



PHOTO COURTESY OF BAR NONE RECORDS

LULLABY FOR THE WORKING CLASS, which has made a name for itself worldwide, will perform at Knickerbocker's, 901 O St., on Thursday and at the Wagon Train Project, 512 S. Seventh St., on Saturday.

Drovers take Celtic influence to Knickerbockers

By **BRET SCHULTE**
Staff Reporter

The Drovers, despite much critical acclaim from college radio stations, music magazines and even Hollywood, have managed to keep a relatively low profile.

Hailed as Chicago's best unsigned band in the early '90s, the Drovers created their own label, Tantrum Records, on which they have released an EP and two full-length albums. Never taking a breath, the Drovers have been touring extensively since their conception, and pushed the tours still harder with their Irish-folk pop debut, 1992's "World of Monsters."

Word rapidly spread of the Drovers' distinct marriage of Celtic strings and semi-acoustic rock, even reaching Hollywood. In 1993, the Drovers were asked to accept a feature role in the Madeleine Stowe picture "Blink."

But the Drovers preferred to stay on the road, and have spent most of their musical career doing just that.

Sean Cleland, master of most of the stringed instruments in the band (i.e. violins, viola, mandolins), said the creation of music belongs in front of the audience.

"Great things happen at shows, people can experience joy, triumph, even hypnotism," Cleland said.

Both in the studio and on the stage, the Drovers' ability to weave a strikingly melodic and powerful song has increased their popularity across a range of listeners.

But their Irish sound, while distinct, often leads to an unwanted and limiting label of the Drovers, Cleland said.

"(Irish) is just an influence. Granted it gives us a distinction, but we really only absorb the style and make it our own," he said. "It's definitely an ingredient but not the whole. It's like saying The Black Crowes are primarily a blues band."

Irish blood still flows strong through both David Callahan and Cleland who are only second-generation Americans. Callahan said the heritage of the other band members is hazy.

"Scotch-Irish, maybe some English ... basically American," he said.

The genuinely ambiguous nature of Americans' ethnicity is reflected in the Drovers' music, and how they hope to continually evolve.

"We don't want to become a rock band — we get further and further away from that," Callahan said.

The Drovers will perform Thursday night at Knickerbockers, 901 O St., with Lullaby for the Working Class.

Lincoln band popular on West Coast

By **ANN STACK**
Senior Reporter

Pigeonholing the sound of Lincoln band Lullaby for the Working Class is like trying to zip up button-fly jeans — it doesn't work.

And while the band's rare blend of instruments and musical styles may prove difficult for the music press to categorize, it certainly hasn't hurt Lullaby's press standing.

The soft-spoken young men played a string of dates on the West Coast over the semester break and, in the process, were able to return home superstars — well, sort of.

"We just went to L.A. to play some shows someplace warm," said UNL senior business management major Mike Mogis, who plays the guitar, banjo and mandolin, among other instruments in Lullaby for the Working Class.

The band will be featured on CNN's "Showbiz Weekly" program as part of a piece on Midwestern Music.

"The L.A. Times did a preview and a review of the show, and CNN picked up on it,"

Mogis said. "There was a buzz on us; the press was extremely flattering. So they came to a show and interviewed us."

Lullaby for the Working Class's debut album, "Blanket Warm," has been reviewed in several trade magazines, including the German edition of Rolling Stone, which gave it four stars, and the British music journal, Q, which gave it three stars.

"Blanket Warm" came out in September 1996, and the European press was the first to pick up on the buzz.

"I don't think that anyone who starts a band thinks that 11 months later they're going to have an album come out in Taiwan," he said. "The most we were hoping for was trying to put it out ourselves and try to make some money off it."

"We got treated really well out there; every town we played had advance press on us," he said. "It's all pretty surprising."

Most of the press generated drew comparisons to groups like The Rolling Stones, the Scud Mountain Boys, the Tindersticks and "Aodyne"-era Uncle Tupelo. Close, Mogis says, but not quite.

Mogis calls Lullaby a "quiet rock band," comparing them to bands that are less country-oriented and more folk-oriented than some of the bands they have drawn comparisons to.

The next album, due out sometime later this year, will be more upbeat than "Blanket Warm," Mogis said.

"We're in better moods now," he said.

The band plans on touring Europe this summer and fall, which means taking a semester off from school. Along with Mogis, Lullaby is composed of his brother A.J., a senior electrical engineering major, on upright bass; singer/songwriter Ted Stevens, a senior English and philosophy major at the University of Nebraska at Omaha; Todd Baechle, a senior music major at Creighton University; and new drummer Matt Bowen.

Lullaby for the Working Class is playing Thursday night at Knickerbocker's, 901 O St., with the Drovers opening. There's a \$3 cover charge.

They also will be at the Wagon Train Project, 512 S. Seventh St., Saturday with other Lincoln bands Cursive, Cobalt Caliber and Blandine Cosima at 7 p.m. This is an all-ages show with a \$4 cover charge.

Have mercy

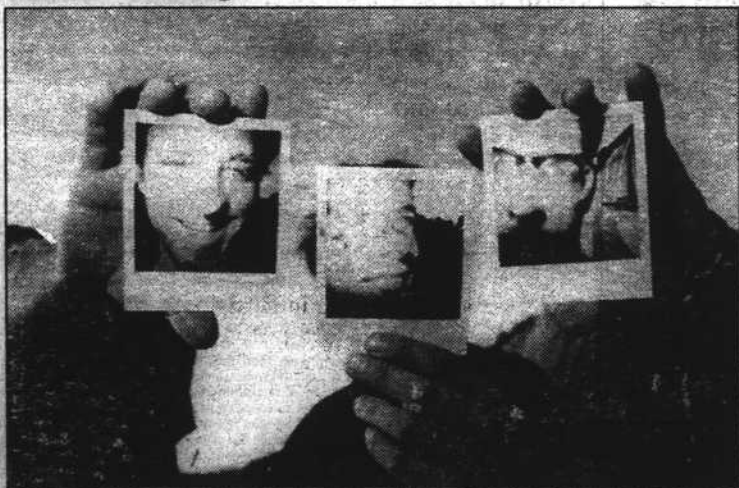


PHOTO COURTESY OF DUFFY'S TAVERN

From Staff Reports

Perennial Lincoln favorite Mercy Rule (above) will be back in action tonight at Duffy's Tavern, 1412 O St.

Tonight's show will be the band's first Duffy's gig since the completion of two projects: the recording of its new album and the birth of the first child of bassist/vocalist Heidi Ore and guitarist Jon Taylor, who also happen to be married.

San Francisco-based band Big Shirtless Rob, whose members are all Lincoln natives, is in town this week, too, and will open the 21-and-over show.

The music will begin at 10 p.m., and the cover charge will be \$5.

CD Review

The Drovers
"Little High Sky Show"
Tantrum Records
Grade: B

While several bands have had limited success under the subtitle "Irish rock," it is not as versatile and financially rewarding as the terribly worn-out and insanely meaningless monster music genre known as "alternative."

U2 eventually abandoned their original Irish tinted and politically oriented sound, forsaking it for greater musical experimentation and loads of cash. The Cranberries briefly assumed the role. But their Irish identity didn't extend much past the accent and their message faded with exploitation and overnight success.

However, there are still a few groups who remain faithful to their kin and their sound. Among them, The Drovers. Although they come from the Windy City rather than the expansive green canvas of Ireland, The Drovers embody a near-symphonic and distinctly Celtic sound.

Their first release, "World of Mon-

sters" is a bouncing, dark and beautifully orchestrated assembly of strings and wind. Offering an inspired and eclectic blend of traditional Irish dance music, this album was one of the best of 1992.

Their follow-up EP, "Kill Mice Elf," departs from this formula but intertwines brilliance with broodings as their sound darkens. Its Celtic flavor is sharply subdued, and the release revels in a sense of loss. Stylistically, the album muses in a British rock attitude, but ultimately lacks the zest and appeal of the first release.

In the wake of these two rather oppositional yet equally capable albums is The Drovers' latest release, "Little High Sky Show." Always embracing a large variety of instruments to enhance their ever-expanding sound, The Drovers use mandolas, violins, whistles and even the occasional pump organ. But vocals are relatively sparse on this echoing, capacious disc.

The title track is weighted with a heavy bass line and the lyrics are little more than faint whispers and mumbled words, adding a slight chill

to the track. "Too Long Ghost" sounds like R.E.M. on lithium, while "Toy" is spiced with snare and cymbal. Almost all the songs on the album are conceptions of warbled high-string strumming and caressing medleys of violins and whistles.

A common complaint about The Drovers' last release was its shortness, even for an EP. This is the first full-length album since "World of Monsters," while only boasting eight tracks, the last cut on the album, "The Bag" actually contains a medley of jigs, reels, slow airs and the occasional graceful polka (yes, I said graceful).

This release is artfully and beautifully conceived, but aside from "The Bag," which is literally a catch-all of modernized traditional Irish folk music, it rarely varies in substance. However, the sound of The Drovers is hauntingly beautiful and nearly hypnotic. "Little High Sky Show" is a dark, pained album flickering specks of light with every trill of the mandola or cry of the violin.

— Bret Schulte