

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Musical community gives artists a new chance

by Jennifer Koppa

They want to take the music out of the hands of the businessmen and put the business back in the hands of the musicians.

This is the mission statement of New Community, an organization with the sole purpose of destroying the artistic-industrial-complex by breaking down the barriers of Milwaukee's musical hierarchy. Jim Warchol (of the band Wild Angels), Dan Hintz and Scott Noegel (Alien Farm) say they realize that the local music scene is in a very unhealthy state. Only certain bands seem to play at the good clubs on the weekends while the bands "on the cutting edge" sometimes land in the boonies, playing gigs mid-week. The musicians see it as a vicious circle because only through exposure can bands land the better jobs and it is tough for bands to break through.

"We're all in bands, we know what it's like for musicians in the local music scene, and we've designed a way for bands to play out live in Milwaukee and have tremendously fun shows," Hintz said.

New Community attacks a lot of the problems in the Milwaukee music scene. It attacks the ego-system of both bands that play and the people that book and manage bands.

"Milwaukee is very cliquish and it has been that way for so long. We're trying to destroy that," Warchol said.

Hintz echoed his thought: "Local new music is being seen as a commodity rather than an

art. It is all based on drawing potential. The bands that draw the best get the best dates. People don't have a lot of money to see bands in the middle of the week."

Noegel said he feels the direction that NC is taking is the most important thing right now. He said the reason that NC is going to function better than its members had hoped is because people from a range of artistic disciplines — film, video, poetry, photography — are getting involved. The group feels that the artistic environment as a whole has been stifled and that local artists desperately need a new avenue for expression, he said.

"The art community sets up its own hierarchy, and New Community wants to solve that. All these things can easily flourish in Milwaukee, they just haven't had an avenue. You have a tremendously large community (of artists); we have a big scene. It's just a matter of getting someone to do something about it," Hintz said.

"We'd like to expand it into other areas simultaneously so we can have more than one NC show going on at the same time," Noegel said.

Warchol said he doesn't want to see NC become the "hip spot, the norm" and attract 20 bands in one night so that no one has the chance to be heard. They are trying to institute ideas slowly and carefully so that things are well planned and well attended, he said. NC will rotate bands and artists so that everybody gets an equal chance.

The group's founders said they started NC as a musical idea where three bands could play for



— Post photo by Tony Garza

From left to right: Scott Noegel, Jim Warchol and Dan Hintz show they are serious about breaking out of the constricting artistic community of Milwaukee.

a relatively inexpensive cover charge. They also wanted the show to demonstrate the absurdity of "opening band," "middle band" and "headlining act." The posters that announce the show do not reveal what order the acts will perform in because there is no "order." If a band played first one show, it may play last at the next. The only thing that is for certain is the time the bands will start. Everything else is left artistically open, Hintz and Noegel said.

What they hope to have is artists showcasing their work at the shows. Poets can read during the break between bands, performance artists can perform surrounded by the whatever visual art is displayed; anything is

possible. The idea is to embark upon a local cultural renaissance in which artists can have an appreciative audience. Hintz, Noegel and Warchol said they see this as a benefit to everybody.

"The three of us just set up the shows, we don't run them. We're not trying to book the shows and take the profits, we don't make any money," Noegel said. They stress the strong motivations behind the concept.

And if it turns out not to be a gigantic success? "So what, we'll have very nice small shows," Hintz said.

Hintz said he sees this project as being similar to the artistically supportive communities of Athens, Ga., Minneapolis and Austin, Texas.

Hintz said people who care about the artistic scene are up against somewhat of a musical horse race right now.

"If a band is one of the 15 biggest draws in the city, it has to wait until some other bands make it big before it moves up in rank," Hintz said. NC wants as many bands and artists as possible, and feels that the community will be as prestigious as the artists who comprise it.

"The concern isn't so much making it big for one individual band, but making it big for the community," Noegel said.

Hintz added, "If one or two of the bands in NC actually makes it, that helps all the bands in NC."

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New sites for NC might be the upstairs of Century Hall, though it is undecided at this time. However, one thing is for sure. The emphasis is on getting people involved with coming to the shows and participating in the shows.

"This is an open call for artists who make their own videos or their own films. They get to show their art," Hintz said.

You can get in touch with NC several ways. The address is "New Community," P.O. Box 11404, Shorewood 53211. Also telephone messages can be left at Warchol's residence (273-4491), Hintz's residence (762-3175) and Noegel's residence (961-1429). Messages can also be placed for NC in care of Atomic Records or Earwaves East LTD.

An upcoming NC show will be on April 3 at Club Garibaldi. The show starts at 10 p.m. and features Drake Scott, Ball Turret Gunners and Alien Farm. Cover charge is \$3.

bad boys