

6A(O)(F-6A)

## ART ON THE EDGE



BILL HANSEN

The Unknown: A wide eyed figure shrieks in terror at the sight of UFOs in "Fear."

## His artwork is inspired by dreams

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN

**C**hristopher Wirth has always held art close to his heart. From abstractly painting tables at the 3-D nightclub in Royal Oak to producing videos for local acts Charm Farm, Discipline and Jeffrey Dean Marlow, this young Waterford artist continues to search for ways of expanding creativity.

Dreams inspire Wirth's current works — a series of mixed media paintings addressing the emotions and desires of modern man. Groove Gallery in Royal Oak will exhibit more than a dozen of Wirth's paintings March 4-26. An opening reception to meet the artist and view his work in a special black light art show will be at 8 p.m. March 4.

Compelled by an inner necessity to transfer dream images to paper, Wirth lays down fluorescent, gouache underlines, blending up color with the addition of pastel and watercolor. When the sun starts setting, the lights in Wirth's sky-crappers seem to search out the night, glowing with warm animation.

In mixed media he paints the viewer with wide eyed figures that shriek in fear of the unknown upon sighting UFOs. Along with the emotion of fear, frustration and security come to life through Wirth's use of cartoon like imagery. Swaying buildings against a night sky lend a touch of whimsy to statements about the craziness of living in big cities.

"I paint what I dream — dream visions. I try not to father my images from other people's work," said the 26-year-old artist with a passion for painting. "I'm very expressionistic because I'm overwhelmed with emotions."

During a recent interview Wirth, who refers to his work as semi-abstract, was adamant about following his own vision.

"When I go into a piece everything else around me becomes invisible," he said. "I've had people say they're too dark. I can only paint what I feel. I'm not going to paint what everybody else wants me to paint, what everybody else wants to buy."

It's obvious by color and content that Wirth is an admirer of French Impressionist Vincent van Gogh and American Scene painter Thomas Hart Benton whose disquiet for big cities emerged not only in his work but in the statement that they were nothing but coffins for living and thinking.

"Thomas Hart Benton didn't have any love for the city. I like his beliefs. '6:43 A.M.' alludes to the craziness of the city," said Wirth, motioning to a work focusing on big city life. "The guy driving the car likes being able to enjoy man's construction without man."

Art attracted Wirth early. In fifth grade he won a scholarship to the Creative Arts Center in Pontiac, but soon after sports took over his life. He wrestled from about age 8 until breaking a thumb in his senior year at Waterford-Kettering High School. That's when he became interested in photography, then video.

"Photography taught me about composition. Taking black and white photographs I learned the importance of contrast. Color seduces you. But if

See ARTIST, 7A

## LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Street Scene next week:

- Christina Fuoco interviews the rock band Tool and sits in at a private show by the Meat Puppets.
- John Monaghan takes a look at the movie scene.

# Show pairs SisterSeed, Breech

How you describe them may well explain their positions on the musical spectrum. Breech's music is "bare-boned, rough and tumble," while SisterSeed's sound is "solid."

BY KYLE GREEN  
SPECIAL WRITER



Never use adjective such as concise, full or comfortable when describing Breech's music.

"Comfortable" is not a word (be)fitting to Breech," said vocalist Missy Gibson. "It's not easy. It's not something you are at ease with. It's sort of prickly."

On the other hand, "solid" is a comfortable word to describe SisterSeed's music that won acclaim as an acoustic folk duo about the same time as it expanded into a four-piece modern rock band.

"We will always keep our acoustic roots, and we can always fall back on that if we have to, but we don't," said SisterSeed vocalist Alicia Gbur.

Even though the bands represent different ends of the modern Detroit musical spectrum, Breech and SisterSeed will perform at Lili's in Hamtramck on Friday, Feb. 18.

Being different is OK, but there's still one common denominator — each grabs you and refuses to let go.

"Both bands grab your attention, just in totally two different ways."

## STREET BEATS

SisterSeed drummer Benjamin Ridley Jr. "SisterSeed is musically more subtle, where Breech slaps you in the face. I think SisterSeed can slap you in the face as a band but differently."

Regardless if one gets hit or not, the bands' upcoming show should prove both acts are independent but interesting.

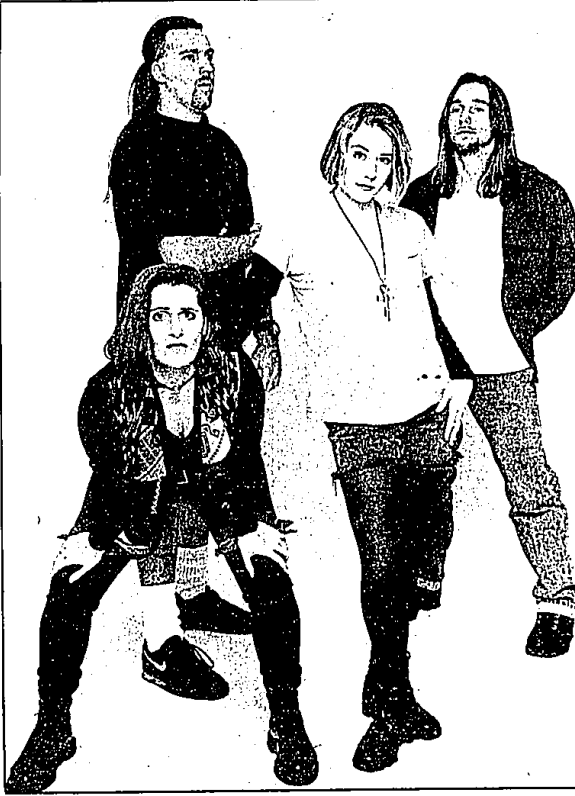
First of all, Breech's Gibson is the former lead vocalist for Strange Bedfellows, while partner Thomas Trimble used to be in Weeping Rachel. While SisterSeed, which includes members of the rock band Blue Nation, began as an acoustic duo.

Second, the angelic singers of SisterSeed are musically focused on a stable musical presence, while the "in your face" Breech prefers references such as gutsy, fully wired, bare-boned and rough and tumble for its pop art approach to music, according to guitarist Trimble.

"When you come to see Breech, you almost feel guilty to turn your back on us," Trimble said. "Usually people turn their backs on rock bands. Unfortunately, there is only Missy and I. You almost have to watch Missy and I — you feel guilty to go to the bathroom."

"In every show we pick up about five people who really weren't expecting what they saw, but about 20 people turn it off."

What they see is Gibson singing



loudly into a microphone and occasionally mimicking a bass drum sound by stepping on another mic. Trimble sits in a chair and strums his acoustic guitar. There are no other members to Breech.

"The music, as Trimble describes it, is "emotionally jagged."

"When you see Breech, you are taking a subliminal voyage to places Missy has been," Trimble said. "It's almost like reading an (Ambrose) Bierce book because you sit in a car with Bierce and he takes you for a ride."

"It's not as though one sits there watching traffic go by, but when you listen to Breech, Missy pulls up and you have to agree to go along and hope she brings you back to where you started."

Instead of traveling through dark musical passages, SisterSeed is striving to evolve as a unit. What started as a duo composed of Chrissy Kerwin and Gbur on acoustic gui-

tars has now sprouted with the addition of guitarist Michael Puwal and drummer Ridley — and a new musical direction.

Nevertheless, the acoustic material of old earned the band the 1993 Detroit Music Award for "Best Folk Duo."

"I think the award was a step in the right direction to put us on the right track . . . and now we want to strive for a sound that opens up more," Kerwin said. "Our music writing has grown. Before it was so simple that guitars and our voices were enough."

"I think it was so natural to have Mike and Ben playing . . . It is to the point with our music that it is missing something without these two."

The members of Breech, however, look back on their past in rock bands with mixed emotions. Trimble and Gibson said they feel comfortable as a duo.

"It's hard being in a regular four-

Clashing styles: The musical styles of SisterSeed — Chrissy Kerwin, Benjamin Ridley Jr., Alicia Gbur and Michael Puwal — and Breech — Missy Gibson, formerly of Strange Bedfellows, and ex-Weeping Rachel member Thomas Trimble — may clash but they'll perform together at Lili's in Hamtramck Feb. 18.

piece because there is more to do, more responsibilities. When you are in a band, you are lazy. In Breech there is no room for it. You have your hands busy all the time," Trimble said. "Breech is sort of stuck between two things because half wants to be sort of in a rock scene and (the other half) is an underground sound more like a Tom Waits sort of thing."

"We just have to be careful that we walk the line between what it is and what it should be."

What Breech is, is honest.

"When it fails to be honest and direct, it fails. It fails to be Breech. In a band you can hide behind others. In Breech, you can't," Gibson said.

Breech, SisterSeed and the Joe Lawless Project perform at Lili's, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck, on Friday, Feb. 18. Must be 21 to enter. Call (313) 875-6555 for more information.

# Listening is understanding Restroom Poets

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO  
STAFF WRITER

The Restroom Poets admit that a majority of bar clientele wouldn't find the band's music particularly attractive. It takes an amount of thought to understand the Restroom Poets.

"We're not a band that is easily palatable if you're in one of those groups," lead singer/guitarist Jason Magee said of the typical drunken, talkative bar crowd. "It's not easy to listen to us and get what we're trying to do."

"It takes some effort on the listeners' part. The big part are our lyrics and what we have to say."

The Restroom Poets, who have gigged with the likes of Paw, Counting Crows and George Clinton, aren't about fluff. Ironically, that may be one of the factors hindering their popularity outside of the Restroom Poets' hometown of Ann Arbor.

Karen Koski, president of the Detroit Musicians Alliance, said the band's time will come once the right crowd is exposed to them.

"There is an audience here for them. The audience just hasn't heard them yet. (They need to find) an audience that appreciates somebody who's doing something a little more difficult, that's a little more important," said Koski, who also writes for "Jam Rag."

Magee, a University of Michigan graduate, said he's tried to write less-challenging lyrics, but he hasn't felt comfortable with them.

"I've tried to write stupid lyrics. I was trying to write a song for someone

else and I failed. . . . He told me 'You have to make dumber lyrics.'"

"I don't think I could sing something like that anymore," he added.

His bandmates — drummer Ben Lorenz and bassist Brian Poore — said that sometimes listeners misinterpret Magee's point because he speaks in "long sentences and long words."

It just takes time for people to get his point.

See POETS, 7A

Items should be submitted two weeks in advance to: Christina Fuoco, 36281 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150, or by fax at (313) 691-7278.

**Monday, Feb. 14**  
MARTY MCNEILS AND JIMMY KOVACH  
Four Green Fields, 3333 N. Woodward Ave., Royal Oak, (acoustic)  
810-280-2902

**Brookside Jazz Ensemble**  
Hawthorne Valley Country Club, Meridian Road north of Warren Ave., Westland, (jazz)  
313-422-3440

**Tuesday, Feb. 15**  
LILLY CENTER JAZZ ORCHESTRA  
Hill Auditorium, Ann Arbor, (jazz)  
313-763-7875

**Lollipop Guild**  
With Violent Wire at Blind Pig, 206-208 S.

## IN CONCERT

First St., Ann Arbor, (alternative rock)  
313-926-6555

**RED C**  
Four Green Fields, 3333 N. Woodward Ave., Royal Oak, (rock) rock  
810-280-2902

**Wednesday, Feb. 16**  
CHEAP TRIBBLE  
Osborn Roadhouse, 9451 Elizabeth Lake Road, White Lake, (rock)  
810-598-1514

**THE HELLA**  
With Working Road at Blind Pig, 206-208 S. First St., Ann Arbor, (rock)  
313-926-6555

Oak, (acoustic guitar and violin)  
810-266-7888

**21 SQUARES FROM EARTH**  
The Silo Bar, 41270 Hayes, Clinton Township, (acoustic)  
810-266-7888

**HUNGARIAN PEPPER GARDEN**  
With Drop and The Pains, Avin's, 5756 Cessa, Detroit, (libertarian benefit)  
810-544-3030

**ELEANOR McEVY**  
Magic Bag Theatre Cafe, Woodward Avenue north of Nine Mile Road, Ferndale, (song)  
810-544-3030

**Lake Road, White Lake, (rock)**  
810-598-1514

**NO MERCY**  
With Saddletramp at The Ritz, 17580 French Road, Royal Oak, (rock)  
810-778-6404

**"OLD SCHOOL BEERJON TOUR"**  
State Theatre, 2115 Woodward, Detroit, (acoustic)  
313-961-5451

**ROADBOYS**  
Grit's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac, (alternative rock)  
810-334-2222

**SOME PEOPLE'S CHILDREN**  
With Linda Green at Blind Pig, 206-208 S. First St., Ann Arbor, (rock)  
313-926-6555

See IN CONCERT, 8A