

Curses on Sex Machine's debut album

by Todd Stone

Carter The Unstoppable Sex Machine
101 Damnations
Big Cat Records

Carter The Unstoppable Sex Machine creates a sound that mixes basic punk with new wave pop arrangements on its most recent release, *101 Damnations*.

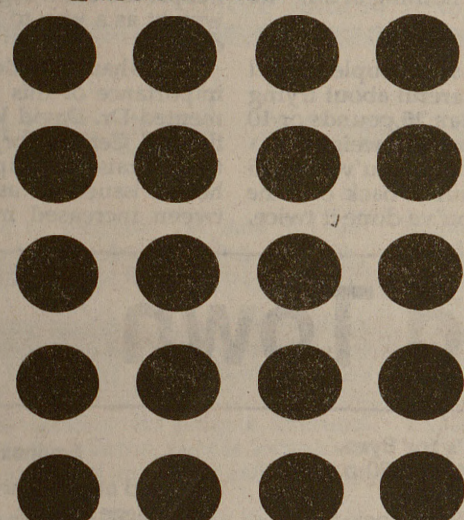
Music Review

The London-based duo is another post-punk band that has found its way to the United States as an opening performer on tour with EMF.

Unfortunately, the group's combination of musical genres just doesn't work on this release. Most of the songs are just too simple for all the arrangements, which include various synthesizers, noises and bells.

Still, simplicity is the foundation for the post-punk era because high energy is required to make that type of music successful. But when the arrangements extend beyond guitars, drums and screams, the songs become cluttered, and any raw energy is snuffed out.

Most of the tracks' foundations are simple guitar riffs or bass lines, supported by heavy, basic drumming. Synthesizers that sound like K-Mart specials fill the back-



101 DAMNATIONS

ground.

The lyrics are performed like something from a punk poetry recital — more reading than singing mixed with occasional screams. The lack of singing, or even screaming, makes the music sound extremely monotone; thus, listening to all the tracks in one sitting becomes tiresome.

Still, there are some good points. The two members, named JimBob and Fruitbat, wrote some great lyrics that offer both wild images and biting social criticisms.

On "G.I. Blues," a song exploring the psychological and physical struggles of serving in the military, JimBob sings, "My eyes are tired and grey/I've lost a stone/I'm just skin and bone/and when I come home today/look away, turn your eyes to the children."

"Sheriff Fatman," a song that attacks greedy, uncaring landlords, also generates some strong images — "There's bats in the belfry/the windows are jammed/the toilets ain't healthy/and he don't give a damn/he just chuckles and smiles/ and laughs like a madman."

Musically, *101 Damnations* offers a strong finish with "Midnight On The Murder Mile," "A Perfect Day To Drop The Bomb" and "G.I. Blues." "Midnight" is the best composed song that has the least amount of punk influence on it. It combines a more commercial sound with a strong bass-line, catchy lyrics and quality synthesizer sounds.

"Drop The Bomb" features the raunchiest guitar on the entire release and maintains a fun pace with a musically chaotic ending of feedback and obscure noises. "G.I. Blues" starts as a smooth ballad with some wonderful piano playing by Rob Sheridan, then, climaxes with thundering drums and guitars.

101 Damnations has successful moments, but as a whole, the project is an interesting effort with mediocre results.

House in Orbit, Blood Oranges to play Friday

By Holly Becka

House in Orbit, a ska band from Austin, foment its revolution Friday night at AnNam Tea House with both world-beat music and messages of world peace.

Making their second Texas appearance since a tour around New Mexico, Colorado, California, Oregon and Canada, band members will alight the Tea House at 9 p.m. with local group Blood Oranges as special guests. Cover is \$4.

Nick Brophy, vocalist and bass player, describes House in Orbit's brand of music as "reggae-funk-African beat."

"We're world dance beat music," he says. "A lot of our influences come from two-tone ska bands of the early '80s. English Beat, Bad Manners and the traditional reggae of Bob Marley and Peter Dinklage influenced us."

Brophy says he, guitarist-vocalist John McClane and percussionist-drummer Dale Johnson would like audiences to understand the message of harmony behind the music.

"We promote world peace as individuals and as an organization," he states. "We promote self-thought and the idea that people can live together in peace despite

what the right-wing media says."

In fact, the group leaves Wednesday to play in the Chicago Peace Fest. The audience at AnNam will get a preview of new music the band will perform in the Midwest.

House in Orbit has been together for almost two years. Brophy and McClane grew up in Fort Worth together before moving to Austin to work on original music. The group sometimes is joined by a horn section, which adds to its eclectic, unique sound.

Brophy says the first time band members played at Front Porch Cafe they didn't know what to expect.

"Everything I had always associated with Bryan-College Station was about Aggie jokes, but we found very cool people there who knew our kind of music," he says. "It was a great response and we're looking forward to coming back. Hopefully, a few people still remember us."

The group's name came up when band members were tossing around ideas about what to call themselves. Brophy admits a friend suggested House in Orbit, but says they immediately liked it because the name doesn't mean anything but could mean lots of things.

Solar eclipse today Brazos Valley Museum to offer viewing program

By Holly Becka

If you've ever looked into the sky and wondered if people in other parts of the country could see what you're witnessing, well, it's happening today — almost.

Many Bryan-College Station residents will turn their thoughts to the sky, specifically to today's eclipse, along with people in various parts of North America, who will experience the eclipse to varying degrees. California, Hawaii and Mexico will offer the best of the heavenly show.

In the local area, the eclipse will be most evident around 2:15 p.m. when the eclipse, or 60 percent of it, can be seen to the fullest in this part of the United States. At about the same time in Mexico City, residents will enjoy a total eclipse.

In Houston, and similarly here, the partial eclipse will be evident starting about 1 p.m. Between 2:15 and 2:20 p.m., 60 percent of the sun

should appear covered by the moon, and by about 3:30 p.m. the moon will move away from the sun.

Those wanting to view this phenomenon can do so simply, yet carefully, by themselves, or at the Brazos Valley Museum in the Brazos Center, 3232 Briarcrest Drive. The museum is offering a viewing program, \$3 for members and \$4 otherwise, starting at 2 p.m.

Randy Smith, museum programs director, says viewers will get solar filters and an instructional "tour" of the eclipse.

"This eclipse is a strange thing because it's not every day you can get to see such an astronomical event," he says. "This will be one of the longest eclipses Texans will get to see. This one is supposed to be five to seven minutes long, and they're usually only one to two minutes long."

The American Academy of

Ophthalmology is warning everyone not to turn their eyes to the skies, but instead to view the celestial event through homemade "filters."

The easiest way to protect your eyes from retinal burns is to get two pieces of white cardboard. Cut a hole the size of a dime into the first piece and cover the hole with aluminum foil. Punch a pinhole into the aluminum foil. Stand with your back to the sun and line up the hole in the aluminum foil so the sun shines onto the second piece of cardboard. This will be an inverted image of the eclipse. Focus the image by moving the second card closer to or farther from the first one.

Astronomers say to be sure and catch this showing of the eclipse because the sun, moon and earth won't be playing the United States like this for another 26 years. And Texans will have to wait even longer — until the year 2024.

'Metropolitan,' 'After Dark, My Sweet' excellent choices for home-viewing

By Julia Spencer

Tired of waiting in long lines and shelling out big bucks to see the latest summer blockbusters? Two films you may have missed seeing on the big screen are now available on videocassette for home viewing at your convenience.

Video Review

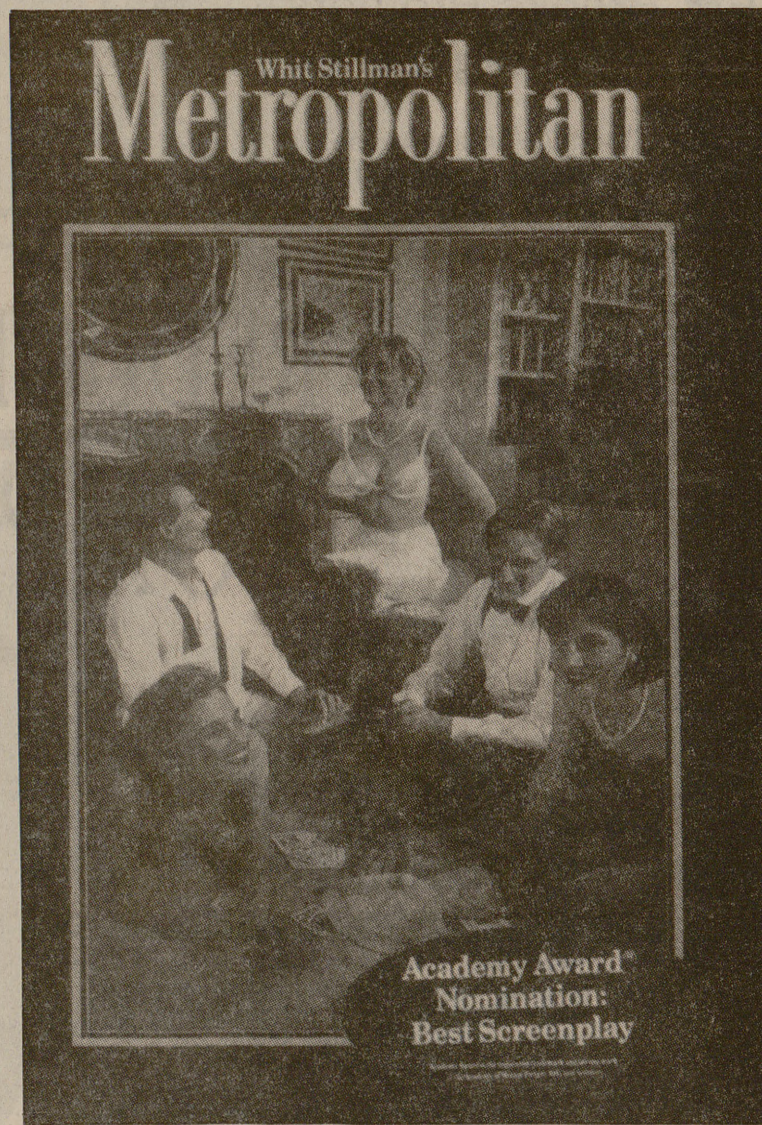
"Metropolitan" is a witty, sophisticated, ensemble piece about a privileged group of Manhattan college students whose clique is shaken up when a charismatic outsider joins them for the Christmas social seas.

Tom Townsend (Edward Clements) is a West-sider and an idealistic, earnest socialist who scorns the glittering, superficial world of high-society galas and Park Avenue post-parties. By accident, he shares a cab with a group of young people, on their way to one of these very same parties. He clearly states his distaste for such affairs, citing his political views, but justifies his presence as an opportunity to observe firsthand at least once the kind of existence he is criticizing. To his surprise, he finds the septet intelligent, well-spoken, and quite congenial, especially the lovely, sincere Audrey Rouget (Carolyn Farina).

Nick Smith (Christopher Eigemann), a cynical, jaded individual who hopes to offset his lack of prospects by marrying rich, sees in Tom the perfect solution to the shortage of escorts and bridge partners. After being persuaded that this sort of social life is actually quite economical — the food and drinks are free, and all one needs are some decent evening clothes — and that the girls are eager to keep him around, Tom not-too-reluctantly agrees to become one of their number.

Before an object of pity, due to his thin coat and meager resources, he soon finds that his quick entree into this select group has, at least in the eyes of others, placed him in the inner circle of society. As a member of the self-named U.H.B., or "Urban Haute Bourgeoisie," and the apple of Audrey's eye, he is suddenly one of the "more fortunate," a person to be envied, and maybe even despised.

Writer/producer/director Whit Stillman's Academy Award-nominated screenplay cleverly and incisively delves into the minds of these young people, perfectly cap-



turing the nuances of their conversations on subjects from sex to Bunuel, their hypocrisies, their favorite pastimes (Truth and Strip Poker), and their overwhelming fear of failure and downward mobility.

"Metropolitan" is kind of like the "Big Chill" with wealthy socialites instead of yuppies, only it doesn't take itself so seriously. The actors and actresses are impressive naturals who seem as if they were born with cigarette and cocktail in hand, and erudite dialogue of the tip of their tongue. Keep your eye out for this bunch in future projects. With this much talent, you're bound to see them again.

"After Dark, My Sweet" is a sweaty, atmospheric thriller set in the California desert, where the sun shines bright, but not nearly bright enough to illuminate the dark, greedy, murderous thoughts of some of its inhabitants.

Hunky Jason Patric (credited with being one of the reasons Julia Roberts "postponed" her wedding to his "Lost Boys" co-star Kiefer Sutherland), stars as Kevin "The Kid" Collins, a brooding ex-boxer and escapee from a mental institution. Collins stumbles into a dusty desert town, where sultry widow Fay Anderson (Rachel Ward) and former cop Garrett Stokely (Bruce Dern), who goes by "Uncle Bud", are cooking up a scheme to kidnap the young son of a wealthy local. They figure the slow-witted Collins, or "Collie" as Fay calls him, will be the perfect man to make the snatch — and take the fall.

A kindly doctor (George Dickerson) tries to take Collins in and protect him from the mistake he's about to make, but Fay's siren call lures him back to the house, and into the midst of the kidnap plot. When the plan goes awry, as such plans always do, and Collins

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Himmelman's 'Strength' deserves attention

by Timm Doolen

Peter Himmelman
Strength to Strength
Epic

Peter Himmelman is a relatively unknown guitar-oriented singer-songwriter who deserves more attention than he has been receiving.

Music Review

On different songs of his recent, self-produced album, *Strength to Strength*, one can alternately hear



the influences of Bob Dylan, James Taylor and Elvis Costello. In fact, when I first heard his album, I thought it was Elvis Costello, because the voices are so similar.

Most of his songs are simple arrangements, and you'll rarely hear more than a handful of instruments on any of the 15 songs. But there is truly beauty in simplicity, and he has a sound that makes one long for the days when songs were not drowned in a sea of synthesizers, drum machines and heavy guitars.

This album shows Himmelman has matured as a songwriter and musician. The only other work of his I have heard is his 1989 release, *Synesthesia*, which is blown out of the water by *Strength*. He has a poetic quality to his lyrics that is refreshing in an age of mindless love songs — there is only one track on the album that could be considered a "love song."

On one of the best tunes of the album, "Impermanent Things," he bemoans the transient nature of many aspects of life: "All these impermanent things/ Well their beauty's never aging/ But their worthlessness's enraging/ You know we stand alone when we're together."

In "Woman With the Strength of 10,000 Men," he picks up the beat and the arrangement to pay tribute to a woman who he felt had been through a lot in life: "From the moment I saw your face/ I knew all my so-called troubles were for nothing/ You put me in your place/ I knew right then I better start living for something."

Peter Himmelman has that folk feel to him that would probably appeal to fans of the Indigo Girls, but with a harder edge on some songs that will appeal to fans of REM.

I highly recommend this album, especially for those who want to experiment and hear some different artists. If *Strength* is indicative of future achievements, Peter Himmelman will have a strong career indeed.