

STREET SOUNDS

So This Is East Lansing — various artists

SO THIS IS EAST LANSING
"So This Is East Lansing" shows that there's viable talent up there besides the standard college rock bar fare. Names often associated with East Lansing music scene — major label candidates the Verve Pipe, the Hannibals, Groovespoon and comedian/acoustic musician Wally Pleasant — contributed tracks to the 14-song CD.

Putting those four aside, there's other up and coming acts that go largely ignored who are featured on the disc. Groovemasters Heckyl & Jive and Cuttin' Heads bring their funky sound to the release along with the rock of Gonzo Dog, dt's, the Oxymorons, Bad Oskar, Ymi and Flushbutton. The Huntunes' acoustic "Get Me Out of New York" will have your head bobbing within the first few notes.

"So This Is East Lansing" was produced by Keri Valmassi and Wendy Aaron, both former DJs at WDBM, Michigan State University's radio station, who thought that the area's music went unappreciated.

The CD is sponsored by Michigan Wherehouse Records, Maximum Headroom, In Flight, Capital Times, Harvest Productions and Music Manor. It's available at Off the Record, Repeat the Beat and Play It Again, all located in Royal Oak, and Ann Arbor's Wherehouse Records, Schoolkids Records and Discount Records.

— Christina Fuoco

Acoustic Highway — Craig Chaquico



Life after glory can be tough in the darkness for many performers, but Jefferson Starship's former lead guitarist Craig Chaquico proves that he possibly wasted his time in the spotlight. With his first solo instrumental debut "Acoustic Highway," Chaquico shows he is more musically diverse than one might have guessed.

Released on the Higher Octave Music label, which is known for its independently distributed New Age material, "Acoustic Highway," with its free-spirited, orchestrated acoustic guitar-based material is much more mature than its style's stigma.

The nine-track release with its mix of electric guitar, bass and keyboards, swings from romantic melodies to easy flowing pieces.

Even with a solid sound, Chaquico is able to poke fun at his musical counterparts by constructing introductions resembling other's work such as "In Your Eyes," from Peter Gabriel, "Stairway to Heaven," by Led Zeppelin, and Peter, Paul and Mary's "Leaving on a Jet Plane," while creatively pulling the song's energy into an entirely new structure.

"Acoustic Highway" maybe composed by a famous rock star and is produced by a label which specializes in New Age works, but this release strives a clearer plateau then it maybe allowed.

— Kyle Green

"Pop Smear" — The Verve Pipe



"Pop Smear," the Verve Pipe's second album, begins with a chaotic clashing of cymbals, guitars, drums and violins but swoops into the year's best release by an unsigned Michigan band.

The 12-song album concentrates on the band's acoustic side but is not without rock. The hook-laden "Wanna Be" questions rock stars' intentions ("Tell us of your abuse, we stand so amused and what you said about the audience, simple lyrics will do 'cause they don't have a clue").

The rappy "Senator Speak" lashes out at politicians' double speak by blending an endless stream of tongue-in-cheek lyrics with their trademark harmonies ("Row, row, row your boat is sinking, the cold war of the world beat around the Bush campaign in the ask yourself absorbing (junior) the economy").

Listening to "Pop Smear" in pieces will make it seem almost unfocused. The first song "Pretty For You" begins with the aforementioned clattering, blends in acoustic rock and ends with an almost lounge jazz fade. It continues by jumping from ballads to rock songs.

The lullaby-like "Sleepy Town" is an interesting diversion on the record. If there are any leaks on this pipe, it's the horn lines throughout the release that could be toned down a bit but the cello, viola and violins add a new dimension to The Verve Pipe. The broken down harmonies in

See PIPE, 8A

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Street Scene next week:

■ Christina Fuoco's report on three local bands — Red C, Verve Pipe and Something Wild — who recently won big.

■ John Monaghan's look at the latest in alternative movies.

Fans: Groove is in the Spoon

■ With its debut release "Psychic Gyration" Groove Spoon hopes to make a few waves of its own. The nine-member band boasts two horn players, a percussionist and two female back-up singers making them one of the area's biggest draws.

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO
STAFF WRITER

 Those planning to go to Groove Spoon's show at Lili's on Friday should dress light. The pride of East Lansing is known for its hot shows — literally.

"We play better when it's extremely hot — temperature wise — and it's all sweaty," said singer Riley Padgett. "At the Small Planet (in East Lansing) I sneak over to the thermostat and turn it up to 72, 75."

Things have heated up for Groove Spoon now that they've released their debut CD "Psychic Gyration." For example, as a testament to their funk roots, Groove Spoon is tentatively slated to open for former Parliament-Funkadelic bassist and songwriter Bootsy Collins next month in Chicago. They were also nominated for numerous Detroit Music Awards this year and featured on the independent compilation "So This Is East Lansing!"

The release of "Psychic Gyration" was held up for months as the band negotiated with a well-known funk record label. On the advice of their lawyers, the frustrated Groove Spoon decided to release the 22-song CD on its own.

"We hired lawyers, these big entertainment lawyers, and . . . there were four major problems (with the contract); (The record company) didn't want us on a few things," said bassist/guitarist Eric Signs.

"In a one-hour meeting, he crushed all our little dreams," Padgett added.

Not all of them, however. The band is actively promoting the CD by assigning a different job to each member. Some club owners say the band doesn't need to do that much work.

Part of the attraction is the band's nine-member roster including two female singers (one singer is Cathy McDermott of Troy), two horn players and an additional percussionist. They're an eyeful to watch on stage with McDermott and Delaney Hogan swaying back and



forth and brightly clad horn players Norm Vanaman and Chuck Rourke running around with Signs following them.

Guitarist Mike Pale runs circles around his bandmates while Mark Jagmin and Allen Quail bang on the

STREET BEATS

skins. Padgett taps his foot, sometimes straps on bass, and sings — emanating a quiet kind of cool.

Groove Spoon's groovy sound — and look — is addictive, accomplishing Signs' original vision.

"The bands I was seeing at the time, like Joe Cocker, had horn sections, girl back-up singers. I thought, 'Why can't we do that?' We did it and all these bands started adding horn sections," Signs said modestly.

The band completes its whole "experience" by arriving for shows in a yellow school bus designed like a tour bus inside. Wooden bunks separated by curtains and cushioned benches line the inside of the bus. They'll soon debut their new bus — a purple one with Groove Spoon painted on the side of it.

Since its inception, the band has

become almost as well known for its clothes as it is for its music. Groove Spoon's closet is filled with '70s-type garb such as pants modeled after the American flag, fur vests and yellow suits. Within the last year, they've hired their own clothing designer, Alexandria Sandow.

Sometimes deciding the evening's wardrobe turns into an inter-band battle.

"We sometimes compete to see who can look the wackiest," Padgett said.

Some would argue that it's Groove Spoon's fans who are the wackiest. They show up at gigs, waving white plastic spoons at Padgett as a sign of their loyalty.

"It's definitely cool. In every town, there's a handful of people like that," Padgett said.

Signs added that he's surprised at how successful his band has been.

"We've got this little small thing starting to evolve; I'm surprised we're going over," he said. "A few years ago in Michigan alone, an original band wouldn't go over. The original music scene is really picked up and people are giving us a favorable response. If you're a cover band, the respect is less than if

you're an original band."

Groove Spoon learned first hand of its popularity when it shaved its name down to Spoon earlier this year. Six months later they were forced to change it back "because of the hostility from our following," Padgett said.

The band switched its name because of the number of bands adopting the "groovy" frame of mind.

"One of our reasons is that there were so many bands with the name Groove."

Ironically, another of the reasons why they switched back to Groove Spoon was because there was a band named Spoon in California.

Groove Spoon performs at Lili's, 2190 Jacob (at Jos. Campau), Hamtramck on Friday, Dec. 10. Call 875-6555 for information. The group will also play Friday, Dec. 31, at the Majestic, 4140 Woodward, Detroit, with Cuttin' Heads and Hot Footin' Puddin' Pie. For information, call 833-9700. "Psychic Gyration" is available at Flipside Records in Clawson, Repeat The Beat, Off the Record and Play It Again Records in Royal Oak and Sam's Jams in Ferndale.

Steve Nardella: Still singing the blues

An original:
Steve Nardella was originally signed by Blind Pig Records, then of Ann Arbor, in 1977.



BY MARK GALLO
SPECIAL WRITER

When Steve Nardella and the Silvertones were signed by Blind Pig Records, then of Ann Arbor, in 1977, the phrase "roots rock" had yet to be coined. With the release of his brand spankin' new "Daddy Rollin' Stone," and guitarist George Bedard's "Upside!" both on Ann Arbor's Schoolkids label, the former co-leaders of that locally legendary band have come full circle. For Nardella, the player pegged most likely to succeed these past two decades, it signals a sometimes old story that still rings true.

"I'm trying to get by," he said recently by phone from his Ypsilanti home. "I hang in there. I keep doing it."

Sometimes you can just feel the sigh in a person's voice, feel the weariness. Certainly, Steve Nardella has the sort of musical track record that any sane musician would be proud of. It's just that he knows how good he is,

and you know that he feels he's still working his tail off for far too little recognition, even locally. He's just off his first foreign tour, opening throughout Scandinavia for Eddie Burns, and there's the superb new disc (his first since 1979's "It's All Rock & Roll," also on Blind Pig, the label that grew out of the popular Ann Arbor pub) to consider. The label has since moved to San Francisco and became one of the most respected in the blues world. Steve Nardella clearly should have made the transition to the big leagues along with them. He's been doing this roots thing, after all, before just about anyone out there and better than most.

A triple threat vocalist/guitarist/harmonica player, he's gotten even more impressive since 1978. Back then, it was his considerable harmonica skills (check out his "Detroit Shuffle" of his version of Eddie Boyd's "Reap What You Sow" off the

See NARDELLA, 7A

IN CONCERT

Monday, Dec. 6
THE JARBU SHAMIR QUARTET
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. (jazz)
832-2355

TUESDAY, Dec. 7
CURVE
With Engines of Aggression at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. (swirly alternative rock)
961-MELT

VERTIGO
Blind Pig, 206-208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. (alternative rock)
996-8555

CORNER DOGS
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. (blues)
832-2355

WATERBOY'S "DRIVING THE COLD AWAY — A Torrada Christmas"
The Ark, 637½ S. Main St., Ann Arbor. (song)
761-1451

Wednesday, Dec. 8
ALEJANDRO ESCOBEDO
The Ark, 637½ S. Main St., Ann Arbor. (acoustic)
761-1451

COUCH
With Zug Island Quartet and Demolition Dollrode at Blind Pig, 206-208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. (alternative rock)
996-8555

Thursday, Dec. 9
CARLISI SLASS
3-D, 1815 N. Main St., Royal Oak. (gothic alternative rock)

TODD ENDRICK
State Theatre, 2115 Woodward, Detroit. (interactive rock)
981-5451

I MOTHER EARTH
St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. (cancelled)
961-MELT

DON'T LOOK HOW JUG BAND
With Maurice's Puppet Show at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. (folk)
832-2355

SECOND OPINION
The Ark, 637½ S. Main St., Ann Arbor. (acoustic)
761-1451

ALEJANDRO ESCOBEDO
With Mary McGuire at Griff's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw St., Pontiac. (Texas acoustic rock)
834-9292

BLACK HALL
With Milk and Cheese at Blind Pig, 206-208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. (alternative rock)
996-8555

SPRAL DANCE
CD release party for "Darkness, Light and Everything" at Industry, 15 S. Saginaw, Pontiac. (alternative rock)
334-1999

Friday, Dec. 10
BOYS OF THE LOUD
The Ark, 637½ S. Main St., Ann Arbor. (acoustic)
761-1451

POOR NARDO
Deebe's, 29200 Hoover, Warren. (acoustic)
558-3290

GROOVE SPOON
Lili's, 2190 Jacob, Hamtramck. (funky alternative rock)
875-6555

See IN CONCERT, 8A

BY JOHN MONAGHAN
SPECIAL WRITER

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