

TAMPA

THEY DON'T JUST MAKE CIGARS.

WORDS & PHOTOS: CRAIG SNYDER

One of the few places you might think a scene would survive could possibly be Tampa, Florida. In fact, compared to what I have found elsewhere (in terms of ratio), it's quite good and if you're in Florida it's the place to go.

The Tampa scene may not appear to be much on the surface but it's symbiosis goes a lot further. Extremely good undiscovered talent have been coming out of Tampa which I dare say is better than many signed bands.

Lee Warren, one of the "forefathers" of the music scene, now lives in Baltimore, Maryland with his current group, NON EROTIC MALE BONDING. NEME, the last time I heard, was a three man band containing guitar, bass, keyboards, vocals, and drum machine. I've heard a demo tape of their material and immediate favourites were "I Never Smoked..." and "Bobby's Girl". Let's just say at minimum it's good.

Lee was in one of the "early era" Tampa groups with Bill Carey and Lester Esser. Bill went on to form the JETSONS which would later be known as the STICK FIGURES. Lester's interests would soon evolve into the STRAIT JACKETS. Lester is now with PRIMITIVE ROMANCE.

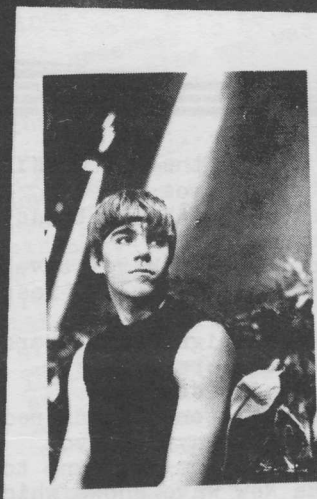
The JETSONS since their conception had few changes besides drummers and their name. They became the STICK FIGURES mainly because people would ask to hear the "Jetson's Theme". Although the STICK FIGURES are constantly trading instruments, they can be commonly associated with certain ones. Bill Carey is usually seen with guitar and organ, Sid



Standing in downtown Tampa (l. to r.) are Allen, Darren, Bobby, and Lester of THE STRAIT JACKETS. They were affectionately called "Tampa's Most Hated Band".

Dansby, guitar, Dave Bowman, bass, Rachel Bowman, vocals and percussion, and Rob Dansby on drums. They produce a rich sound with constant interaction. Visuals such as films and slides are often used. They are basically 5 individuals in a group. Their personal tastes differ from one another and probably is the main reason why they are so real, original and GOOD. The STICK FIGURES have released a 4 song EP on GREEN Records, a Tampa label. The group has since moved to the Northeast in search of better exposure.

The STRAIT JACKETS were an excellent live band that thrived on anger and teenage frustration. They had the music and they had the look. Their lineup during their peak consisted of Lester Esser(guitar, vocals), Robert Woodrich(vocals, bass), Darren Rademaker(guitar, vocals), and drummer Allen Esser. They recorded an independent LP in September 1980 which may never be released. Darren soon left the group due to



Fish



Darren



Brent

musical differences and formed A NEW PERSONALITY. In early 1981 the remaining STRAIT JACKETS broke up due to personal and musical differences. Lester and brother Allen were the Main writing force behind the STRAIT JACKETS. They went on to form PRIMITIVE ROMANCE with bassist Randy Barnwell.

A NEW PERSONALITY consists of Darren(guitar, vocals), Brent Rademaker(bass, vocals), and Steve "Fish" Fisher on drums. At present A NEW PERSONALITY are a finely atuned trio having a highly rhythmic sound which could easily be mistaken as Liverpoolian. Their recent three song EP is representative of this. They are on the GREEN Records label with fine production by Bill Carey/Dave Bowman. A NEW PERSONALITY is as consistent and unique as their EP.

PRIMITIVE ROMANCE has progressed rapidly since their birth in June 1981. The band can barely keep up with the fresh material that Allen and Lester constantly turn out. The music has dynamism with tones ranging from pop to menacing. They also have recently released a three song flexi disc on DOT CITY Records. Like the STICK FIGURES, PRIMITIVE ROMANCE has moved to the Northeast(Boston) in the great quest of exposure.

Although some of the better components have gone, the scene hasn't suffered.



In frame are Rob, Rachel, and Dave of THE STICK FIGURES during a benefit.

DISCOGRAPHY (relevant)

March 1981 Stick Figures
Green Records
August 1981 Primitive
Romance Dot City Records
August 1981 A New
Personality Green
Records
also 1980 The Shades
(neo-mod originals,
rarely seen)

Presently there is only one new music venue called the MS. LUCKY CLUB. It's small and a bit shabby but offers lots of atmosphere. Twice a month the three floor Cuban Club is rented out with 3-5 bands appearing and sometimes as many as 400 people turning out.

The club-goers have a high authenticity about them with relatively few posers. The crowds are usually very fashion conscious and respect each others personal tastes, music or otherwise.

TAMPA THEATRE is the in-place to see a flick. Foreign, Avant-Garde, and New Music films are most of the fare that the theatre offers.

Three years ago Tampa was blessed with a new radio station. WMNF(88.5) began to liberate the airwaves with it's listener sponsored programming. What they play can be best described as "anything you don't hear on the radio". Their liberal format ranges from Big Band to Jazz to New Wave and Reggae. Pam Wiener began the New Wave shows which has now expanded with more DJ's and more airtime. Listeners not only get to hear the very latest releases but personal requests as well. Besides music, personal interviews with local and major talent and any relative useful information is aired.

Tampa is small and not very liberal but most of the scene has the right idea. I hope the newer generations will expand on that idea.

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