

Opting for obscurity: Music you won't hear on MTV

By **SCOTT JACOBSON**
Staff Writer

Long ago, in the bygone days of early rock and roll, there was no single prerequisite for mainstream musical success. Constant touring helped propel a struggling band into the public spotlight, as did radio airplay, television appearances, and plain luck, but overnight success stories were fairly rare. Then came MTV. The seemingly harmless network debuted in the early eighties and was initially looked upon by the entertainment industry as just another face in the struggling crowd of up-and-coming cable channels.

Today, however, the once weak and undistinguished MTV is an entertainment giant, capable of granting a band success and yanking it away again all in one fell swoop of the program director's pen. Simply put, getting a video played regularly on MTV does for a rock group what even a coveted *Ed Sullivan Show* appearance couldn't have managed: it repeatedly thrusts them under the noses of millions of malleable and money-burning American kids.

Music Television is a wolf in Doc Martens and threadbare flannel, ordering the 13 to 25

demographic with Buzz Clips and cool VJs to fork over their allowances to the worthy cause of "alternative music." Its influence envelopes the music world and dictates public tastes. Consequently, a great deal of worthy music is never even given a stab at widespread popularity. Don't kid yourself: there's more to nineties pop than Green Day or the Cranberries. You just have to look for it.

Thanks to the four-track recorder and boom box with condenser mike...today's wannabe rock stars have full access to a crude recording studio in their own bedrooms.

Enter "bedroom rock," admittedly more of a suitable nickname than a bona fide genre. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of frustrated bands and musicians labor tirelessly in their own homes to produce music that is often doomed to hopeless obscurity, but shouldn't be ignored. Their reasons for not bothering with real recording studios are often financial: most bands simply can't afford the fees. Thanks to the four-track recorder and boom box with condenser mike, however, today's wannabe rock

stars have full access to a crude recording studio in their own bedrooms. As a result, a great deal of noteworthy music has been produced by artists whose work normally wouldn't find an audience.

The most popular example of late is Dayton Ohio's Guided by Voices. Led by thirtysomething grade-school teacher Robert Pollard, GBV churned out poorly distributed

side the realm of home recordings, but lead singer and guitarist Franklin Bruno has established himself as the premier lyricist of the bedroom rock world with his low-key solo releases. Bruno, who hails from the mystic Inland Empire of southern California, writes songs that manage to be at the same time catchy and refreshingly cerebral. Few singer-songwriters besides Bruno could manage to seamlessly fit references to Joseph Cornell, Jane Pratt, or tableaux vivant into the matrix of a pop song without sounding hideously pretentious. In addition to their clever word play, Bruno's songs often manage to put a refreshing spin on the tired subjects of unrequited crushes and bored lust.

Such originality offers a welcome break from the norm; most contemporary pop artists have exhausted their supply of original ideas and now resign themselves to an auxiliary store of cliché-ridden lyrics that serve as little more than sonic space fillers. In a world where Dead-eye Dick's moronic "She's a Vegetarian" song resides comfortably at the top of the charts, we need songwriters like Bruno who take for granted that their audience actually does listen to the words.

You've probably been in the dark about these artists or the independent rock scene in general, but that's understandable. After all, you won't find most of these groups on *Alternative Nation* or in the "New Faces" section of *Rolling Stone*. If you're interested in expanding your musical horizons a bit and giving home-recorded music a chance, try writing to the labels listed below for catalogs filled with cheap (as low as \$3.00 for most tapes) but remarkable music, or dig a little deeper in the bins of your local independent record shop. Other groups (or individuals) well worth looking into include the Mountain Goats, Strapping Fieldhands, Butterglory, Alastair Galbraith, and the Silver Jews. Don't let their obscurity scare you: home-recording artists often put flavor of the month buzz bands to shame.

Walt Records (carries releases by F. Bruno, many others) 89 Fairview Ave., Port Washington, NY 11050; Scat (GBV, NPB) 5466 Broadway #200, Cleveland, OH 44127; Shrimper, P.O. Box 1837, Up-land, CA 91785

A Viewer's Choice

Dumb and Dumber: It's not as bad as you've heard

By **BRIAN YEN**

Staff Writer

Jim Carrey has become an overnight success story in 1994. From his beginnings on *In Living Color*, Carrey has become one of the biggest and highest paid stars in Hollywood. He has already made three hit movies this year: *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective*, *The Mask*, and most recently, *Dumb and Dumber*. While some may criticize the exorbitant amount of money that he demands for each movie, Carrey's performances have brought in some of the largest profits of 1994. *Dumb and Dumber* earned \$40.7 million in the first two weeks alone. Over the holiday weekend, it was number one in ticket sales.

Dumb and Dumber is a slapstick comedy reminiscent of Carrey's other film, *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective*. Directed by Peter Farrelly, the film stars Carrey and Jeff Daniels (*Speed*, *Arachnophobia*). Carrey and Daniels play two friends, Lloyd and Harry, who drive from Providence to Aspen to return a briefcase left by a wealthy woman played by Lauren Holly (*Picket Fences*, *Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story*). The plot also involves kidnappers trying to retrieve ransom money which is contained within the briefcase. However, the plot is unimportant and overshadowed by the off-the-wall humor of Carrey and Daniels. It is just a silly film filled with a lot of sight gags, off-color humor, and Carrey at his best.

Carrey and Daniels play well

off each other in *Dumb and Dumber*. Carrey's bowl cut and Daniels' shaggy dog outfit are enough to make you at least crack a smile.

This, combined with the duo's physical comedy and totally idiotic conversations, make you laugh aloud. Probably the most humorous aspect of the film is implied by the title. This movie is just so blatantly dumb and silly that you cannot help but guffaw. Take, for instance, the snowball fight scene. When I watched this scene I knew it was utterly ridiculous and silly, but I could not

stop from laughing.

The movie is also full of a lot of off-color and bathroom humor. Again, I knew this type

of humor was a very low, unoriginal, and blatant attempt to make people laugh. However, I walked into the movie in a silly mood and couldn't prevent myself from letting out at least a slight laugh when Harry drinks tea which has been doctored with laxative. The movie can only be enjoyed if you are in a silly and light mood, as the humor is often very silly and low-brow. The merit of this film, as summarized by senior Hao Zhu, "It wasn't a good movie, but I laughed so hard I wet myself."

