STREET SCENE

Vudu Hippies ring out eventful '96 at 7th House

CHRISTINA FUOCO

For the alternapop band Vudu Hippies, 1996 has meant putting out an EP "Who?", performing relentlessly, and releasing a new album, "Trampoline."

"We look back on '96 with tears of melancholy and infinite unhappiness yet bright smiles of wonderful recollection. We held hands, watched movies, drove 7,000 miles to play in front of a tornado, and went back up to the room and mashed a potato. But most of all, above everything, we had our pride," guitarist Chris said. (The band prefers to be on a first-name basis with everyone.)

"Trampoline," recorded at the Tempermill in Ferndale and Pearl Sound in Canton, is the Vudu Hippies' first album since 1992's "Happy Medium." Singer Renee said there's a world of differences between the two records.

"There's a lot of new growth in this album. I think the album really defines what we're about, what we're trying to say," she said.

Chris agreed.

"We know how to play our instruments a lot better. We've pretty much had the same lineup since 1992 or 1993. We've definitely started to think a lot more alike. I just think we have more of a professional approach. We know each other a lot better."

The 11-song "Trampoline" features a slew of new songs that the band has included in its set for some time – "Simpatico," "Name," and "Sara." "Sucker" and a slow version of "Simpatico" are hidden in the CD. Renee said her love of the Cowboy Junkies inspired the new take on "Simpatico."

"My favorite's the slow one," Renee said. "I think it shows what the song is about. It comes out better."

Next year the Vudu Hippies will continue pushing "Trampoline" and chasing that elusive record contract.

"Hopefully we'll get farther out in the Midwest and get signed and keep playing. The band is very tight and we're playing such a ridiculous amount of shows. It definitely helps, though," Chris said.

The Vudu Hippies, Brilliant and Crimson Hollow will perform Tuesday, Dec. 31, at 7th House, 7 N. Saginaw, Pontiac. Doors open at 9 p.m. for the 18 and older show. For more information, call (313) 961-MELT.

• The new year will bring a new single for East Lansing's The Verve Pipe. Todd Schenkenberger, RCA publicist, said "The Freshman," a song that appeared on the original pressing of the band's first album "I've Suffered A Head Injury," will be the next single. The record company's plan is to "concentrate heavily on college press."

"It's the kind of song that certainly college students can relate to and all the emotions people go through. It's really an accelerated growing up time for people."

In conjunction with U magazine, a monthly magazine carried in college newspapers around the United States, RCA Records is running a contest where entrants must write in *150 words or less their favorite* freshman moment.

"The band will judge the entries and the one that the band chooses wins a free Verve Pipe show on their campus," he said.

On the "I've Suffered A Head Injury" version of "The Freshman," lead singer Brian Vander Ark was accompanied solely by an acoustic guitar. The Verve Pipe's latest album "Villains" takes it a step further with more instrumentation. The band recently re-recorded the song for the third time to make it more "rockin.'"

The video, filmed in England, will be sent to MTV in January.

The Verve Pipe, who appears in an Intel TV commercial, will perform Sunday, Dec. 29, at Clutch Cargo's in Pontiac – its first show since returning home from a European tour with Kiss.

"Kiss's management really, really liked The Verve Pipe. The Verve Pipe has gotten a better reaction in the United States than any of the other opening acts they'd had so they invited them to come out and open up all the European dates," Schenkenberger said.

"They were asked to do the Australian tour, too, but with the release of 'The Freshman' and that being a really big single for us, The Verve Pipe had to turn down the Australian dates so they could come back to the United States to concentrate on that single."

The Verve Pipe performs Sunday, Dec. 29, at Clutch Cargo's, 65 E. Huron in Pontiac. Doors open at 7:30 p.m. for the all-ages show. Tickets are $13 in advance. For more information, call (810) 333-2362.

If you have a question or comment for Christina Fuoco, you can write to her in care of The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft Road, Livonia, or you can leave her a message at (313) 953-2047, mailbox No. 2130, or via e-mail at CFuoco@aol.com.

Ringing in the New Year: *Vudu Hippies – from left, drummer Brad, guitarist Chris, guitarist Reed, bassist Steve, and singer Renee.*

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