

# LIVE MUSIC

## Love, Love, Love

by Brian Lillie

I don't know about you, but the terrible defeat suffered on Saturday by the Wolverines at the hands of the evil archenemy down south really bummed me out. I'm not even a sports fan, but the genetic encoding that comes with being an Ann Arbor native (yes, we do exist!) insisted that I feel terribly depressed after the game. How best to crawl from this void of athletic despair?

Aside from Michigan football, love and music seem to be the two other most important healing powers in the universe, so it was just my luck that two bands with the word "Love" in their names were playing that very weekend— Al Hill and the Love Butlers at the Cavern Club on Saturday night, and The Original Brothers and Sisters of Love at Arbor Brewing on Sunday. You couldn't have asked for two more diverse, yet equally uplifting groups to drown your post-Buckeye sorrows.

I had never been to The Cavern Club, and had no idea what to expect. I was astonished to find that it is gigantic, dark, and beautifully decorated. Exactly like those places that are in every action movie— you know, where the hero surreptitiously follows the Russian weapons expert so they can waste a few minutes of film before blowing up the next car. But, instead of a weird techno band providing the soundtrack, it was the formidable Al Hill and The Love Butlers (Bill Lewis, Andy Conlin, Dave Farzalo, Eric Korte and John Ferry), celebrating the release of their new CD, "Willie Mae".

There were about 40,000 appreciative fans on hand to help them out, and it was quite a party atmosphere. Al and his sidemen play a muscular gumbo of Memphis, Chicago and New Orleans, with a groove so tight you can bounce a quarter off it. He is a boundlessly energetic bandleader, and he jumped from keys to guitar, with chops to spare on both, keeping the crowd rapt the whole time. The songs ranged from rave-ups ("One Way Ticket", "Waiting at the Station") to soul ballads ("What's It Gonna Be"), and sported great horn arrangements and guitar solos from both Hill and the talented Farzalo. Hill's voice is like a huskier, lower register John Hiatt, and his songs (a majority co-written with his wife, Whitley Setrakian-Hill) are for the most part strong and designed for maximum boogie potential. The Cavern Club was so packed that the dancing consisted mostly of rhythmically bumping into the people closest to you, but even dorky guys like me were called to the dancefloor by the Love Butlers' celebratory and inviting rhythms. You owe it to yourself to check these guys out.



Al Hill

The following night, after I had washed my hair five times to get the cigarette smell out, I headed down to The Arbor Brewing Company on Washington, to check out a free Sunday night show from The Original Brothers and Sisters of Love.

The Brothers and Sisters are about as far from Al Hill and his gang, musically, as you can get. They are normally a five-piece, though on this particular night they were operating without their drummer, Martin Juarez.

The other members (real-life brothers Jamie and Tim Monger, Greg and Scott McClintock) treated us to an acoustic set that was equal parts alternate-universe Beatles, pirate rock, acid-appalachia and rapid-fire comedy. You would be hard pressed to find a funnier or friendlier band of musical oddballs anywhere on the entire planet. They cracked jokes like a single organism, and segued from song to song with loopy, good-natured repartee that mentioned everything from BMX biking to Phillip Glass.

Their songs are brilliantly constructed pieces of slightly off-kilter beauty with titles like "Nailed to the Body of Lincoln", "Ice Cream Hat" and "Church Bus". They all sing, and all seem to have the ability to play a number of stringed instruments as well as cheesy organs and coffee cans.

Jamie and Tim, the ringleaders, promised that their long-awaited first album, "The Ballad of Jeb Minor", will be in local stores by winter, 1999. It has to be heard to be believed! There aren't many bands with the chutzpah to blend classic pop, sea-chanties, gigantic chorale sections (a la The New Christy Minstrels), folk rock, punk and acid-celtic-stomp, and fewer still who can do it and still move you emotionally even as you are cracking up and marveling at the intricacy of it all.

By the time Sunday came to a close, I could not even remember why I was so upset on Saturday afternoon. Now there's a sign of true greatness.