

SPOTLIGHTED



The Cichlids



Dania's own new wave band is moving up fast through concert appearances and a recording contract. Story, Page 2D.

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The Cichlids:

New Wave From Dania
Breaks On Rock Scene

SPOTLIGHTER



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Look Out! Here Come The Cichlids

By LORI MIRRER
Sun-Tattler Staff

New wave rock has finally taken hold in South Florida, just a few years behind New York, London and the rest of the world.

With the growing local popularity of national new wave-ish acts such as the Cars and the Police has come local talent in the new wave vein.

At the forefront of this area rock renaissance is a Dania foursome called the Cichlids. A cichlid is a type of fish that's "aggressive, colorful and very personable," according to Cichlids guitarist/vocalist Debbie Mascaro.

IT'S AN APT name for the band. The Cichlids is far from the ordinary local group, spending its time and limited energy on material by better known artists. They're dead set against playing what they call "dinosaur rock" — the long, riff- and solo-filled meanderings of groups such as Led-Zeppelin.

"That type of music is uneconomical," Mascaro said.

The Cichlids prefer their brand of "economical rock," said drummer/vocalist Bobby Tak. "It's usually fast, with a lot of energy."

Cichlids guitarist/vocalist Allan Portman concurred. "Energy is a key word for our music," he said. "We don't put anything unnecessary into our songs."

THE RESULT is a manic style of rock, like an electric powerhammer set to music. You don't sit quietly to Cichlids music. Like the members of the band, you jump up and down and scream to it.

The Cichlids story is like that of the classic "garage band," entering the music business with more raw energy than extraordinary musical talent.

The first set of Cichlids got together more than a year ago. Mascaro is the only Cichlid left from that original all-female aggrega-

tion, which included a paraplegic drummer.

THE DRUMMER left because her artificial legs "couldn't take the repeated bam-bam-bam" of the Cichlid sound, Mascaro said. As she and the other members left for varied reasons, the present Cichlids fell into place. Drummer Tak was an old high school friend of Mascaro's who wanted to play "crude, physical, energetic" music. He met guitarist Portman and found "the chemistry was right" between the two and Mascaro.

Then, five months ago, the Cichlids found bassist Susan Robins. Actually, they just found Robins. She had never picked up a bass until she auditioned with it for the Cichlids.

"She had red strings on her bass," Tak recalled with a smile. "We had to have her in the band."

THUS FORMED, the Cichlids began to create a sensation on the local music scene. From the stripes and prints of their pants and shirts to the pounding and shouting of their music, the Cichlids began to become widely known, whether for good or bad reasons.

Gigs at the now-defunct Tight Squeeze club "Punk Nights," plus shows at Florida Atlantic University, the Rock/Cassino, the Treehouse Lounge and a free concert outside the Musician's Exchange in Ft. Lauderdale spread the Cichlids notoriety.

At the Musician's Exchange concert, the Cichlids found themselves in front of a crowd of Southern rock fans. Some were abusive, asking, "Where'd you learn how to play guitar?" or, "When are you GOING to learn how to play guitar?"

But, said Mascaro, "I think we won over a lot of them."

THE CICHLIDS fame has spread in other directions as well. The group was chosen to open for England's the Police tonight at 9 at Gusman Cultural Center in downtown Miami. They've been signed to record for



Gordon C. Vaughn Jr./Staff

DANIA'S OWN NEW WAVE ROCK BAND: THE CICHLIDS
Allan Portman (Left), Debbie Mascaro, Bobby Tak, Susan Robins

Hialeah's TK Productions, known more as a disco and rhythm-and-blues label.

TK producer Ann Holloway found the Cichlids when she was searching for a new wave band for the label. "They had something I couldn't describe," she said. "I think it was the energy."

Holloway will take the Cichlids into the studio next month. Their album should be out early next year.

THE CICHLIDS have also been nominated by the South Florida Entertainment Writers' Association for an award in the category of pop/rock cabaret entertainers.

The Entertainment Writers' competition pits the Cichlids against mainline acts such as Keith Herman, Robert Wuagneux, the Uptown Show and the Stagger Lee Show. The winner will be announced at a gala awards banquet Nov. 5 in the posh Cafe Cristal of Hollywood's Diplomat Hotel.

The key to the Cichlid's appeal is energy and freshness. With the exception of such

tunes by other bands as "Ubangi Storm" and "These Boots Were Made For Walking," "Yummy, Yummy, Yummy" (yes, the Ohio Express tune), the Cichlids perform original material. Mascaro and Tak do most of the writing now but Portman and Robins also contribute.

"This is a band where we want every to participate," Tak said. "We try to keep a fun thing."

THE CICHLIDS sound is very basic, consisting of a few chords and a pounding bass. Vocals are shouted more than sung and there are no instrumental solos.

While the Cichlids are pleased with their growing popularity ("I'm surprised at how warm we've been received," Tak said), superstar status is not the main goal of the group.

"I'm in it for myself," Tak said. "I want what I feel. The great thing about rock and roll is people saying things, saying how they feel."