

Street

GA(O)F

MONDAY, JANUARY 31, 1994

MUSIC NOTES



CHRISTINA FUOCO

Soundgarden fans can preview the band's new 15-song album "Superunknown" one month before it hits the stores. By dialing (800) 594-ROCK, fans will hear excerpts of four songs — the funk metal of "Spoonman" (the first single and video), the slow groove of "The Day I Tried to Live," the AOR-made "Fell on Black Days" and the hook-laden "My Wave," one of the songs previewed at their Pine Knob show in the fall.

The band, who begins their U.S. tour in May, will release vinyl copies of their album on Feb. 22, two weeks before the CD and cassette street date of March 8. There will also be a limited amount of colored vinyl — blue, orange and clear.

Excerpts of songs by Swervedriver (who plays the Blind Pig Friday, Feb. 4) with Medicine), Doughboys, Therapy? and Paw can also be heard by calling the number.

Here's a warning for current or future girlfriends of Greta singer Paul Plogans: If your clothes start disappearing from your closet, you can count on an impending breakup. "A girl can tell when we're getting close to the end (of a relationship) when I borrow a couple dresses and don't give them back."

Plogans, you see, has a penchant for wearing dresses. At a recent Harpo's show, he donned a dress on stage and while judging the "sexy ladies" contest. Inside the CD booklet, he was photographed wearing a simple, "Little House on the Prairie" number.

Like his dresses, the band's lyrics are innocent and simple — discussing things like their hatred of school ("School on Fire") and ex-girlfriends ("Dirting"). That's a far cry from the intense lyrics their former bandmates — Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder and Rage Against the Machine's drummer Brad Wilk — are now throwing out.

"It's so totally irrelevant," said lead guitarist Kyle Boer when his former bandmates are mentioned. "If this band got really famous, it would be an interesting footnote." But until then, it's a forbidden subject.

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LOCAL SPINS

With February comes a deluge of local and national acts to the Detroit area. Here's the "best bets" for the month as far as Michigan-bred acts are concerned.

1. "Jazz at Sweet Lorraine's," 29101 Greenfield north of 12 Mile in Southfield, Tuesday, Feb. 1. Jazz in a brightly painted, chic dining room. (810) 559-5985
2. East Lansing's alt-rock band The Verve Pipe co-headlines with roots-rocking Red C Friday, Feb. 4, at Lill's, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck. (313) 876-6555
3. Award-winning blues from the throaty Mimi Harris and the Snakes, Friday, Feb. 4, at Stan's Dugout, 3350 Auburn, Auburn Hills. (810) 852-8433
4. Sometimes Why releases its single, "Perpetual Love" with the B-side "Forever," with a performance and dance party at Griff's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac, Saturday, Feb. 5. (810) 334-9292
5. Spank, which includes members of Missionary Slow and Red C, performs with the Ann Arbor rock band Restroom Pools Saturday, Feb. 5, at the Magic Bag Theatre Cafe, Woodward north of Nine Mile, in Ferndale. (810) 644-3030
6. Jason McCauley Berry and his All-Night Fish Market release their self-titled debut CD with a party at Industry, 15 S. Saginaw, Pontiac, Thursday, Feb. 10. (810) 334-1959
7. Rhythm and blues crooner and former Southfield resident Keith Washington returns to Detroit Saturday, Feb. 12, with a show at the Fox Theatre in Detroit. Also performing: Regina Belle and Phyllis Hyman. (810) 645-6666
8. The up-and-coming swirly alternative rock trio Whirling Road returns to the Blind Pig, 206-208 S. First, Ann Arbor, Wednesday, Feb. 16. (313) 996-8555
9. The in-your-face rock of Broech meets the sweet harmonies of SisterSeed at Lill's 21, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck Friday, Feb. 18. (313) 876-6555
10. Vudu Hipfiles debut its new lineup at Griff's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac, Friday, Feb. 25. (810) 334-9292

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Street Scene next week:

- Christina Fuoco previews a host of shows coming to town in February.
- John Monaghan takes a look at the movie scene.

Gangster Fun: To be ska free

Fed up with being exclusively labeled as "ska," Gangster Fun is trying to show people that the horn-laden form of music isn't just a novelty.

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO

STAFF WRITER



There's no way to misinterpret how Gangster Fun feels about being pigeonholed as a ska band.

"Ska sucks," drummer Brian Bowie and lead vocalist John Bunkley said almost in sync.

"We're tired of being labeled as a ska band. We're pigeonholed as some sort of novelty act. . . . As if ska is any different from alternative. We're just as alternative as any other alternative music," Bowie said.

"Really, we're just like every other rock band in Detroit except we have a little different beat," Bunkley added.

Most people don't realize that, according to Bunkley, he's tired of explaining ska music to people who are unfamiliar with it. (For the record, "The Rolling Stone Encyclopedia of Rock & Roll" describes it as "quicker and less brooding than reggae.")

Because of the ambiguity of ska music, many people assume that it's "this weird, weird fringe thing," Bowie said. In response, they're trying to clear up that misconception. Many things have hindered their quest, however, they said.

For example, winning the "Best World Beat Band" prize at the Detroit Music Awards has caused further confusion. Bowie said that being incorrectly lumped into "world beat" is insulting because they're "alternative."

"When somebody gives you an award that says 'Best World Beat Band,' that's a put down to every world beat band in Detroit," said Bowie, a Pontiac resident.

Also, compilations like "American Ska-thon: A Portrait of Midwest ska Post to Present" further pigeonholes ska, he added. Members of Gangster Fun appear on the CD with the Steady Earnest horns playing a cover of AC/DC's "You Shook Me All Night Long." "They're unhappy with the track because it was recorded with another member singing lead — not Bunkley."

At any rate, Midwestern ska, they said, doesn't offer Gangster Fun any competition because many bands are just studio projects.

"We don't want anything to do with it," Bunkley said of Midwestern ska.



Chuck Wren, a Chicago ska DJ and organizer of "American Ska-thon," said the "ska" or "Midwestern ska" labels aren't all that bad.

"Alternative" means nothing to day. For them to want to be called that means nothing."

STREET BEATS

Bowie and Bunkley stressed that they're not being "pompous" by wanting to mix the musical pigeonhole.

"If you've been listening to it for as long as we have, you'd be sick of it, too. . . . Our music is different because it's our own. If you can't stand your own music, then you quit the band," Bowie said.

Gangster Fun has been around since the late 1980s when it released "Come See, Come Ska" on England's ska Records in 1989. The album proved successful for the band,

which has since gigged with bands such as Fugazi, Bad Brains, Bad Manners and Bim Skala Bim.

Bunkley said the key to their success is that musically and lyrically, they use a light-hearted approach to get serious messages across.

"I think we're more light-hearted people than most bands. They take themselves and their music way too seriously. They use it as a means to an end. . . . Just have a good time until you break up," Bunkley said.

Despite general unhappiness with the music business, the duo didn't see Gangster Fun breaking up any time soon. In fact, they're recording an EP at The Disc in Eastpointe for possible release in June. The CD, which will include a cover and a few originals, is their first since 1991's "Time Flies When You're Gangster Fun." It took three years to record their new record, they said, because they were "lazy."

"We just didn't get around to doing it. It's expensive to run a band

with 10 people in it," Bowie said. (Gangster Fun also includes keyboardist Andy Elko of Livonia, guitarist/vocalist David Minnick of Center Line, percussionist/vocalist Josh Silverstein of Southfield, saxophonist Chris Minnick of Ann Arbor, trumpeter Tony Albano of Sterling Heights, trombonist John Ferry of Milan and bassist Ron Hill of Detroit.)

"We're a bunch of slackers. We're never on time," Bowie said. (Well, not never: They were on time for their interview.)

The yet-to-be-named EP will carry Gangster Fun's trademark sound. After all, Bowie said, they may be sick of ska, but they're not sick of their music.

Gangster Fun performs Saturday, Feb. 5, along with Gun Rack at the Falcon Club, 3515 Caniff, Hamtramck. Doors open at 9 p.m. Must be 18 to enter. Cover charge is \$2. For more information, call (313) 368-6010.

Proof is in Puddin' for charming band

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO

STAFF WRITER

Hot Footin' Puddin' Pie has an undeniable charm about them.

When lead singer Lenny Pops enters a room, he commands attention with his somewhat pompous air, trademark curly reddish-brown hair and 1970s-style black leather coat. In tow are three females who ooze "cool" — suave drummer Deb Agolli, the platinum-blondie cherubic Kim Marro, and the sweet-talking smiling Dee Boman.

This quartet may be an eye-ful to look at but don't underestimate their musical talent. They've become one

of the most talked about up-and-coming Detroit bands.

Modestly Marro explained how she thinks the buzz about Hot Footin' was created.

"We're not so serious. We have a playful, charming aspect. It's contagious when people see us," she said.

Try to take your eyes away from the stage on which Hot Footin' is playing and you'll find yourself subconsciously returning to them.

The sweet vocal harmonies of Agolli, Marro and Boman in songs like "Willow Tree" will swirl around in

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Rising stars: Hot Footin' Puddin' Pie — Kim Marro (left), Dee Boman, Deb Agolli and Lenny Pops — is quickly becoming one of the most talked-about Detroit bands.

Items should be submitted two weeks in advance to: Christina Fuoco, 36261 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150, or by fax at (313) 951-7279.

IN CONCERT

Monday, Jan. 31
MARY MCQUIRE AND JULIE KOVACH
 Four Greenfields, 3333 N. Woodward Ave., Royal Oak. (rock) rock
 (810) 280-2902

Tuesday, Feb. 1
JAZZ AT SWEET LORRAINE'S CAFE
 Featuring Al Martin and Johnny Allen at Sweet Lorraine's Cafe, Greenfield Road north of 12 Mile Road, Southfield. (jazz)
 (810) 559-5985

ALEX CRAYTON
 With Greg Vaughn Combo at Blind Pig, 206-208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. (pop)
 (313) 996-8555

Wednesday, Feb. 2
JIM SHEDDEN
 Acclaimed alto saxophonist from New York City at Bird of Paradise, 207 S. Ashley, Ann Arbor. (jazz)
 (313) 662-8310

STEWART COPPELAND & THE RHYTHMISTS
 With Urtai and Vins at State Theatre, 2115 Woodward Ave., Detroit. (worldbeat)
 (313) 961-5451

MAUD OVERHEAD
 With Tension Splash at Blind Pig, 206-208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. (rock)
 (313) 996-8555

COOL
 With Marshall Law at The Ritz, 17580 Frazee, Roseville. (rock)
 (810) 778-6404

SLOW CHILDREN AT PLAY
 Griff's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac. (rock)
 (810) 334-9292

HOT FOOTIN' PUDDIN' PIE
 Falcon Club, 3515 Caniff, Hamtramck. (70s-influenced rock)
 (313) 368-6010

WINTERFALL
 Performs with Tomelanes and Mr. Wigly during an Ann Arbor Art Net Fund-raiser at Blind Pig, 206-208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. (rock)
 (313) 996-8555

Friday, Feb. 4
THE VERVE PIPE
 With Red Cat at Lill's, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck. (rock)
 See IN CONCERT, 7A