

Drummer mixes blues, college classes

By Brian J. Shults
 ■ The Shorthorn
 U. of Texas, Arlington

Chris Hunter beat his drums, but he loathed what he heard. Frustrated, he threw his sticks across the playroom and pounded the tom-toms until reaching exhaustion.

That was 11 years ago. Hunter was 8. "I would hear in my mind what I wanted to play, and I would hear what I was playing, and I hated it," he said.

Now, after a decade of practice, the 19-year-old business sophomore is a professional drummer with the blues band Cold Blue Steel.

Learning percussion principles from a veteran performer helped Hunter overcome his impatience.

Blues drummer Doyle Bramhall, who was dating Chris' mother, taught him drum beats, holding the boy's small hands over the drumsticks during lessons.

"Doyle would leave for a week, and then he'd come back. By then, I'd have the drum beat down," Hunter said.

This zeal to learn impressed his mentor.

"When I started playing the drums, I wanted to learn as much as I could as fast as I could," Bramhall remembers. "Chris had that same desire."

"I was always going to nightclubs watching Doyle play," Hunter said. "My goal was to be just like him."

Barbara Logan, Hunter's mother, said that when he began playing, music had little to do with his new hobby.

"The first time Chris sat behind the drums, he just started banging on them," she said.

Logan noticed her daughter could work with the drums better than Chris could. "His sister was really trying to carry a beat and hear the different sounds. Chris was just banging on them," Logan said. "But she lost interest."

Chris never did. If he ever had, Cold Blue Steel might not have a permanent drummer today.

Hunter offered to help the band one weekend when Bramhall, who had been filling in with Cold Blue Steel, was busy with his own group.

"We said, 'Hey, Chris, can you hold down the gig?' and he said, 'Yeah, sure,'" bass player Tony Dukes said.

Then schoolwork was another gig that had to be held down.

"I never looked at drumming as taking away from anything. If anything, it enhances my schoolwork," Hunter said. "I know the music business isn't something I would want to always have to rely on."

He said a business degree would be ideal for a musician and help him with negotiations.

But pursuing the degree and a musical career at the same time has meant some sacrificing of sleep.

Hunter's mother noted, "It can't be easy having an 8 a.m. class after being out until 3 in the morning. He has amazed me in his judgment and ability to take care of himself."

MUSIC



COURTESY POLYGRAM RECORDS

Gorky Park, the first Soviet band to release an album in America.

From Russia with rock

By Wendy Greene
 ■ Columbia Spectator
 Columbia U.

Rock 'n' roll doesn't need repressive authority to be great: the illusion serves as well as the real thing. Sure, young Jon Bon Jovi may have hated his parents on occasion, or may have done a few rebellious things like cutting classes or defacing desktops. But he also was probably considered a pretty well-adjusted kid, with all the standard choirboy frustrations.

Soviet band Gorky Park, in their self-titled debut album, took Bon Jovi as a role model. However, Gorky Park, the first Soviet band to release an album in America, is authentically rebellious.

Founding members Alexei Belov and Nikolai, while in a pre-Gorky Park group called Moscow, were forbidden to play rock 'n' roll by the Soviet government.

Officials said the "look" of rock was not acceptable because it made kids go crazy and created an uncontrolled environment. The two, nevertheless, continued to play clubs and arrange music for other bands.

One of the groups they collaborated with was led by Stas Namin, now Gorky Park's manager. Namin's group, Flowers, sold more than 12 million singles in Russia before the government cracked down.

The trio later founded Gorky Park, and in addition to selling millions of

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Wine, cheese, high fashion — and rock music?

By Elisabeth Vincentelli
 ■ The Daily Targum
 Rutgers U.

Let's face it, France has never spelled R-O-C-K for Americans. It's the country of wine and cheese, the kingdom of permanently dressed-up fashion victims and obscure post-modernist philosophers.

But have you ever heard of any French rock bands?

Any visitor to Paris has for years been able to hear a curious mix of wimpy continental pop (called *la variété* by the locals) and international mega-stars such as Dire Straits, the Cure or Madonna. But there is also now a creative, diverse and healthy alternative French music scene, thriving despite the absence of college radio.

Several groups are now on U.S. record labels, including the electronic-oriented Trisomie 21 (on the Wax Trax label) and the exuberant Gallic outfit Les negresses vertes (soon to be released by Sire over here). From the anarcho-punk spirit exemplified by the incredibly popular Beruriers Noirs to the steamy dance music played by Kassav (*zouk*, the party music from the French West Indies), the French are now succeeding in carving a niche on the European scene.

Even the old school of *variété* is getting better and better, with people as Uruguayan-born Elli Medeiros and her tropical funk, or even the Velvet Underground-influenced Etienne Daho.

The French still can't play straight "rock," but they have become pretty good at perverting it, and even more important, they are finally writing decent lyrics in their native tongue on a beat faster than "My Way" (penned by a Frenchman, incidentally).

Les Satellites are part of the Bondage roster and produce a joyous, humorous, somewhat anarchic brand of rhythm 'n' blues, something you wouldn't expect the French to tackle. Showing a cartooning sense of humor, they even make fun of "les américains." "Their houses are bigger/they're more comfortable/their ice-creams are bigger/therefore people are happier."

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SOUNDBITES

Red Hot Chili Peppers *Mother's Milk*

This latest collection of punk-funk from Los Angeles' Chili Peppers finds is a step backward. "Magic Johnson," for instance, is a grating earache of a rap which glorifies the L.A. Lakers. Certainly a talented group, the Peppers have once again failed to match the jagged grooves of their first record, still their finest work. ■ Bill White, *The Emory Wheel*, Emory U.

Janet Jackson
Rhythm Nation 1814
 Janet Jackson, the prototype for

female dance artists like Jody Watley, Paula Abdul and Sheena Easton, continues to grow with this album. Although *Rhythm Nation 1814* fails to fully realize its conceptual and musical aims, it is Jackson's best effort. Producers Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis return to provide grooves that are more expansive and developed than those on *Control*; most songs run past five minutes and are full of pulsating bass lines and churning drums. Lyrically, Jackson displays a social conscience, discussing issues like drugs, crime, family deterioration and education. "The Knowledge" says it plainly: "We are in a race between education and catastrophe." Only her thin voice, which frequently lacks conviction, holds things down. Nevertheless, a great record. ■ Craig Hausman, *The Daily Trojan*, U. of Southern California



COURTESY A&M RECORDS

Janet Jackson