

Lincoln band joins New York label

SPOTLIGHT

By Malcom Miles
Staff Reporter

Something was different when Lincoln's Mercy Rule took the stage at Duffy's Tavern last week.

The trio's tight, hard-rocking music sounded the same.

Heidi Ore's aggressively beautiful vocals were the same. Ron Albertson's driving rhythms were the same. Even the band's trademark minimal lighting was the same.

It was, however, Mercy Rule's first show as Relativity recording artists.

The band recently signed a four-album contract with the New York-based label.

Relativity became interested in the Lincoln band when a label representative saw it playing a late-night spot at New York's legendary punk club, CBGB's.

This discovery is only the latest chapter in the band's history.

In the mid-1980s a band called 13 Nightmares roamed the local club scene with unusual fierceness. In 1991, the band's vocal list moved and left the members in a tough spot.

Ore stepped up to take over the vocal chores, and the band changed its name to Mercy Rule. Last year, Mercy Rule released a 10-song compact disc entitled "God Protects Fools" on Lincoln's Caulfield Records.

The band toured the Midwest club circuit, which eventually led them to New York, CBGB's and Relativity.

Relativity is one of the largest independent labels in the country. The label is in a position — having clout from the high sales of guitar technician Stevie Vai and others — to

help Mercy Rule reach a larger audience.

"They know where our listeners are," Mercy Rule guitarist Jon Taylor said. "They know who to sell it to. We hope our music will be on more stations, and we will be able to play more shows."

Mercy Rule is not interested in a media blitz. The band members feel their music should be the selling point for the album.

"There won't be any full-color ads or expensive videos," Taylor said. "It's hard for us to justify spending more on a video than we did on the album."

Taylor said the main reason the band chose Relativity had little to do with the industry considerations.

"It came down to us liking the people, and they seemed to genuinely like the band."

Relativity plans to re-release "God Protects Fools" in late March or early April. The band has already started work on its first album for Relativity.

The new songs are being produced by Brian Paulson, who has worked recently with Uncle Tupelo and the Spinanes. The new release should be available next fall.

The attention Mercy Rule is receiving is having little impact on what the band members do. All three members said they were keeping their day jobs for now. They said they were somewhat surprised that people thought they might turn into superstar monsters overnight.

"We're not gonna move," Ore said between songs at the Duffy's show. "I don't know why anyone thought we would; rent's cheap, my cats like it here."

Hopefully, the members of Mercy Rule will continue to be as persistent with their music as they are with their place of residence.

Mercy Rule will play at the Culture Center at 14th and R streets on Friday.



Jeff Haller/DN

Mercy Rule guitarist Jon Taylor, right, jams last Wednesday night at Duffy's Tavern, 1412 O St. Playing bass is Heidi Ore.

Sink teeth into 'Dracula'



"Anno-Dracula"
Kim Newman
Carol & Graf

"He is experimenting and doing it well; and if it had not been that we have crossed his path he would be — he may yet be if we fail — the father or furtherer of a new order of beings, whose road must lead through Death, not Life."

This excerpt, taken from Bram Stoker's classic, "Dracula," details part of the vampire's motive for journeying to England.

Most people are familiar with the story, either through the book or one of the many movie adaptations. In the late 1800s, Dracula traveled to London, intent on spreading vampirism to the heart of Victorian Britain. His defeat at the hands of Dr. Van Helsing and company is also fairly common knowledge.

But what if Van Helsing had failed? What if Dracula's plan of conquest was successful?

Author Kim Newman ("Jago," "The Night Mayor") explores this possibility in his intriguing new novel, "Anno-Dracula."

It is 1888, and Queen Victoria has remarried, taking as her new consort Vlad Tepes, infamously known as Count Dracula. Sherlock Holmes and Bram Stoker have been imprisoned, and the head of Abraham Van Helsing is impaled on a pike in front of Buckingham Palace. A vampire, Lord Ruthven, is prime minister, and another, Sir Francis Varney, is viceroy of India.

The vampire population of London is increasing exponentially, and while some

still resist Dracula's breed, the bulk of the queen's subjects are adjusting. Many even seek conversion, hoping to advance themselves by joining the swelling ranks of the newborn undead.

Building upon literary speculation, alternate history, political satire, mystery and romance, Newman has reinvented Victorian England in the best Gothic horror tradition.

Clever and richly detailed, the book leaves vivid memories of vampire prostitutes lurking in deserted alleyways and everyday people fighting for their lives in a new medieval era.

The real strength of Kim Newman's writing, however, lies in his characters.

Although much of the book revolves around Stoker's originals, namely Dr. Jack Seward and Count Dracula, Newman has created some memorable personae of his own.

Chief among these are Genevieve Dieudonne, a vampire charity worker striving to alleviate poverty in London's East End, and the mysterious adventurer Charles Beauregard. The book also features appearances by many famous historical figures, and it even includes a character Bram Stoker conceived for the original "Dracula" but omitted from his book.

This is a brilliantly realized novel, packed full of surprises. The Dracula legend has been open to many interpretations over the years, but rarely, if ever, does an author manage to infuse this much imagination while still retaining the quality of the original work.

"Anno-Dracula" seems destined to become a modern-day classic, and it stands a good chance of placing Newman firmly on the literary throne of the vampires, right between Bram Stoker and Anne Rice. Highly recommended.

— Todd Ellington

Band appeals to broad audience

By BJ Gifford
Staff Reporter

Allgood joins the B-52's, R.E.M. and Love Tractor in calling Athens, Ga., home.

The band's tour began Feb. 2 and will continue through April until they have made 27 stops, many of them in the western half of the United States. Saturday the band will play at Jones Street Brewery, 1316 Jones St., in Omaha.

"Some of us have a weakness for skiing," lead vocalist Corky Jones said laughing, in explanation of the seven stops the band will be making in Colorado.

Southern rock comparable to the Allman Brothers or Lynyrd Skynyrd is how critics so far have defined the band.

"Pop is the thing that gets lost a bit," Jones said. "We're not shooting for anything in particular. Whatever comes out is it — soul, blues and funk."

Being compared with the Allman Brothers and other southern rock bands all of the time gets old, Jones said, but it can be flattering.

"People have to compare you to something or someone they recognize and know others will recognize until you're around long enough to

stand as a comparison base yourself," Jones said.

Anyway, music of the past is great, Jones said.

"Like a weird smell," Jones said, "it takes you back and delivers a clear picture to your mind of what was going on in your life then — when you were listening to the music that last time."

Jones speaks for the band's four other members only until they hit the stage. Clay Fuller, Mike Sain and John Carter add guitar, bass and vocals to Jones' vocals, while Charlie Pruet plays drums for the band.

Jones said it didn't matter whether they played against a big-name band in New York or in a bar in a small town.

"We hold our own against the bigger bands, but we can also pack the bars in the tiny towns. People who see us generally really like us. It's just dumb luck when the music you love to play as a musician is the same stuff that the audience really likes."

Although the band pleases everyone from young professionals in the big cities to hippies and high school students, a good chunk of Allgood's fans is made up of college students, Jones said.

Sci-fi book has time warps, termites

"Out of Time"
James P. Hogan
Bantam Spectra Books

James P. Hogan's "Out of Time," his 16th volume, is a good, old-fashioned puzzle piece in the grand tradition of Arthur C. Clarke. Hogan's specialty is hard science fiction. He sometimes takes outrageous and improbable theories and makes them work.

"Out of Time" is set in a near-future New York City, where a mysterious warp in time is making clocks run at different speeds.

Air travel at major airports becomes a risky prospect at best, and the concept of time zones becomes useless. Criminal investigator Joe

Kopeksky is called on to find out why. The only clue Kopeksky and his associates have is an eerie red glow coming from the areas of greatest time retardation — high-density computers.

The solution is as intriguing as it is initially improbable. The time lapses are caused by interdimensional termites, bugs from another parallel universe that feed on time. The time at the heart of computers is tastiest to the bugs, and devouring it produces a relativistic red shift. The solution Hogan devises to rid New York of the bugs is delightful, taken from childhood fables. "Out of Time" makes for a thoroughly enjoyable read.

— Sam Kepfield