

## STREET SCENE

## Unbreakable: Nine Inch Nails returns



STEPHANIE A. CASOLA

It's been a while since we've heard from Nine Inch Nails, five long years in fact. So when "The Fragile" was finally released in September 1999, the double-disc set did more than satisfy

fickle, hard-to-please rock fans worldwide, it earned the praise of critics everywhere, and begged for the band to get back on the road.

Fresh off the NIN international tour, keyboardist Charlie Clouser called last week from a hotel in Los Angeles to apprise fans of the coming U.S. tour — which happens to begin today.

Proving that performance ability hasn't rusted since the last stint in support of "The Downward Spiral," Clouser said it feels good to get back on the road. When asked the question on many minds addicted to mod-

ern rock music — "what took so long?" — Clouser said it didn't feel like a very long time. After two years of touring, one year working with Marilyn Manson and the next two plugging away on "The Fragile" while holed up in an ex-funeral home/studio in New Orleans, and five years' seems like a short hiatus.

Time marks a transition for Nine Inch Nails' Trent Reznor. The Ohio native started the group more than a decade ago, writing, playing and recording material almost completely on his own. Showing the world how pain, anguish, rock, technology and brilliant musical layering can collide into soundscapes of raw power, Reznor redefined music in the early 1990s.

Having slipped out of sight, but never out of mind, NIN have broken through boundaries once again. And more than 100 minutes and 17 tracks later, "The Fragile" weaves and ebbs with moody instrumentals, brittle ballads, and primal sonic experiments.

For the first time on an NIN album, there was an opportunity for collaboration. While Reznor and producer/engineer Alan Moulder worked on tracks in the main studio, Clouser and bassist Danny Lohner took copies of songs to their rooms and worked on overdubs, keyboards and textures, later recording the work on computers. "The next time they happened to be working on the song, Trent and Alan would pick through the bits and pieces," said Clouser. "It was the only way we could collaborate without having Trent step aside."

"A lot of songs were very simple musically, but we wanted them to have interesting sound textures. The challenge of the material is truly pulling it off in a live setting. Some of the songs are so thickly layered, no five guys could get up there and play (them)," he said. Performing allows the band freedom to interpret the material on instruments, without the need to dupli-

cate the album.

The result is a more rugged skeleton of a song. "They're not all dressed up with all the intricate bits of candy," described Clouser.

There will be no candy, or bubblegum-pop for that matter, in the vicinity of a Nine Inch Nails show. Ever.

Though the musical climate has migrated toward well-designed pop stars and boy bands, NIN shows no concern. Clouser said it's actually made life easier: "We don't have so much competition anymore. In the early '90s there was Nirvana and Soundgarden and other heavy bands that were really good at what they did, that were innovative and creating something new. Now, no one's doing anything that I haven't heard before."

Don't mistake this effort by NIN as a softening; it isn't. The title came about from Trent's ability to explore a wider spectrum of emotions," said Clouser.



SEAN WATKINS

Finding fragility: Nine Inch Nails consists of Robin Finck, Trent Reznor, Charlie Clouser, Danny Lohner and Jerome Dillon.

"It's not so much hate, pain and rage."

To achieve a sense of fragility, NIN incorporated instruments like cello, ukulele and mandolin, which are difficult to play. The end result was a fractured sound that is unmistakably NIN. "Reznor" needed a challenge, something that was not going to be a sure bet."

See Nine Inch Nails and A Perfect Circle, featuring Maynard James Keenan of Tool, 8 p.m. Friday, April 14, The Palace of Auburn Hills, \$29.50-\$45. (248) 645-6666. 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@ec.nm.com.

## LISTEN UP



Listen: Bill Keith (center) with students Jake Buggea and Jody Gross.

When it comes to keeping an ear out for local sounds, South Lyon resident Bill Keith has his favorites. He works as station manager at Plymouth-Canton's WSPD and music director at Dearborn's WHFR.

Bill Keith's top five local CDs:

1. "Uncut Detroit 2: Live Blues in the Night" (various artists)
2. "Love Big, Use Small" (Don Krist)
3. "Hallowed Boulevard" (Harbinger's Mile)
4. "Corn Daddy" (Corn Daddy)
5. "Two Tracks Left" (Moods for Moderns)

Bill Keith's top five local bands to experience live:

1. Susan Calloway
2. The Bird of Paradise Orchestra
3. Jan Krist and band
4. Harbinger's Mile
5. Madson's Grease

Submit your top five local artist's CDs and favorite local bands to catch live to "Listen Up" 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, Mich. 48150. Include your name, photograph, city of residence and any music-related tid-bits.

## CD REVIEWS

Please submit newly released local CDs for review to Stephanie Angelyn Casola, 36251 Schoolcraft Road, Livonia, MI 48150. Reviews run on the second Thursday of every month, as space permits.

**"Good Disguise"**  
Knee Deep Shag  
Hi-to records

Knee Deep Shag has done it again, and it comes as no surprise. With "The Latest," greatest release "Good Disguise," the band strips away some of their former funk to make way for more good, clean rock and roll.

Despite line-up changes — bassist Troy Stansberry left to spend more time with his family and made way for Mike Furrat — the band sounds as solid as ever. It's about time they released gems like "3 P.M." and "Faded and Live" for mass consumption. You can't put a live show on repeat. The album finally gives keyboardist Rob Cookman his due, allowing this tight group to shine as one solid structure.

The title track comes off as a throwback to The Beatles with its vintage melodies. Vocalist Matt Gross croons with abandon on "Early Evening Moon" and sings sweetly on "By A Thread." That signature sound is ably held together by guitarist Phil Barry and drummer Jeff Moehle, whose parents reside in Troy. Press play and prepare to get lost in the original sounds of this rising rock quintet.

—STEPHANIE ANGELYN CASOLA

**"Naked Self"**

The The  
Nothing Records

Delving into The The's "Naked Self" is not unlike entering a dark, back alley, where distant sirens expose peril and constant vigilance is demanded from any wary intruder.

The British band's first release in seven years opens with "Boll-Point," a bleak urban tale whose moaning guitars churn and build in strength and intensity.

Since "Soul Mining," the band's 1993 American debut, Matt Johnson continues to enlarge his repertoire of visceral lyrics and haunted, twisted tales.

But with "Naked Self" there is a radical departure from the aggressive, mixed instrumentation of "Mind Bomb" and landmark album "Infected."

No synthesizers, no pounding organs, just Johnson and Eric Schermerhorn on guitar, Spencer Campbell on bass and Earl Harvin on drums.

Johnson continues to break new ground, this time using guitars to paint evocative horizons.

"SoulCatcher" finds Johnson in deep reflection while "Global-eyes" and "Swine Fever" are biting social commentaries — something for which he's a master.

See The The 8 p.m. Tuesday, May 2, Clutch Cargo, Pontiac. \$22-\$25. (248) 645-6666.

—ALICE REIKIN

## "RELENTLESSLY FUNNY BONE CRUNCHING COMEDY"



AMC ABBEY	AMC BELL AIR 10
AMC FORUM 30	AMC LAUREL PARK
AMC SOUTHWEST	BEACON EAST
MJR SOUTHWEST 20	NOVI TOWN CTR. 8
RENAISSANCE	SHOWCASE
SHOWCASE 4.22	SHOWCASE 4.22
STAR GREAT LAKES CROSSING	STAR ROCHESTER
STAR TAYLOR	STAR SOUTHWEST
	STAR WEST RIVER

## "FUNNY, SEXY AND LOADED WITH LAUGHS!"

## "MAY BE THE BEST DATE MOVIE EVER!"



Ben Stiller, Jenna Elfman, Edward Norton

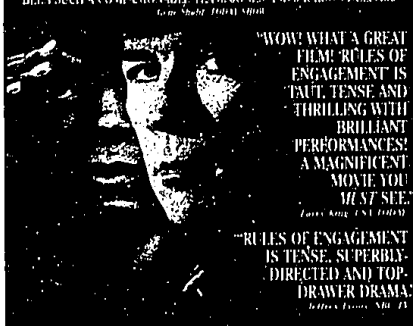
## Keeping the Faith

STARTS FRIDAY, APRIL 14

AMC ABBEY 8	AMC LASTLAND	AMC FORUM 30
AMC LAUREL PARK	AMC LIVONIA 20	BIRMINGHAM 8
CANTON 6	MJR SOUTHWEST 20	NOVI TOWN CTR. 8
SHOWCASE 4.22	SHOWCASE 4.22	SHOWCASE 4.22
STAR GREAT LAKES CROSSING	STAR ROCHESTER	STAR SOUTHWEST
STAR TAYLOR	STAR WEST RIVER	

## "A FORCEFUL, POWERFUL, THOROUGHLY CONVINCING FILM... WITH ITS BRAINS AND ACTION, 'RULES OF ENGAGEMENT' HAS A RING OF TRUTH AND CONVICTION."

NOT SINCE NEWMAN AND REDFORD OR GIBSON AND GLOVER HAS THERE BEEN SUCH A COMPANIONABLE TEAM. JONES AND JACKSON DELIVER.



## RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

A HERO SHOULD NEVER HAVE TO STAND ALONE

AMC ABBEY 8	AMC LASTLAND	AMC FORUM 30
AMC LAUREL PARK	AMC LIVONIA 20	BIRMINGHAM 8
CANTON 6	MJR SOUTHWEST 20	NOVI TOWN CTR. 8
SHOWCASE 4.22	SHOWCASE 4.22	SHOWCASE 4.22
STAR GREAT LAKES CROSSING	STAR ROCHESTER	STAR SOUTHWEST
STAR TAYLOR	STAR WEST RIVER	

## "BRILLIANT! A MUST-SEE!"

Sandra Bullock in the best performance of her career.

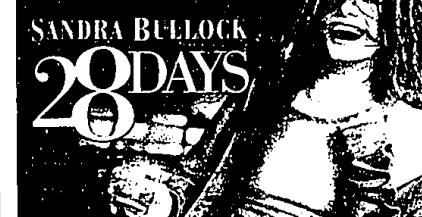
Bill Finken, NBC TV

"LOTS OF LAUGHS. Sharp enough to see the difference, compassionate enough to rare and deft enough to combine humor and heartbreak in just the right doses."

Paula Travers, ROLLING STONE

"One of this decade's strongest comedies."

William Hollendorn, THE ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY



## 28 DAYS

STARTS FRIDAY, APRIL 14

AMC ABBEY 8	AMC LASTLAND	AMC FORUM 30
AMC LAUREL PARK	AMC LIVONIA 20	BIRMINGHAM 8
CANTON 6	MJR SOUTHWEST 20	NOVI TOWN CTR. 8
SHOWCASE 4.22	SHOWCASE 4.22	SHOWCASE 4.22
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STAR TAYLOR	STAR WEST RIVER	