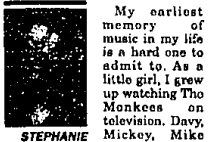


STREET

'Turnaround' and catch this local blues quartet



STEPHANIE A. CASOLA

My earliest memory of music in my life is a hard one to admit to. As a little girl, I grew up watching The Monkees on television. Davy, Mickey, Mike and Peter ran around singing songs and getting into mischief, and I didn't want to miss a minute of it — even if the show was already in re-runs.

When my family moved from our home in northern Indiana to Rochester, Mich., I couldn't have been older than 5. I vividly remember asking my mom if "The Monkees" would be on TV at our new house. That was the one thing I wanted to take with me.

It seems Jeff Franchi shared a similar experience. I didn't ask the guitarist whether his favorite Monkee was Davy Jones, but I did ask him for his earliest musical memory. And watching "The Monkees" was it.

Franchi, guitarist and vocalist for The Turnarounds — a Wayne County-based blues band — grew up surrounded by music. His father played the accordion, and his older brothers played in rock bands who often practiced

in the basement of the family's Farmington home. Franchi remembers setting up his toy drum set in the basement and playing along with the band when he was a little boy. It was a big deal when his brother let him sit behind The Real drum set. He played percussion for years, throughout his time at Farmington High School, but also took up the guitar, which he's now been playing for 20 years.

"There was always music around," he said. "It was almost like I didn't have a choice."

Almost three years ago, Franchi made a choice. He joined four other musicians who shared his passion for blues and formed a band — The Turnarounds. After one year of recording on and off at Circle Sky in Farmington and The Loft in Saline, the band is ready to release its first CD, titled "Are You Ready." In 15 tracks, The Turnarounds combined catchy originals with covers like Stevie Wonder's "Superstitions."

Initially called The Blues Shakers, the band consists of Franchi, guitarist Todd Best, a former Westland resident who attended Livonia Franklin High School, bassist and lead vocalist David Gondoly, a former Canton resident, and drummer Bill Henrikson, a Redford resident and

Redford Union High School graduate. To avoid confusion with other bands in the area, they changed the name to The Turnarounds.

Franchi and Best are co-workers at Joe's Music in Livonia, where they both play guitar. Best, who grew up listening to his brother's AC/DC records, also acquired an affinity for playing music at an early age. He remembered making a cut-out of a guitar in third grade. He and his friends used it at a lip-synch performance of Pink Floyd's "The Wall" at school. Since that early stage experience, Best has grown used to performing. He met Gondoly while studying music at Wayne State University. And Best knew Henrikson from working with him in other bands over the past decade. They all came together to form The Turnarounds.

"We're just a bunch of friends playing music together," said Best, who admits he's always been interested in blues music. "It's really expressive."

Franchi agreed. "One of the reasons (the blues) attracted me is the fact that you can improvise. I don't like playing Top 40, being a human jukebox." He gets bored playing songs the same way. With blues, the music is open to ever-changing interpretation.



ARTISTIC IMPRESSIONS

Bluesmen: David Gondoly, Bill Henrikson, Todd Best and Jeff Franchi are The Turnarounds, a Wayne County-based blues quartet.

Both Franchi and Best agreed the best music derived from life experiences and true emotions. While the band performs regularly and can be seen at places like Lowertown Grill in Plymouth, Franchi said live music in the Metro area isn't as easy to find as it used to be. Best agreed that more bars and clubs rely on DJs for entertainment, which makes it hard to find places to perform.

"If you do Top 40, you get more work," Franchi added. "I'm personally willing to put up with

that limitation." Best said blues music is something everyone can relate to. By adding elements of rock, jazz, pop, and even a little country, the music can draw in listeners who never thought they'd become blues fans. "We really mix it up."

Franchi has a saying for those who question The Turnarounds' style: "If you come in and see us and you don't like the song, stick around. It'll change."

Ypsilanti, Friday-Saturday, Jan. 21-22, The Alibi, Farmington, and will host a CD Release Party for "Are You Ready" 9 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 29, Lowertown Grill, 195 W. Liberty, Plymouth. Call (734) 451-1213. More information and CDs are available at <http://turnarounds.hypermart.net>.

Stephanie Angelyn Casola writes about popular music for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. She can be reached at (734) 953-2130 or e-mail at scasola@oc.honcom.net.

STAY TUNED...

Look out Jenny Jones. The talk show maven has taken a liking to the musical stylings of Kalamazoo's Knee Deep Shag.

The band will return to the "Jenny Jones" show on Tuesday, Jan. 18. The topic is "prove your talent."

CD REVIEW

Methods of Mayhem
Methods of Mayhem
MCA Records

No doubt shocking old fans, former Motley Crue drummer Tommy Lee has assembled hip-hop heavyweights like Snoop Dogg and Lil Kim to help out on the self-titled debut record by his rap-metal band, Methods of Mayhem.

Give Lee credit for that, because the D-O double-G and the Queen Bee add spice and credibility to what could have amounted to a rip off of Limp Bizkit, Korn or any other rap-metal band of the moment.

Lil Kim heats up the track "Get Naked" with her typically trashy talk and, along with guests Fred Durst, George Clinton and Mix Master Mike, helped Lee find his way to alt-rock radio. The earnest delivery and bludgeoning beats make it easy to forgive the disposable lyrics.

Snoop Dogg rescues "Who The Hell Cares," while Kid Rock boosts "New Skin." Surprisingly, Methods of Mayhem manage to capture Roni Size's drum 'n' bass — without his help — on the closing cut, "Spun."

The lesson here is that Methods of Mayhem have released an acceptable record because they brought in the right people and made their rip-off of others' music sound somehow fresh.

Even so, the lyrics here are to be mostly avoided. Tommy Lee fires off like some angry juvenile at news reporters, police officers and others who have, it seems, conspired to make his life miserable.

On "Narcotic," the lyrics reach a new low with "Forget about rehab. Give me more."

More what? Talent?

— BY DARRELL CLEM

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