

## STREET SCENE

## Counting Crows promise fans a memorable show



CHRISTINA FUOCO

"Live, we just focus on emotion. We play from the heart. I'm happy with our fans. They're loyal and in that regard our job really is to move people at a concert and make it an experience that you can't forget."

The band will make its third visit to the Detroit area on its "Recovering the Satellites" tour on Thursday, Oct. 23, at Hill Auditorium in Ann Arbor, a city that has special meaning to Vickrey.

"My relatives live there. My grandmother lives in Ann Arbor. My grandmother couldn't make it, to the last show, but she's planning on going to this one if she doesn't get sick. At least we're going to do lunch," he said.

This 2 1/2-week stint will wind down the U.S. portion of the Counting Crows' tour in support of "Recovering the Satellites"

(Geffen), which was released Oct. 15, 1996.

"We may go to Europe until the end of the year. After that we're going to rent a place in the hills and rehearse and record," Vickrey said.

So far, the Counting Crows have "a couple of songs, a couple of demos" for their San Francisco-area band's third album.

"But they're only like a germ so far."

Vickrey hopes that the song-writing process goes easier than it did for "Recovering the Satellites," which features the songs "Angels of the Silence," "Daylight Fading," and "A Long December."

"It was a hard period," Vickrey said about the time between the Counting Crows' multi-platinum-selling debut "August and Everything After" and the recording of "Recovering the Satellites."

"I think I would say that Adam really had a difficult time with the first tour. Adam, he's the lyric writer. After 18 months of touring, you can't write without having a life. When you tour, amazingly enough you don't have a life. It's like suspended time," he said.

"I would guess that it's going to be different this time. We're not all having a nervous breakdown this time. The beauty is at this point we all know what it is to make a record and do a tour. It's familiar territory."

Producers, he said, wanted to make its debut album "August and Everything After" all over again.

"We certainly made an effort not to do exactly that. It was more than us just saying to ourselves that we have to get another record out. We said let's take the time to make a great record. That's our concern — not to make a lot of records but to make great ones. We did what it took to do that and we accomplished that."

Thanks in part, he said, to relentless touring.

"Musically, I think you learn how to play with everybody when you're on tour. You're always learning musically in a live setting. That's the beauty of it. It makes you better band."

The Counting Crows and special guest Don Eye View perform at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 23, at Hill Auditorium, 530 S. State St., Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$20 for the all-ages show. For more information, call (313) 764-8350.



Returning to town: After two sold-out shows, the Counting Crows return to the Detroit area on Thursday, Oct. 23, to play Hill Auditorium in Ann Arbor. The band is, from left, Ben Mize, David Bryson, Charles Gillingham, Matt Malley, Adam Duritz, and Dan Vickrey.

## Backstage Pass upfront about its concern for arts



ANN DELISI

On Backstage Pass, we try not to pull any tricks. None of this "brought to you through the magic of TV" stuff. When you watch the Big Show on Detroit Public Television, you see the cameras, the countdowns, the edges of the set.

That's putting the "backstage" in the "pass" — as we take you behind the scenes at local venues, you get glimpses of our process, too.

"Hopefully, we've been similarly direct about our reasons for doing the show (and this column). Backstage Pass gives you a place to turn to discover something new and exciting in our arts and entertainment scene, artists a place to perform and showcase their work, and arts organizations and cultural insti-

tutions a place to demonstrate that their presentations are worthy of your attendance and support. Along with the fun reasons like "brought to you through the magic of TV," there's a more serious one: artists often leave communities that don't create a supportive environment for their work.

Civic funding debates aside, there's a single, best, obvious means by which we all can support our indigenous artists: Go. Go to shows. Go to galleries. Go to theaters. Go, go, go.

I seem a little adamant about this point, I have reason. On this week's Backstage Pass, we're featuring "Theater Grottesco." This amazing troupe was founded in Paris in 1983, has developed eight full-length plays and more than 20 shorter works, has performed in seven countries and 30 states, and won an international award for best production, two drama critic's awards and a silver medal from the Houston Worldfest Film Festival.

They used to be based in Detroit. Last year, they left. Ouch.

Luckily, we have an opportunity to welcome them home when they perform at the Millennium Theatre in Southfield this weekend. Our crack Backstage Pass theater correspondent Blair Anderson will host members of Theater Grottesco in our studio to discuss their unique performance style.

We hope you had a chance to check out the Metropolitan Film Festival, which we featured on last week's show. It seems independent films have provided quite a few popular hits these last few years. I asked our film expert, Elliot Wilhelm of the DIA's Detroit Film Theatre, to make his own declaration of independence.

"An 'festival independent' generally means the film was not financed by any of the major studios. Well, 'Sex, Lies and Videotape' came from the festival scene and was technically inde-

pendent. Same with 'The English Patient.' So was 'Pulp Fiction.' So was a budget of \$16 million and had Bruce Willis in it. The Metropolitan Festival was designed to show films that don't have Bruce Willis in them, were often produced on shoestring budgets and come in all shapes and sizes — such as Paul Feig's 'Life Sold Separately,' or Errol Morris' 'Fast, Cheap and Out of Control,' which is being featured on Backstage Pass and presented at the Detroit Film Theatre."

For fun, I asked an antagonistic question: Why bother with these little films when we can go see the next "Batman" installment? "Most studio productions, regardless of how good they may be, are rarely the visions of an absolutely independent filmmaker. They somehow boil down to being works by committee. The films shown at the Metro Fest can be likened to novels, the works of a single author. Often, the low budget means that no compromise is imposed on the

author/filmmaker; the work can adhere to the vision. You gain in that vision what you lose in surface slickness."

Also on the Big Show, we welcome the song and satire of those Public Radio favorites, The Capitol Steps, who appear this week at Music Hall. Going strong after

16 albums in 16 years, they remain as billed "the only group in Washington that attempts to be funnier than the Congress." That's tonight at 9:30 on Detroit Public Television, Channel 56. Watch. Then go!

## Hilberry presents fast-paced 'Othello'

Wayne State University's Hilberry graduate theater company continues their presentation of Shakespeare's tragedy "Othello" in repertory through Dec. 11. Upcoming show times are 8 p.m. Thursday and Friday, Oct. 23-24; 8 p.m. Friday, Oct. 31; 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 1. The Hilberry Theatre is on the WSU campus, 4743 Cass (between Ford and Hancock). Tickets range from \$10 to \$17, call (313) 577-2992.

By GUY SUCHITTA  
Special Writer

"Othello" is a story of love and hate, of trust and betrayal, themes that travel easily through time, giving the production staff the opportunity to cunningly costume and stage the show in the period of political unrest in Europe between World Wars.

Vintage field telephones added a unique touch to the immortal bard's prose, and the ladies' costumes and period military uniforms firmly established the era.

Interracial marriages have always evoked disturbing reactions throughout history, the

elopement of Othello, an African Moor to Desdemona, a white Venetian lady, plays a role in the story. However, Iago's rage and revenge over Othello's love to the central theme of the story.

Iago preys upon Othello's naivety and jealous nature, convincing Othello that Desdemona has been having an affair with Cassio, Othello's field commander. Emotions overcome logic, and several lives are ruined before Iago's treachery is exposed.

Momentz Black turned in a powerful performance as Othello. He not only captured the tough military man, he very effectively portrayed the heartbroken vulnerability of a man torn by his wife's alleged deception.

Wendy Gough's Desdemona was luminous and full of trusting grace. She mingled a regal dignity with a commanding stage presence, firmly establishing her character as both a lady and naive, trusting girl.

David Engelman established a strong rapport with the audience



Classic tale: Momentz Black (center) as Othello, Wendy Gough as the fair Desdemona and David Engelman (top) as the sinister Iago in Hilberry Theatre's production of "Othello."

as the evil Iago. He made Shakespeare's dialogue easy to comprehend, and he brilliantly crafted the type of villain one loves to hate. Cassio, played by Matthew Talbot, also turned in an outstanding performance.

Despite a strong supporting cast, the death scenes were awk-

ward and contrived, evoking titters from the audience at times. A pistol misfired, then was aimed well away from its victim when it finally did go off. However, the rich lighting added an effective dimension to the mood.

## Folk concert series features Joel Mabius

The Paint Creek Folklore Society will open its fall Comfy Concert season 6 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 26 with folk singer/songwriter, Joel Mabius. The concert will be at the Rochester Hills home of Phil and Althea Dolittle. Starting time is 6 p.m. and the cost is \$10 per person, call (248) 375-2513 for reservations and directions to the Dolittle home.

Jim Perkins, a local folk musician from Farmington Hills, will open the concert. Perkins plays penny whistle, acoustic guitar and bodhran (an Irish one-sided drum).

Musicians with an Irish lilt has always been the mark of folk musician Jim Perkins. His fingers literally dance when he plays lilting jigs and Irish airs on the penny whistle. With the addition of the Irish drum (bodhran) and the guitar, Perkins will bring to the stage not only Celtic but American traditional music and few compositions of his own.

and traditional music on an array of stringed instruments.

He is featured at top festivals and feels there is a place for a well made song passed from one soul to another — a mellow chord on an acoustic guitar, a catchy rhythm on the banjo, an ancient melody woven with a fiddle and bow.

A maverick in the folk world, Mabius defies any easy pigeonhole. From coast to coast he brings audiences to their feet — and new found friends asking for more.



Joel Mabius

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