

The snow didn't stop Gehret's music

Ed Paukstis
Capital Times Reporter

Snow began to cover the ground and stick to the roadways early in the morning on Wednesday, March 3rd but he made the trip PSH anyway.

People shuffled by in a semi-panic trying to complete their business as quickly as possible but he remained relaxed filling the room with warm and vibrant jazz lines that resonated throughout the small lounge area in the Olmsted building. This was no ordinary performance! It was Ken Gehret, a featured artist in the lunch time concerts sponsored by SGA, playing solo jazz guitar in his unique and slightly unorthodox style.

Gehret's performance was originally scheduled to take place in the Gallery Lounge but instead was intimately delivered from the vestibule lobby in the Olmsted building which easily transformed into a nightclub scene minus the

dark lighting, smoke and drink specials.

Gehret's natural ability to improvise sophisticated ideas within the framework of conventional jazz is just one aspect of his impeccable style. But perhaps the greatest achievement is Gehret's perseverance and determination to play "the gig".

Gehret positioned himself slightly in front of the lounge area and seemed to be totally pleased with the impromptu performance setting. He introduced each song with some background information and honored requests from the audience.

"I gave up planning things years ago," Gehret said. "I try to be as extemporaneous as possible

"The weather was getting pretty ugly on the way up but I really didn't mind traveling," Gehret said. "because it seems to work better," he said.

The small turnout responded with enthusiasm as Gehret launched into traditional jazz standards like "Blue and Green".

Gehret's approach to the guitar is a finger style technique that blends together many facets of classical and jazz. He executes brushed harmonics that sound lush and peaceful which lay the foundation for a perfect bridge between his more "bluesy" licks.

Gehret's tone embodies a deep bass timbre that is reminiscent of a piano with pedal effects and volume swells. His walking bass lines are a result of spider-like finger combinations that prowl the length of the guitar's neck with confidence.

All the while, Gehret somehow keeps the bottom or bass section of the song in a constant motion which lets the song breathe.

Gehret plays a 10 string guitar which is tuned somewhat like a piano. The second string is middle "C", the 1st string is an "A" above middle "C" and the bottom strings are tuned standard.

The tuning is all Gehret's own creation and he is able to create gorgeous melodies that work from unusual chord sequences.

The base of the guitar has an unusual black covering which Gehret said acts like a dampening device. Gehret parallels the covering to a "bathing suit".

The song "Little Snowshower" is an original Gehret composition. The guitar stylings that Gehret creates are reminiscent of the sound that Robby Krieger achieved in the Doors song "The End" except Gehret extends the sound a bit further into the mid-eastern or "Arabic" tradition. Throughout the song, he interjects sonic double

stops and executes lightning fast runs up the neck that resolve into a stream of tender harmonies.

Gehret explains that he was inspired to write the song while stranded in a snow storm.

"I guess you can call it the Ken Gehret Special," Gehret said jokingly. "For years I have tried to find the sound that I wanted without getting all the feedback that occurs when an acoustic guitar is amplified.

Gehret said that his device is the solution to increasing the number of overtones that the instrument is able to produce.

"I can now play as loud as I like and still have the response of a classical guitar," he said.

Gehret said that he enjoys playing live and that he frequents many different types of venue including:

coffee houses, bars, night clubs, festivals and other universities.

A self proclaimed studio musician, he also has worked on other musicians recordings and has scored and produced soundtracks for several documentaries.

One such film is entitled, "A Time For Tears" which is based in Reading, PA.

"That one was a real tear jerker type of film," recalls Gehret. "It is relatively obscure," he said.

Gehret also is a member of the bluegrass band "Sweetwater Reunion". In this band he is able to flex yet another part of his musical anatomy by playing the fiddle.

"I enjoy fooling around with different instruments but my main ones are guitar and fiddle," Gehret said.

Travler saves souls and Loser wins

Ed Paukstis
Capital Times Reviewer

Luna
Bewitched
Elektra

Luna is a four man band with a long list of musical credentials. They opened up shows for the revitalized Velvet Underground on their recent tour. Ex-Velvet, Sterling Morrison appears on two tracks of Luna's new album—"Friendly Advice" and "Great Jones Street". Lead vocalist, Dean Wareham's voice is reminiscent of vintage Lou Reed. Therefore the comparison is justified. Right? Well, it seems that Luna has a great deal of musical integrity, but often lacks the intensity of the legendary Velvet's. There is a common bond of simplicity that combines with great guitar, vocal harmonies and haunting melodies to quench the thirst of a Velvet fan, but Luna is missing the edge and unpolished sound that the Underground achieved on great songs like "Lonesome Cowboy Bill" and "Sweet Jane".

Sterling Morrison's appearance on the album is authentic and he seems to be right at home as he does some incredibly cool guitar work. The whole situation is very nostalgic, but where does that leave the rest of the recording? Somewhere between a masterpiece and mediocrity.

"Into the Fold" is probably the best song on this album. The clean guitar strumming is evidence that guitarist Sean Eden studied his Velvet recordings and mastered Lou Reed's guitar style, while emphasizing the

"less is more" guitar solo. The rest of the band has polished their sound to resemble the mathematical sound but oddly enough, the effort only half shines. The tarnishing effects are beyond the remote comparisons of what the Velvet's actually sounded like or how they produced songs. It might leave you wondering if Luna really knows the difference between themselves and their idols although people do say that imitation is the greatest form of flattery. But not everyone subscribes to that notion and, after all, according to Andy Warhol, "We are all entitled to our 15 minutes of fame!"

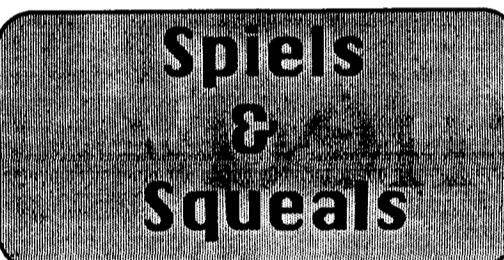
BLUES TRAVELER
SAVE HIS SOUL
A&M Recording Artist

New York based band, Blues Traveler has created yet another masterpiece with "Save his Soul". The album serves as a celebration of sorts for the band members d fans since lead vocalist and harmonica player John Popper's recovery from a near fatal car accident that confined him to a wheel chair for a number of months and throughout most of the supporting tour. But these guys are not about to call it quits! "Save His Soul" is probably the strongest recording since the debut album.

John Popper's voice sounds wonderfully soulful and his harmonica wails throughout the album like it never did before! Popper shines on cuts like "Believe Me" and "Love and Greed". He has slightly altered his approach to the "harp" and refrains from the extended solos that brought the Garcia comparisons. Popper still retains a cosmic energy but juxtaposes it with great blues

licks that would make Muddy Waters, Howlin Wolf and Willie Dixon proud.

The band is playing tighter than ever and upholds the blues meets reggae sound that older cuts like "Gina" introduced and newer songs like "Go Outside and Drive" and "Trina Magna" now represent. They also introduce a few harder edge tunes that are a combination of James Brown "funkadelic" meets R&B meets retro Bob Marley.



"Save His Soul" is a swirling mass of bass and drums with machine gun guitar reminiscent to some vintage Hendrix but without the obvious replication of his style or licks. There is a definite mood or feeling throughout this recording and new songs like "Bullshitters Lament" and "Fledgling" are definitely noteworthy examples of how the band has matured musicians and songwriters.

"Save His Soul" is definitely a good investment. It is an indication that Blues Traveler is still able to make great music that extends well beyond the parameters of the blues. Don't be deceived by the name. Don't think that it doesn't contain blues. It's in there!

Kristen Hersh
Hips And Makers
Sire/Reprise

When the band Throwing Muses called it quits in 1992, it became questionable whether the collaboration between songwriters Kristen Hersh and Juliana Hatfield would fade into oblivion or draw comparisons of legendary songwriting teams like Lennon and McCartney or even merit any praise at all. Until now, the comparisons have not yet surfaced but it's only been about two years since the break-up.

Still the similarities of their solo careers can be compared to the outings of Lennon and McCartney in the 70's. McCartney triumphed as a pop phenomenon while Lennon was cast as a rebellious underground rock star who had little concern for the limelight and produced strikingly controversial and obscure music that has influenced many of today's rock personalities including Lenny Kravitz.

Hersh can be compared to Lennon while Hatfield resembles the McCartney image. Hatfield did not hesitate to put together a band and to transcend the alternative music scene and the MTV commercial pop world much like McCartney did with his band "Wings" minus the MTV thing.

Hersh has just debuted on the alternative scene with the release of her new albums and Makers". It is an all acoustic album in which she incorporates all the vocal techniques that she utilized in Throwing Muses and finally makes them her own creation.

The album is a subdued masterpiece in

which Hersh strums her way through compositions that are tainted with almost every human emotion imaginable but she does not come right out and say something like "I love to yeah yeah yeah. Not all their songs are a bit tongue in cheek but they are well thought out and conceptually real in design and presentation.

The song "Beestung" is about as cute as any song can get. It's Hersh's interpretation of Edie Brikell minus the sexy vocal swagger and Margo Timmins minus the whispering. Maintains a Mon, Mar 28, 1994 pre-adolescent voice on the tune and the song climaxes with her vocal "Your beestung there got too late".

Hersh's guitar work is unique and she as that "Dylanesque" humming combined with a bit of Neil Young influence which really helps the songs achieve a dramatic flare.

For Hersh, the songs are one continuous palette of musical experimentation in which the accent is upon her ability to make the simple seem complex and the odd to become familiar.

Her solo career seems to be headed in the right direction and with the help of friend Michael Stipe on the song "Your Ghost", Hersh is destined to make her mark on the musical world. Regardless of how different her approach might be, Hersh can say, "I did it my way".

Beck
Loser
4 song ep

SEE LOSER
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