



ENTERTAINMENT

Music, hockey and 'the song'

by Peter J. Cullen
Brunswickan Entertainment

From the surprise success of the song 'The First Day of Spring', to opening in New York for Our Lady Peace, the Gandharvas have been amassing a legion of fans with their pop/jazz manner of music and intriguing lyrics. While entertaining show-goers and establishing a band history as they continuously promote themselves in live venues, the Gandharvas will strap on their guitars and plug in their amps at The Cellar this Wednesday evening.

Originally formed as a high school troupe dubbed 'The Droogs', the Gandharvas lead vocalist Paul Jago, guitarists Jud Ruhl and Brian Ward, bassist Eric Howden and percussionist Tim McDonald compose the five member band. The young group, at an average age of 23 years, are currently rehearsing at their homes in London, Ontario, for their eastern tour. "We've had some time off and had separated for a while, but now it's time to get back and pull it together again," guitarist Ruhl said in a recent phone conversation. As Jago was unavailable, Ruhl explained how he was coerced into the interview. "Paul's 'Mr. Homework Man' right now. He's doing a correspondence course and he thought it'd be better if I did it 'cause I have nothing else to do," he laughed.

Relatively quiet and seemingly shy, Ruhl, who has been practising guitar since grade eight, mentioned first the release of the Gandharvas' latest album, *Kicking In the Water*. After its quiet appearance at record stores in September, the band took to the road



The Gandharvas in their oh-so-casual poses. L-R: Brian Ward, Tim McDonald, Paul Jago, Jud (Mr. Interview Man) Ruhl and Eric Howden.

these ideas for quite a long time and we played a lot of them, actually, on the last tour," Ruhl said, explaining why the latest songs form a better album than before. "It's true that you do have no time restraint in writing your first album. But then again, it's because of writing over such a long period of time

drawing people and that song is the reason why."

However, Ruhl noted a slight downside to being known for just one song. "It's kind of rough because you had people coming to see us that want to hear that one song and that's about it... but then again I think of me going to see a band. [Laugh]. Most of the time I probably only know one song going to see a band I've only heard of. That's the exact same thing."

However, the band can take confidence in the fact that they have built a fan base through more than just one release. The entire *Soap Bubble* project contains several tracks with diverse sounds and interesting arrangements, like 'Cans' and 'Circus Song'. The driving force behind the lyrics is indubitably the lead singer, Paul Jago. Ruhl hesitated to speak much about him for fear of stating something untrue, but he did profess that Jago is a diligent, intelligent song writer. "Well, Paul writes the lyrics himself and he spends a lot of time on them. And he's big on arts and literature. He reads more than anybody I know, that's for sure." Jago's knowledge and grandiose usage of language are quite evident in the band's press releases. More importantly, his university

experience apparently aids him as his song issues span several topics and ideas.

With their national status to date, the Gandharvas have been criss-crossing Canada and have also campaigned south of the 49th Parallel. "Our first album was picked up by a label out of Chicago, so we've been down there a few times. We've been to New York to do a showcase, too. But that's just crazy. New York's insane, it's so big," he said. But while Ruhl has been experiencing more exposure to

America, their recent video illumination of the puck in the NHL All-star had him laughing. "Did you see the little lasers? God, it's disgusting!" he exclaimed. "You know what the reason is? They just couldn't see the puck, right? A Canadian will always know where the puck is going because Canadians know how to play hockey, so they know deep back in their brain where the puck's going and where it should be going." Then, as a humorous, final afterthought: "Americans should stick to football."

Despite his hockey purism and enthusiasm, Ruhl has yet to watch the Toronto Maple Leafs on their home ice, even though he resides in nearby London. But somehow that seems to fit Ruhl's persona; a down-to-earth fellow who avoids big city life and glamorous living. When asked about his reason for entering into the world of touring and recording, he replied, "I'm just a fan of music and that's all I needed... And I wanted to be a rock star. And I still do. [Laugh]. Nah, I'm just kidding. I'm too young and too shy."

"You've gotta be pretty extravagant to be a rock star."

You've gotta be pretty extravagant to do that."

Seeming far from extravagant, the

Gandharvas should fit in nicely with Fredericton. Presenting their personalities, ideas, but most importantly, their music to the crowd next week, the performance of their growing set list should make people aware that they sing more than just one song. Those showing up to hear 'The First Day of Spring' on the last day of January could be pleasantly surprised.

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and peddled their product out west. While not yet providing a hit commercial single like 'The First Day of Spring' from their debut CD, *A Soap Bubble and Inertia*, Ruhl expressed immense pleasure with the new album. "I think *Kicking In the Water* does carry the band name even though it may not be as publicly known [as the debut CD]. I think it's a way better album, for sure."

The songs for *Kicking In the Water* were constructed well in advance of last year's recording sessions. In fact, the 'new' songs may sound familiar for anyone who has witnessed the Gandharvas in person. "We had a lot of

that [the first album] doesn't flow well. This new one flows, you can tell."

It is virtually impossible to recognize the Gandharvas without associating them with their uplifting and vibrant song of rebirth, 'The First Day of Spring'. But Ruhl would never have guessed that to be the tune to bring the quintet national stature. "We just didn't expect that at all," he said in his hushed tone. "I don't think we even picked that song [as a single]. We thought it should be something poppy, like 'The Coffee Song'. I think MCA or somebody picked it and we went, 'Really?!' Y'know, we thought that was strange. But we're still

...COMPETITION TIME...COMPETITION TIME...COMPETITION TIME...COMPETITION TIME...

Yup, it's back again after its Christmas holidays. And we have a special Gandharvas giveaway to celebrate the fact that they are coming to town next Wednesday night. We have THREE copies of their latest album to hand out to anyone who can answer the following question:

Name either of the Gandharvas' albums

Get your answers into The Bruns office by Tuesday at 6 pm, and the first three correct entries pulled from the Bruns duckboot wins. Simple as that.