

## STREET SCENE

## Gravity Kills likes second effort

Jeff Scheel, singer/guitarist for the St. Louis rock band Gravity Kills, is awfully happy that fans never heard the first version of its sophomore effort "Perversion" (TVT).

"We sort of wrote two records in effect. We wrote this really bad record and then we came back and wrote 'Perversion,'" Scheel said with a laugh.

It's not that TVT Records, Gravity Kills' label, complained about the first attempt, he added.

"We listened to what we were doing and we weren't into it. When we were in Europe we were buying every drum and bass/electronic CD we could get our hands on. Still you can't get over here. ... It kept into our

songwriting," he said.

"We thought about it and said,

"This isn't Gravity Kills. It

sounds like Gravity Kills listening

to a lot of electronica." We

had to kind of take a deep breath

and start over."

For the final version of the album "Perversion," Gravity Kills took an organic approach to recording. Strong parts like "Guilty" from Gravity Kills' stellar self-titled debut seem cluttered compared to the crystal clear "Perversion" due in stores Tuesday, June 9.

"We still used computers like crazy. When I wrote a song I tried to do as many things on the guitar as I could as opposed to saying to Doug [Firley, keyboards and programming], 'Hey

fill these holes up with production!'"

The change is in direct response to Gravity Kills' experience with the band. Prior to recording its debut, Gravity Kills had not performed in front of an audience. Now, after playing up to 300 shows in 14 months, the band has sharpened its image as a touring entity.

"Being a live band became who we were," Scheel explained.

Gravity Kills tried not to concentrate on writing songs that could be reproduced live note for note but "you can't help it to affect what you're doing or infect what you're doing."

"We wanted to be more of what we were live. I think people don't get who we are really until they

see us live anyway."

That is unless you were at the "Nightmare Before Christmas" concert at the Palace of Auburn Hills in December 1996 when the band experienced major sound and production problems.

"If that's the only time people have seen the band, we probably looked very confused. That's not what we are. If someone was at that show and they liked the band, great. If they were disappointed by the band, give the band another shot and come out and see the band again."

Fans — or listeners to the line — will get the chance to see Gravity Kills on Saturday, June 6, at The Shelter below St. Andrew's Hall in Detroit.

The band will be on the road at least through the end of the year. The trek, Scheel said, will surely be inspirational not only musically but personally. The emptiness of road life is traced in the spooky "Always."

"It was one of the last songs that were written before we packed up here and went to New York to mix (the album) and I had that feeling that we were getting ready to leave for a very long time," said Scheel, who is married.

"You feel that loss of being separated from all the things that are comfortable to you and that you love. It's great being on the road but the downside is you lose touch with a lot of things that are very important to you."

"Guilty" tells the story of Gravity Kills' rapid rise into the alternative rock world. Soon after forming in 1995, the band submitted at the last minute a demo of the song "Guilty" to radio station



Debuting album: The rock band Gravity Kills will preview material off its sophomore album "Perversion" Saturday, June 6, at The Shelter below St. Andrew's Hall in Detroit. "Perversion" hits stores Tuesday, June 9.

KPNT for a compilation album. "Guilty" became the station's top-requested song and signed with TVT Records soon thereafter. The band remained on the modern rock chart for six months after which it was taken off due to the chart's six-month maximum.

Although the "Perversion" shines Gravity Kills experiences in an innocuous way so that listeners can relate it to something in their lives, he explained.

"I don't think we made this whiny, 'Oh I hate the record busi-

ness'-kind-of-sophomore record. We wrote about things that obviously were within the context of our lives. But at the same time you could put them in several different contexts and mean something else."

Gravity Kills, Pitchshifter and

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## Director wins Emmy Award

I simply have to start out today's column with a heartfelt congratulations to the series director of *Backstage Pass*, Timmy M. Danielian. Two weeks ago, Timmy won a Michigan Emmy Award in the category of multi-camera studio directing. It was certainly well-deserved!

A series director makes the decisions that create the look of the program that you see on TV. Timmy starts out a typical taping day by heading up a morning meeting with the crew — camera operators, floor directors, audio technicians, etc. He runs down what's going to be done live in the studio, what's "rolling" on tape (usually pre-produced segments from art galleries since usually can't bring the art to the studio), which cameras will cover which shot, etc., generally what to expect that day.

As performers arrive at the Detroit Public Television studio, Timmy has to look at what they do and decide how to convey it to viewers at home. How should it be shot? Where do the performers have to stand to get good camera angles on them? How should it be lit? If it's a theatrical piece, Timmy will collaborate with the play's director to make sure the scene comes off the way it's intended in the play.

Then Timmy asks the performers to rehearse. This gives them a chance to get warmed up and comfortable in our space, but it also gives our crew a chance to practice with camera angles and

shot composition. During rehearsal, Timmy takes careful notes on instrument solos or lines so he can make sure that he gets the right shot when we roll.

Once we're ready to go and everyone's in position for the start of the show, Timmy goes to "the bridge," or "studio control," or "the control bridge." I've heard all these terms bandied about; lord knows which is correct. They all sound vaguely like something you'd hear on "Star Trek." During the taping, all four cameras are getting shots at all times, but only one camera's shot is being recorded at any given time. Who literally calls the shots? You guessed it — Timmy.

Timmy's a Michigan Emmy-winner. Of course, this catalogues only a small portion of what Timmy does, but it's what I see on taping days.

Now to the lineup on this week's show: Detroit lost a legend and with the recent passing of sculptor Marshall M. Fredericks, noted for his public sculptures, Mr. Fredericks' "Spirit of Detroit" stands immortalized downtown, quite appropriate since this visionary unconditionally shared his spirit with Metro Detroit and the world. You can find Fredericks' all over Metro Detroit. The Cranbrook Estates in West Bloomfield Hills are home to several Fredericks' pieces, including the popular piece locals call "the sitting monkey" perched proudly on a cement base in one of their prominent courtyards.

Mr. Fredericks' son, Carl Fredericks, gave *Backstage Pass* segment producer Andrew Erickson an intimate tour of the artist's personal studio in Royal Oak. Carl told Andrew how his

father would come downtown every morning in a suit and tie for breakfast before heading off to the studio to work. Carl recalled how his father would say that you need to feel good enough about yourself to dress up for any occasion."

Upon entering Fredericks' studio, Andrew told me he couldn't almost feel the artist's presence in the musty air. It was like walking into a time machine. I looked up and saw shafts of light streaming down from the high-stained glass windows of the warehouse and immediately transported into another time and era. The warehouse was almost like a shrine; everything was just the way Fredericks left it. There was used and worn sculpting equipment lined up over so precisely on a ladder. You could feel his wonderful creative spirit and soul.

Fredericks continued to work as an artist right up to his death and left us several unfinished projects. One that will be completed is a statue of Lord Byron.

Andrew got an glimpse of this unfinished work. All these old relics and statues line the perimeter of the warehouse in the shadows. Then the unshaded Lord Byron dominating the center of the room. His studio is really a museum of its own."

Also on the big show, we'll hear music from the Farm Dogs, a quartet led by longtime Elton John collaborator Bernie Taupin. And we'll hear from the performer whose angelic voice is melting women the world over, Jai. That's all on *Backstage Pass* tonight at midnight, repeated tomorrow at 7:30 p.m. on Detroit Public Television.

## COMING ATTRACTIONS

Scheduled to open Friday, June 5

**THE TRUMAN SHOW**

Peter Weir's satiric tale about an insurance adjuster whose mundane life is actually a staged TV show. Stars Jim Carrey, Laura Linney, Noah Emmerich, Ed Harris.

**A PERFECT MURDER**

A wealthy and powerful man hires someone to murder his unfaithful wife. Unknown to him, the man he hires is his wife's lover. This sets off a deadly cat-and-mouse game among the three people involved. Stars Michael Douglas, Gwyneth Paltrow.

**Scheduled to open Friday, June 12**

**DUTTY WORK**

Comedy centers around a spiteful loser who runs a business specializing in "dirty work." Stars: Jim Carrey, Chris Farley.

**KNIFE HAD ME**

Comedy about teens graduating from high school and searching for their next move while making a statement about their future and their past.

**Scheduled to open Friday, June 19**

**DOCTOR DOLITTLE**

Action romantic comedy about a gruff

cave pilot and an eccentric New York magazine editor who are stranded on a deserted island. Stars Harrison Ford, Anna Friel, David Schwimmer.

**BYOND SILENCE**

Exclusive at the Maple Theatre. Set in

a small town in Germany, the movie

chronicles the life of a young girl raised

by her parents.

**Scheduled to open Friday, June 19**

**THE X-FILES**

Inspired by the TV series, the movie fol-

lows FBI Special Agents Mulder and

Riggs as they are drawn into a web of

intrigue while investigating the myster-

ious disappearance of a Dallas office building.

**HAVE PLENTY**

Based on a true story, a funny, morbid

love story about a man who wants

nothing out of life, except for a woman

who has everything. Stars Christopher

Scott, Cherie Currie, who also wrote and directed.

**Scheduled to open Friday, June 26**

**DOCTORS**

Exclusive at the Maple Theatre. A

comical romp through the territory of

love and vengeance. Set in 1840s

France and based on Honore de Balzac's

timeless novel. Stars Jessica Lange.

**Scheduled to open Friday, July 10**

**LETHAL WEAPON 4**

Detectives Murtaugh and Riggs are

reunited in a struggle to unravel a com-

plex and deadly mission of revenge.

Stars Mel Gibson.

**MADELINE 2**

In an old house in Paris all covered with

vines, lived 12 little girls in two straight

lives. Those are the opening lines from

the classic books by Ludwig Bemelmans

about the adventures of a tiny school girl.