

# MC5 makes splash with compilation

Known for its grungy sound, band shows brilliance in 'The Big Bang.'

By Josh Krauter

Senior editor

Though Detroit's current music scene is famous for clowns such as Kid Rock, Eminem and, well, the Insane Clown Posse, it hasn't always been this way.

Once upon a time, in the late 1960s, Detroit had a couple of vibrant music scenes that continue to inspire today, one aboveground, one underground.

Motown was, of course, the mainstream face of good Detroit pop, producing legends such as Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder, the Jackson 5 and the Supremes.

But across town, there was a grittier, grungier, uglier sound going down. It was the sound of gears grinding, assembly lines marching forward, dirt getting caked under fingernails. It was a soundtrack for misfits, stoners, nihilists, outcasts, speed freaks and blue-collar workers.

Ten years before punk, 20 years before grunge, a couple of Detroit bands invented a primal, dirty, monstrosity that moved rock forward while simultaneously reverting it to its garage beginnings.

These two bands, The Stooges

and the MC5, are long gone, having only released three albums apiece to indifferent audiences who didn't care that they were ahead of their time.

The Stooges were the better of the two, producing a real-life rock star in singer Iggy Pop, and releasing three classic albums, "The Stooges," "Fun House" and "Raw Power," that still startle, sounding unlike anything before or since.

The MC5 is a little sketchier and sounds more and more like classic rock as time goes by. But each of its three albums showed moments of brilliance and rugged rock 'n' roll, and it's past due for a retrospective of the band's career.

So here it is. "The Big Bang! Best of the MC5" is a smartly selected compilation of the band's entire career, starting with early singles and finishing with a previously unreleased song recorded shortly before the band's dissolution, hitting each of the three albums in between.

It opens with a bang. "I Can Only Give You Everything" is a rough-and-tumble rock song, riding along on the riff Beck borrowed for "Devils Haircut." The next two singles, "Looking At You" and "I Just Don't Know," continue the decadent, distortion-drenched vibe, sounding like Chuck Berry if he had to sleep in a garage under a bunch of oily rags.

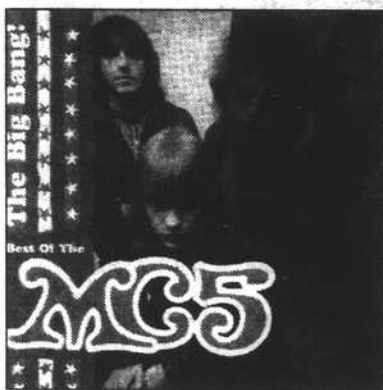
Then come four songs from the 5's first album, "Kick Out the Jams."

The album has been profoundly influential but suffers from muddy production and several weak songs. "The Big Bang" snatches the four best songs from that album, showing how chaotic and outrageous the band's music could be.

That's followed by a whole bunch of tracks from "Back in the USA," the second album. The music from this period is a lot cleaner, the songs are shorter and the production kicks up the treble and lowers the bass. These particular songs were produced by Jon Landau, a former rock journalist who later managed Bruce Springsteen.

With titles like "Teenage Lust," "High School" and "Shakin' Street" and pop hooks to match, this section of the album is the catchiest on first listen and often sounds like pure power pop. Imagine a more accomplished Ramones or Monkees composed of serial killers to get an approximation of the sound. For this part of the band's career, the oily rags have been discarded for an actual Chuck Berry cover and a more radio-ready sound.

The next segment of the album features songs from "High Time," the band's last album. These songs are once again long, feedback drenched and guitar heavy, but with better production values. Guitarist Wayne Kramer compares a lot of this stuff to jazz musicians like John



## REVIEW The MC5

**TITLE:** Big Bang! Best of the MC5  
**LABEL:** Rhino Records  
**GRADE:** A  
**FAVE WORDS:** Sweaty, ugly and loud rock

Coltrane and Sun Ra, but don't believe him. It all sounds like loud rock 'n' roll.

The unreleased song, "Thunder Express," continues in the same vein with a decidedly more classic-rock beat, sending "The Big Bang" out with a bang, too.

Anyone who's into late-'70s punk or the better grunge stuff, such as Nirvana and Mudhoney, should check out where some of it came from by picking up "The Big Bang." You won't be disappointed.

# 'Festival' allows audience to critique works

PLAYWRIGHTS from page 9

The play is a drama dealing with a serious subject, Miller said, whereas the other readings are comical.

Whitehead, who is a nontraditional student, said "you write what you know," and she is just trying to tell a story.

"I wanted to do a play (about an issue) that my generation is facing," she said.

Other plays include "Steak Fred," written by Derek Hyatte, which is a comedy about a young couple, simple misunderstanding and a secret recipe for leftovers.

Hyatte was reluctant to go into any more detail about the play simply because he said he didn't want to give too much of the plot away.

He did say the thought of his play being watched and analyzed by an audience makes him a bit nervous.

Other plays include "Party," by Wade Dugan, "What are You Thinking," by Scott Dunn and "A Mississippi Story," by Justin Bottsford.

"Party" is a documentary-style portrayal of a college party scene; "What are You Thinking" is a comedy based on the internal and external opinions expressed when men and

women shop together; and "A Mississippi Story" follows the trails of a pastor.

The sixth play is "Friday Night at the Last Resort/Saturday Morning at Kuhlmann's" by Jeremy Blomstedt.

Nita Ritzke directs the reading. She described it as a "slice of life in a small town," set in a building that serves as both a cafe in the morning and a bar in the evening.

"The writer has really captured the local color of the town in his play," she said.

Those who have plays being presented in this weekend's productions said they are excited to have their work

shown.

Betty Buller Whitehead said she is not nervous about what people will think of her play but instead is excited. "I'm looking forward to getting feedback from a real audience," she said.

Miller pointed out that readings like this are done all the time in New York, and that this is the first step for writers wanting their work to be accepted.

"People in the audience may see a production that will be in the theater in a year," he said. "You're getting the opportunity to see something before it has been put out there."

# Dropped

## Two Illinois bands to join local group in performance

If band names were as telltale as headlines, tonight would be one destructive night.

Two bands from Illinois, Haymarket Riot and Hero Of A Hundred Fights, are stopping in Lincoln tonight for a show at the Antelope Park Pavilion, A Street and Memorial Drive, with Her Flyaway Manner, one of Lincoln's most intensely intricate local bands.

Despite the violent undertones of the two visiting bands' names, the show is sure to focus on one thing: music.

Haymarket Riot, a band that has played in Lincoln a handful of times before, has developed a strong following for its aggressive yet melodic brand of rock. The group is touring in support of its self-titled five-song CD on Divot Records and will be raffling off an unreleased copy of its new full-length album at tonight's show only.

The self-titled album is an intense array of spacey and slow, intricately woven guitar, drum and bass sounds, which crescendo into driving rhythms with robust vocals and powerful guitars. In its quieter moments, it is oddly soothing, while in its more aggressive moments, the album is very moving, sounding in some respects like a cross between Fugazi and June of 44.

With Hero of a Hundred Fights, newcomers to the Lincoln scene, listeners can expect an interesting type of guitar-driven, broken-down noise rock, which eventually comes together for powerful and unified chorus riffs. The vocals are definitely less prominent than the group's musical elements.

Tonight's show starts at 7 and costs \$3.

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