hop with their clever musicianship interwoven with catchy lyrics.

The 1990 album "The Revival" produced three hits — "Whatever You Want," "Feels Good," and "It Never Rains in Southern California."

With their new record, "Sons of Soul," they took it a step forward. This time they hired a steel guitar player to play on the album — something not exactly standard in rhythm and blues or hip-hop music.

"He was spotted," singer Raphael (Ray) Wiggins said about California guitarist Peter Cornul. "He's in

his 60s or something. He never played on this type of music. When he got the tape and listened to it, he was surprised. . . really shocked."

With the "Tony" track record, it's no surprise that the Tonys ventured onto this turf. Drummer Timothy Christian Riley said the Tonys' musicianship is a nod to the past.

"We pay homage to the tradition of R&B because we are a self-contained band that really plays, appreciates and understands the rootsiness of the music. But we are of the hip-hop generation. So it's just a natural part of our mentality to create much the same way rappers do," Riley said.

See TONYs, 7A

Tuesday, Nov. 30

THE CLOCKWORKS
With Last Minute at Blind Pig, 206-208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. (alternative rock) 996-8552

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS VIDEO APPRECIATION NIGHT
3-D, 1815 N. Main St., Royal Oak. (video) 569-3344

Wednesday, Dec. 1
DICK DALE
With the Goldenstones at Industry, 15 S. Saginaw, Pontiac. (instrumental surf) 334-1999

MUSTANO SALLY
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. (blues) 832-2355
CONCRETO
The Ark, 637 1/2 S. Main St., Ann Arbor. (ethnic) 961-4617

IN CONCERT

761-1451
SPYRO GYRA
With Greg Kanukas at Royal Oak Music Theatre, Royal Oak. (jazz/new age) 645-6666

IMPATIENTS
With Rollinghead at Blind Pig, 206-208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. (alternative rock) 996-8555

Thursday, Dec. 2
THE ARLONS
With Love Jones and special guest Martha Reeves at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. (alternative rock) 961-4617

CUTTIN' HEADS
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. (alternative rock) 832-2355

LEON REDBONE
The Ark, 637 1/2 S. Main St., Ann Arbor. (soul) 761-1451

THEM 'N' US
With Goddog at Griff's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac. (alternative rock) 334-9292

BARTONIANS
With Caper Block at Blind Pig, 206-208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. (alternative rock) 996-8555

Friday, Dec. 3

FOUR HANDS
Mr. Muschhead, 4212 15 Mile Road, Sterling Heights. (post-rock) 978-8097

SHAKE OUT
Lil's, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck. (alternative rock) 875-6555

SMASHING PUMPKINS
With Sweeneyriver at the State Fair Coliseum, Woodward Avenue at Eight Mile Road, Detroit. (swirly alternative rock) 335-4850

KIM WILSON
Fabulous Thunderbirds' frontman performs along with the West Coast All Stars at the Majestic, Woodward Avenue, Detroit. (blues) 645-6666

See IN CONCERT, 6A