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for Midgard - who was playing with the Garfield Blues Band and Johnny "Yarddog" Jones - and "Gorgeous" George Friend, then of the R&B group the Sun Messengers.

"I was doing pick-up blues gigs all around town playing the upright until the Tarantulas finally got to a point where we knew we were see-worthy. We've been full time almost two years," Midgard said.

Five drummers later, Alex "The Thrilla From Manila" Trajano, formerly of the avant jazz troupe Blue Dog, is on skins.

"Alex is awesome. Alex is the find," Midgard explained.

Midgard realizes that one day he, too, may leave.

"Musicians do come and go. That's the nature of musicians. They do a certain bag long enough then they get tired of it. Me, I have my own thing that I do. There will always be a Twistin' Tarantulas, but I think

the only main stay is going to be me. Other guys are going to come and go. That's just something that you learn to accept after while."

Maracas player Fredrick ("Ready Freddy") Spencer made an unexpected exit from the Twistin' Tarantulas Friday, Nov. 1, 1996. A captain in the armed services, Spencer was shining his shoes and brass buckles and buttons on the cloth wheel on a bench grinder. Police believe that his tie got caught, yanked him down and snapped his neck.

"I wrote a song about what I learned from that experience. It was a strange thing because I had this song in mind earlier. One time I was thinking about spectator sports and thinking about how spectators get so involved in this thing, but they're not in the arena. I've never been able to understand that personally," Midgard explained.

"I was thinking about people who love to sit back and criticize the people that are in the arena doing the battle. They're not trying anything."

The chorus, he said, encourages people to make the most of their lives.

"There might not be a tomorrow," Midgard sang. "There's not such a lot of today. So live your life in the arena and love, don't sit in the stands and fade away."

Prior to Spencer's death, Midgard struggled with the song's verses. Afterward, the words flowed.

"It was real simple then. It was the last time he taught me a lesson - that you should live and love and love to live because you never know your fate."

"The Arena" will be on the Twistin' Tarantulas follow-up to "Attack of the Twistin' Tarantulas," its debut CD released in the fall 1996. Midgard is planning to record soon and release a new CD this summer.

Also included on the CD will be "Lighthouse."

"Lighthouse" is about different

people in my past that when I was wandering with no direction, these people were beacons. They were lighthouses when I was wandering too far away from where I should be."

After a pause, Midgard said, "Oh, I have to sing the chorus for you."

"In my darkest moments when I felt so alone/At times when I'd wander so far from home/You lit a candle while I cursed the dark/You're a lighthouse in a foggy world."

Quickly, he sat up and admitted that he got the lighthouse/foggy world connection from the Frank Capra film "Meet John Doe."

"I'm writing songs with a little bit more serious subject matter. The first CD has a lot of those songs that I wrote when I first started playing rockabilly. My feeling about rockabilly at that time was that it had to be all fluff. You don't want to say anything too deep because it's just fun, happy happy, joy joy music."

"There's a couple songs on it that have odd twists to them like 'Snake in the Grass.' I'm sitting there telling this girl she's got to get away from this guy because he's treating her (badly) and by the way, I'm available. That was the only song I was lyrically proud of on that record."

A shuffle, a stroll and Latin and bossa nova beats have become a standard fare for the Twistin' Tarantulas' shows.

"We try to educate. There's a real big dance scene that's evolving. For the longest time, all these so-called dancers all they could dance to was one groove, which is fast swing. All they know how to do is spin each other around and dance really fast. If you don't play fast swing, they wouldn't dance."

Finally, Midgard tossed out a threat.

"I started saying to them, 'Look man. If you're really dancers then you should know how to do a shuffle and a stroll and a mambo and a bossanova. If you're really going to get out here and wear the clothes, and

wear the two-tone shoes and the pin-striped suits, you folks should learn how to dance to all these different steps, not just 'Sing, Sing, Sing.'"

Nevermind the threats, the crowds keep pouring in to clubs like Fifth Avenue Billiards every Sunday night. Midgard knows full well that his band is all about its live performances.

"We're a fun band to watch," Midgard said confidently while crossing his arms. "It's not because we put on some big dog and pony show. We enjoy what we do. That comes across. I love the music that I play. It comes from the bottom of my heart. I try to look nice, keep my hair combed."

"We try to mix it up. It's all in a very similar vein. We play American roots music. We don't do one bag. We have a nice full bag of tricks. We can do swing. We can do blues swing. We can do straight-ahead rock 'n' roll. We can do rockabilly. It all has a common denominator to it. It's always the three of us playing."

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Game from page E1

town-themed restaurants, players are given categories like "Reasons to press STOP on your VCR," "Famous Blond Actors" or "Movies with One Name." You must come up with as many answers as possible while an electronic timer (with a "Mission Impossible"-style suspenseful tune) gives the game tension.

■ Monopoly Special Editions - You've probably lost the shoe and the few \$500 bills that remain are looking pretty dog-eared. Still, even if you do buy the "Deluxe Edition," it won't prevent your opponents from hitting Boardwalk before you do.

And in a twist on the "Your City Here" versions of the game produced in berga nationwide, Monopoly's "Star Wars Classic Trilogy Edition" mixes Chewbacca and Community Chest. Here the power tokens now resemble X-wing fighters as you develop cities and spaceports throughout the galaxy.

■ Channel Surfing - The favorite pastime of couch potatoes worldwide is now a popular (and socially acceptable) party game. Using the remote control on your cable television (not included), you must search for such items as "Tacky Outfits," "Fruit," or "Something That Makes You Gag," all explained for you on game cards. In a clever twist, a "Ring" could be a wedding ring, but it could also be

Sip from page E1

sturgeon (beluga, ossetra or sevruga) and the sea from which they are taken (generally Caspian or Black). Other caviars are described as granular, pressed, flavored or pasteurized. It is most important to purchase fresh caviar. Beluga is the most expensive.

Fish departments of upscale grocery markets in the area regularly carry caviar during the holidays. Ordering caviar by telephone from a reputable importer and having it shipped overnight is a snap. We've used Caviartaria, Park Avenue, New York (800) 4-CAVIAR or for American caviars, Carolyn Collins Caviar Company, Chicago (800) 226-0342.

Become a style maven on New Year's Eve! Imitate James Bond. Go to a New Year's Eve showing of "Tomorrow Never Dies," the latest James Bond film. Watch Pierce Brosnan as Agent 007 drink the 1989 Champagne Bollinger Grande Année \$70. This is the 19th Bond film and the eighth in which Agent 007 drinks his favorite champagne. You'll get thirsty, so have your bottle chilled and imitate the Bond style when you get home! It's also great with caviar.

You just want to stay home? Fine, rent the video of one or all seven other Bond films in which Agent 007 drinks Bollinger

Champagne - "Live and Let Die," "Moonraker," "Octopussy," "A View to a Kill," "The Living Daylights," "License to Kill," "GoldenEye" and "Tomorrow Never Dies."

Bollinger Special Cuvée runs about \$30 if the Grande Année seems a tad pricey. No kidding, it's really good with fresh popcorn!

Prepare a simple, romantic dinner with wine. Chardonnay remains America's most favorite white wine. 1996 Alderbrook Chardonnay \$13 is most appealing.

Or you could order pizza. Drink good but cheap red wine with your pizza. The following are \$10 or less.

1995 Napa Ridge Cabernet Sauvignon; 1995 Georges Dubouche Cabernet Sauvignon; 1995 Lindemann Bin 45 Cabernet Sauvignon; 1996 Walnut Crest Merlot; 1996 Sutter Home Merlot; 1995 Lindemann Bin 40 Merlot; or 1995 Fetzer Eagle Peak Merlot.

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Video from page E1

■ Offbeat Romance - Before you rent "Sleepless in Seattle" again, try a charming little romance called "Before Sunrise," from Richard Linklater, the director of "Dazed and Confused" and "Slacker." Here Ethan Hawke and Julie Delpy play young Bohemians who meet on the train in Europe and decide, on the spot, to spend one memorable night together in Vienna.

■ Better in Black and White - The holidays are almost over, but there's still time to catch "Shop Around the Corner" (1940) a Jimmy Stewart movie directed by Ernst Lubitsch that gives "It's a Wonderful Life" a run for its money. Here the stammering one plays head clerk at a Budapest gift shop who doesn't realize that the co-worker he constantly argues with (Margaret Sullivan) is the same woman he has been wooing through a personals ad.

■ Hong Kong Action - With the Hong Kong influence making itself more and more known through the American success of Jackie Chan, John Woo and hopefully soon Chow Yun Fat (his new movie opens in February), it's time to catch up with the Asian invasion on video. Now that you've seen Woo's "Face/Off," check out his "Hard Boiled," whose high-octane shootout in a big city hospital includes some of the most heart-pounding action ever put on film.

■ New York, New York - If you can't be in New York this holiday, you can see it in its glory in "On the Town" (1949), for my money the most exuberant MGM musical ever made. Here sailor boys Gene Kelly, Frank Sinatra and Jules Munshin spend such a memorable 24 hours in Manhattan (it was filmed on location) that you'll be planning your next trip.

■ Pre-"Scream" Screams - Now that you know both "Scream" practically by heart, check out the offbeat movies Wes Craven made before he became a household name, though preferably those without II or III after the titles. "Last House on the Left," "The Hills Have Eyes," and "Deadly Friend" won't disappoint.

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