

STREET SCENE

Restroom Poets — Restroom Poets

What you hear on the Restroom Poets self-titled debut CD (Harmonic Park Productions) is what you get. The Ann Arbor quartet of drummer Ben Lorenz, bassist Brian Poore, vocalist/guitarist Jason Magee, and guitarist Brad Skinner have done what most bands are unable to do — capture the intensity of their live show and slap it on a recording.

The 11-song CD weaves in and out of Magee's mind telling stories of his ideal love ("Sensible Woman"), personal struggles ("Decadence"), and his struggle to understand social ills ("Death in Canada"). The straight-ahead rock of "Death in Canada" has made the song a crowd favorite at shows, and comes across equally as well on "Restroom Poets." The sultry blend of country and blues on the Jeff Healey-like "Out of Style" is striking both musically and lyrically.

The fluidity of Magee's vocals on quiet, emotional songs like "Out of Style" and on rockers "Sensible Woman," coupled with the Restroom Poets' tight performance make the band one to watch this year.

Restroom Poets plays at 9 p.m. Thursday, July 27, at Maze Big Theatre Cafe, 22918 Woodward Ave., Ferndale. Cover is \$3 and the show is open to those 18 and older. Call (410) 544-3030 for more information. The band also plays a free, all-ages show at 8 p.m. Friday, July 28, at Planet Ark Cafeteria, 2357 Canby, Hamtramck, (313) 365-4948.

Happy Bluesday — Robert Noll Blues Mission

There are those who might say that blues guitarist/vocalist Robert Noll's most endearing quality is his ability to spark controversy. Of course, it isn't, but depending on who you speak to, he's either too loud and rock-oriented, or he's the King of the Blues in Detroit.

He's certainly the biggest blues draw in town, and as long as he keeps folks talking and standing in lines to see him wherever he plays, from Sisko's to the Q Club, he does more for what the late Bobo Jenkins used to thank his audiences for — "keeping the blues alive" — than anyone else in town has in many years.

This is a disc that touches on all aspects of the public perception of Noll. It leans on a rock hybridized volume knob here and there, and it sits in honey sweet pure and natural blues in others. Just the Allman Brothers-styled instrumental, "Mountain Top," alone should convince any doubting rockers of the vitality of the blues and prove to the blues hard-liners that there is much to be said for the discriminate use of rock energies.

Robert Noll keeps folks talking, certainly. This proves that there's plenty to talk about.

Robert Noll performs at 9 p.m. Saturday, July 22, at Buddy's Barbecue, 6675 Orchard Lake Road, West Bloomfield. For more information, call (410) 851-4250. — Mark E. Gault

A Spanner in the Works — Rod Stewart

By now, everyone knows the drill: old Rod goes, new Rod best. Critics lamented his gigantic sales in the late '70s with hits like "Da Ya Think I'm Sexy?" and genuinely missed the homespun feel and self-deprecating humor of the early Mercury hits with cohort Ron Wood. Others saw the satin pants and California tan and wrote him off. The worst part of it was, even for the occasional flash of brilliance like 1983's "People Get Ready," both groups were right to reject the New Rod Stewart. As more and more gloss was spilled to his image, the more bloated and watery his work became.

The '90s found Stewart pandering to adult contemporary radio for lightweight hits and rock stations simply playing "Stay With Me," one more. Worst of all, the Mod himself was guilty into slugging his '70s output in interviews, calling it a "betrayal of his talent." Meanwhile, we die-hard fans swallowed the new material and kept praying for Rod's rejuvenation, a complete return to that once-familiar musical swagger and new life for that raw rasp of a voice.

And again, we have to settle for second best. It's genuinely frustrating to hear the handful of tantalizing cuts on "A Spanner in the Works" (Warner Bros.) yield to what ultimately becomes yet another lite rock soundtrack, ready to ooze out of countless dentists' offices this summer. It's heartening that the album is sequenced and paced like an honest-to-goodness album, beginning slow and moody and climaxing with several grooving, up-tempo cuts, but when the quiet numbers are as watery and weak as the openers "Windy Town" and "The Downtown Lights," hope dies fast. An attempt at the mid-80s raunch-rockers, "Delicious," falls similarly flat. The gems of this collection are few and far between. — Todd Wicks

A Rochester Hills resident, Todd Wicks is a Michigan State University student.

Have a listen

To hear music by Catherine Wheel (message 2), Mae Moore (message 3), Big Sugar (message 4), Restroom Poets (message 5), Nik Turner (message 6), and Memphis (message 7) you can call the Burnt Skins Music Line at (313) 963-2025 on a Touch-Tone phone. If the forwarded to the corresponding message by pressing 23. To request a message, press 4.

Catherine Wheel finds its worth

BY CHRISTINA FUCCO  
STAFF WRITER  
Catherine Wheel vocalist/guitarist Rob Dickinson is a sight to behold as he walks over to the 89X tent at the radio station's birthday party concert in Pontiac. With his Caesar haircut, sleek, wrap-around black sunglasses, heavy black boots, retro-style shirt and black jeans, it's hard to believe that Dickinson and his band ever had an ego problem.

■ 'We all of a sudden after touring for two years had the confidence to do exactly what we pleased.'

Rob Dickinson

Up until Catherine Wheel's last tour, Dickinson said that he wasn't sure of his band's worth. After consecutive nights of touring, a lightbulb went off in his head and he realized "the band is finally worth something."

"We all of a sudden after touring for two years had the confidence to do exactly what we pleased," said Dickinson during an interview in his dressing room at the Phoenix Plaza Amphitheatre Saturday, June 24. "We were released from the shackles of our influences. By touring so much, we were able to become our own entity."

"Happy Days," Catherine Wheel's latest album, is the result of the band's new found "healthy arrogance." Overall, the CD is much more aggressive than Catherine Wheel's previous efforts — 1991's "Ferment" and 1993's "Chrome." If you listen to them as a collection, however, "Ferment" and "Chrome" are musical stepping stones to "Happy Days" (Mercury/Pontana).

"If you don't get it (the musical progression), it's not our problem. Our healthy arrogance came by naturally and positively. Any record which can have that rocking 'God Inside My Head' and the acoustic-influenced 'Fizzy Love' on it is a bit of an achievement. It encompasses the full spectrum of what moves us."

"This is the first album that shows the fullest breadth of this band's ability." Dickinson describes the album as "aggressive, melodic, delicate, and sometimes it's uplifting." Underneath all those elements is Catherine Wheel's trademark "tension under the guitars."

The sweeping vocals of "Heal," the answer to the band's first U.S. hit single "Black Metallic" both in style and length, shows Catherine Wheel's softer side. The aggressiveness of the first single "Waydown" allowed Catherine Wheel to break into whole new market — hard rock.

"Judy Starling At The Sun" is a straight-ahead pop song that features the angelic vocals of Billy lead singer/songwriter Tanya Donnelly. "We'd bumped into her touring,"



On their way up: British rockers Catherine Wheel — from left, bassist Dave Hawes, percussionist Neil Sims, vocalist/guitarist Rob Dickinson and guitarist Brian Futter — have landed airtime across the radio dial with their hit "Waydown" from their latest album "Happy Days."

Dickinson said of the collaboration. "Gil Norton (who produced 'Happy Days' and 'Chrome') knew her from his production of Throwing Muses, and Billy as well, so he introduced me to her at the London Finsbury Park XFM Festival we were both playing at. We got along really well, and I knew I wanted a female voice to sing on that song."

"I could hear a lot of country in her voice, that sort of twang and twinkle, and I thought she would be perfect for this track." The heavy beat-laden "Hole" was written in response to the suicide of Nirvana singer Kurt Cobain. "On the seventh day of pre-production for this album, Kurt took his own life. It obviously had an effect on

us, and that song is our reaction," he said. Dickinson, guitarist Brian Futter, bassist Dave Hawes and drummer Neil Sims formed Catherine Wheel in 1990 in the seaside town of Neil Sims. Named after a gruesome torture device that dates back to the 4th century St. Catherine, came about its record deal quickly. "Black Metallic," "I Want To Touch You," and "Crank" soon became radio hits.

To push "Happy Days," Catherine Wheel played a stream of radio station-sponsored gigs, including the 89X Birthday Bash at the Phoenix Plaza. Dickinson, the cousin of Bruce Dickinson, said although radio shows are "a technical headache," he likes playing them.

"I like the perversion of playing to people who may not be there to see you," he said with a shy smirk. Dickinson and the rest of Catherine Wheel are returning to Detroit to play St. Andrew's Hall on Monday, July 24. When asked if Dickinson was going to play cult favorites like "Want To Touch You," he replied, "It is difficult to pick from three records. But people won't go away disappointed."

Catherine Wheel, Wax and Gums Mars perform at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit, on Monday, July 24. Doors open at 8 p.m. for 18 and older show. Tickets are \$8.00 in advance. For more information, call (313) 961-MELT.

Vancouver singer arrives in happier mood

BY CHRISTINA FUCCO  
STAFF WRITER  
Vancouver singer/songwriter Mae Moore was concerned that her name wasn't listed in ads or on the marquee as the opening act for Billy Bragg and the Barenaked Ladies show at Meadow Brook Music Theatre in Rochester earlier this month.

"Will Billy Bragg fans be disappointed when she instead of he comes out at 8 p.m.? Will people who she is?"

Her question was answered quickly when she announces that "I'll be giving away prizes after the next song. They go to whoever knows my name," she said with a laugh.

The song ended and the scant crowd yells her name. She tosses out stickers of her latest album cover and the rush is so strong to the stage that a female usher ducked down and covered her head. She's found her "pleasure ground."

Moore is touring in support of her latest album "Dragonfly" (Tri-Star/Sony) which follows her more well-known album "Bohemia." Although she's been popular in the United States, her whispy, sultry vocals on the title track and "Because of Love" helped her sell more than 20,000 copies of the album.

She hopes to have the same success with "Dragonfly," which she recorded after a "year of reassessing a lot of things in my life."

"It's happier. A bit more optimistic. 'Bohemia' is dark and moody and more brooding. 'Dragonfly' deals with issues of death and longing but it's elevating," Moore said.

After her father died in January, she found herself reassessing her feelings and finding out what's really important in life. She values honesty in relationships "not material things that give you sustenance. . . things that speak to the heart."

■ 'The band I'm with right now is very supportive. When it's just myself and an acoustic guitar, then I tend to draw back inside and get quite introverted. Now that I'm with a band that really rock, a lot of the elements are fun and really buoyant.'

Mae Moore  
singer/songwriter

stand beside you on this earth/I've always wanted to/Where are we now/in circles we go around/Dragging our love/Through these pleasure grounds."

Sometimes, she admits, it's hard to sing emotional songs like "Love Won't Find Us Here" and "Evolution (The Same Way)" at some shows.

"It depends on the situation. The band I'm with right now is very supportive. When it's just myself and an acoustic guitar, then I tend to draw back inside and get quite introverted."

"Now that I'm with a band that really rock, a lot of the elements are fun and really buoyant."

Her band, all of whom played at Meadow Brook and on "Dragonfly," reads like an all-star lineup of Canadian musicians — Paul Brannan formerly of the Odds plays drums; Blake's Vincent Jones plays keyboards and pianist Rick May plays bass; and Neil Clarke, who played with Lloyd Cole, is on guitar.

She'll return to the United States in the fall. Right now she's concentrating on another aspect of her life that gives her satisfaction — painting.

"It's having a show of a small gallery" near Vancouver. "I loved home. I have one painting to finish and some drawings to do."



Reassessing relationship: After the death of her father, Mae Moore reassessed her friendships and other relationships. Ironically, her latest album "Dragonfly" has a happier feel. Moore recently performed with Billy Bragg and Bare Naked Ladies at Meadow Brook Music Theatre.