

Strokes and Stripes criss-cross from the city to suburbia

Tonight marks the first of two highly-anticipated Detroit-area performances featuring our own rock darlings, The White Stripes, and New York City's five-man counter-part, The Strokes.



Street Scene

Stephanie Casola

From Detroit's Chene Park to Pontiac's Clutch Cargo, that stripped-down sound will draw quite an audience. Though the pairing seems like common sense, I was curious to know how it came about. So Strokes drummer Fabrizio Moretti filled me in.

"They saw us play a long time ago in Brighton, England," said Moretti. "And we sort of befriended each other."

The Strokes returned the favor last spring when The White Stripes performed a short residency - four nights - at New York's Bowery Ballroom.

"We went to see them a bunch of times," Moretti said. "We were talking about how we should play some shows together. From our perspective, they're a really good band."

So they devised a plan - two shows here in The White Stripes hometown and two New York City shows, all before heading to Britain for festival stages. The bands will switch off headlining slots.

The Strokes didn't set out to conquer the rock world as we know it. They didn't even have a plan of attack. According to Moretti, "It wasn't like anything set. We'd just been friends for a long time. We learned our instruments together, ever

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since we were young. We wrote a lot of stuff we threw away." Singer Julian Casablancas, guitarists Nick Valensi and Albert Hammond Jr., bassist Nikolai Fraiture and drummer Fab Moretti have since graced the cover of countless music magazines. Now that garage rock has emerged as the official next-big-thing in music - with punk-influenced bands like The Hives, Mooney Suzuki, The Von Bondies earning international attention - Moretti contemplates the fate of The Strokes.

As far as he can see, the band came out at a rather stale time in pop music.

His best analogy goes something like this: "You're in this ocean of weird music and you get certain things floating around - you just categorize them together because they're not dissolving in the water."

In essence, it's what any musician strives for - to find something new, something that stands out in a virtual sea of popular music - and make it your own.

Fans grasped tightly to *Last Nite*, the first single, and *The Strokes RCA* debut. *This It*. That mix of straight, fast rhythm and catchy melody that seemed a throwback to the very core of rock 'n' roll was ushered onto radio by listeners who grew weary of bands like Creed and its angry clones.

Moretti was as surprised as anyone to hear The Strokes on the air. "We were all tired and ready to go home and *Last Nite*

came on the radio," he recalled, with what sounds like an audible smile. "It still is strange - when you're watching MTV and you see yourself on television."

The band hasn't started working on a new record just yet - what with the non-stop touring, constant interviews and mega-stardom.

"We've gone to work in the studio on new songs," said Moretti. "It's not so easy to get all five boys in the same room these days. When we do get in the studio, it's just like old times."

"It's not like we've become jaded or anything like that."

When we first started we were like 'Oh God, I hope people give a s*** about this.' Now people have sort of picked up the album and liked it. It would be bad if we started being concerned about our place. We don't let it get to our heads. We're still just as we've always been. We just hope it doesn't become stale."

The White Stripes and The Strokes perform 7 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 8, at Clutch Cargo, E. Main in Pontiac; call (248) 333-2362 for the latest ticket information. Lucky ticket-holders can see The White Stripes and The Strokes 7:30 p.m. Friday, Aug. 9, at Chene Park, 2600 Alwater Street, downtown Detroit. The show is sold out.

Stephanie Angelyn Casola writes a popular music column for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. She can be reached at scasola@oehomecomm.net.



The Strokes - Julian Casablancas (left to right), Nikolai Fraiture, Albert Hammond Jr., Fab Moretti (sitting) and Nick Valensi - make a triumphant return to the Detroit area tonight, supporting The White Stripes.

Toothy alien, Stitch stars in video game

BY WILLIAM SCHIFFMANN
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

There's something to be said for a game where your finger is almost constantly on the trigger.

Unfortunately, when you can't see what you're shooting at, some of the air comes hissing out of the balloon.

That's the problem with *Stitch Experiment 626*, from High Voltage Software and Sony Interactive for the PlayStation 2.

The game is a sort of prequel to *Lilo & Stitch*, the popular four hands, special Disney animated film now in theaters. In the movie, a multi-armed, shark-toothed creature

named *Stitch* lands on Earth and moves in with a family whose tolerance for exotic pets is a lot greater than mine.

In the game, however, *Stitch* is fresh from the genetic stew brewed up by an eccentric scientist named Jumba (apparently he had eccentric parents, too).

Jumba sends *Stitch* off on a mission to collect DNA for the scientist's unconventional experiments.

To do this, *Stitch* must wade through endless cartoon monsters, collecting guns (one for each of his four hands), special weapons like the Freeze Ray and the aptly named Big Gun, along with DNA and scores of secrets.

Stitch is a classic platform game, and he's good at it. Perspective throughout the game is excellent, so you rarely misjudge a jump because it's farther or closer than it looks.

That is, of course, when you can see it at all.

In common with what seems like every other game on the market, the camera work in *Stitch* is frequently atrocious. Making up for the messy camera work are the excellent graphics, and the variety of levels.

Graphics get an "A." Sound gets a "C." Control gets a "C." *Stitch Experiment 626* gets a "C."



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