

Detroit Music Awards revisited



STEPHANIE A. CASOLA

Though the Detroit Music Awards have nearly faded from mind, I thought we could all use a recap, a little something for those who didn't attend, those hitting before they performed, and those who just weren't paying attention. Besides, like many, it was my first time at the event. So music fans, here goes:

Pulling a no-show

The story at the preshow was a no-show. This year it was almost fashionable to be too late or not show up at all to receive one of the (gulp) 63 awards given out at the event prior to the 2000 Detroit Music Awards. While the State Bar was packed back to front, only a few of the winners were present to accept their statuettes. Perhaps it was a simple

matter, like parking. With a ball game across the avenue at Comerica Park (where Kid Rock tossed out the first ball) and the entire music community converging on the State Theatre, the minimal parking spots went fast and cost more than ever before. If the winners weren't stuck looking for a spot to park in the Motor City, maybe they just didn't know about the preshow. Whatever the case, presenters Peter Shorn and The Impaler cracked endless jokes about the abundance of statuettes and lack of winners present. There's always next year.

DMA fashion

The awards show drew musicians from all genres, and people whose fashion sense ran the gamut from dingy jeans to tailored suits, and even a few Cinderellas searching for the ball. The common threads included the obviously-symbolic cowboy hats worn mostly on stunning blondes in honor of the First Cowboy of Detroit, host Kid

Rock. Then there was an abundance of low-cut dresses, outlined in faux fur and feathers, tight silver arm bands and some daringly short skirts. Oh, I almost forgot about sequined halter tops, imagine that. With all the shimmer and glitter around, the room lit up like fireworks in July. But I don't think anyone could feel out of place, not even naked.

Not so secure

Security at the awards seemed to be lacking something called organization. I can't recall how many times security personnel asked me where I should be. Some even changed their minds half-way through the show. I wasn't wearing a sticker on my gold dress for nothing. Despite the kinks, it was a fabulous event.

'Live'ning it up

The performers at the DMA kept the event rolling along even as it ran late into the night. Those Howling Diablos - fronted



The winning groove: The Brothers Groove's Chris Codish wins Outstanding Blues Songwriter at the preshow.

by twice-charmed DMA winning vocalist and songwriter Tino - filled in with funky spots as house band. The Diablos managed to snag the Outstanding Local Funk Group award as well. Livonia native, Paradime, got the crowd out of their seats and hooked onto a hip hop vibe. The Contours catered to the crowd with meticulously timed move-



Backstage: Paradime gets support from the hottest Chili Pepper around, Chad Smith, 10 minutes before showtime.

ments in sync, both musically and rhythmically, and The Frost got everyone talking. Robert Bradley's Blackwater Surprise stole the stage last. While the list of performers, winners, happenings and gossip is much too long to mention, The Detroit Music Awards certainly left its mark. If only there were more opportunities for local

musicians to mingle, perform and support one another. I can't wait to see how the sponsors top this one next spring. Stephanie Angelyn Casola writes about popular music for the Observer & Eccentric newspaper. She can be reached at (734) 953-2130 or by e-mail at scasola@ec.homecomm.net.

Reverend Horton Heat sizzles with new release, nationwide tour

BY STEPHANIE ANGELYN CASOLA
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Rockabilly can be a religious experience. No one knows that better than the reverend himself, Reverend Horton Heat. To his friends and his dog, Chuck, the Rev is known simply as Jim Heath, a Texas native with a knack for stirring up rock, punk, swamp, surf, swing and country into a musical genre he alone can rightly preach to the masses. Backing him up at the pulpit are bassist Jimbo Wallace and drummer Scott Churilla. The Reverend Horton Heat released their seventh album, *Spend a Night in the Box*, to prove that rockabilly is alive, well and hotter than ever. Tearing through the Bible Belt and beyond, the Rev's been touring since late January.

Talking to the guitar-alinging rock 'n' roll rabble-rouser while at his Las Vegas hotel April 12, the Observer Eccentric got a healthy dose of the Reverend's dogma. *Spend a Night in the Box* is a throwback to Reverend Horton Heat's earlier rockabilly rhythms with enough references to women, booze and bad relationships to make listeners shiver. A good-time cocktail of wailing tracks, the album is the band's first for Time Bomb Recordings. "I'm always trying to do something different; that gets me in trouble, I think," he laughed. "On this particular one, we kinda backpedaled a little."

With some songs written in the '80s, *Spend a Night in the Box* revisits a freedom that was long stifled by previous record companies. "It's a little bit reori-

ent than the last album," said Heath. "Our label Time Bomb didn't really care." Whenever he strayed from the formula under previous record contracts, the label wouldn't make the final cut. "The real energy shapes the power and flavor of the CD, see what I'm saying? A lot of rockabilly got ignored by the last label." The album isn't filled with a lot of flash, just straight-up Reverend. "We kinda wanted a stripped down sound."

The new deal encourages Heath to write and produce a lot of material, which was good

news for a guy who never slows down. "It's the first time in my career we've been a priority." With renewed spirit, The Rev hooked up with Paul Leary as producer. "It's good to have an outside ear," said Heath. "After you work on something so many times you start to lose your perspective of things. It's hard to tell if you're doing everything in time and in pitch."

As for the songs, all 14 were written by Heath. The title track came from the band's obsession with the film *Cool Hand Luke*. It's the kind of movie they have watched over and over again

while on tour. It turned into a joke - if anything goes wrong, spend a night in the box. And there's another reason for the song title: "We're rolling around in a big box, it's kinda like," he said of the tour bus. Heath said all the songs have gotten a good response live, especially *Big D Boogie Woogie*, *Sleeper Car Driver*, and *Sue Jack Daniels*.

He gets inspiration for writing music by just driving around, he said. "I purposely don't have a radio. I drive around and sing. I've gotten into a lot of crashes." Catch the big box when The Reverend Horton Heat and guest Hank Williams III roll into the Motor City, 8 p.m. Monday, May 1, St. Andrews Hall, Detroit. All ages. \$18. Call (248) 645-6666.

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