

*LEE DEVITO*

*2013 Portfolio*

# *Longform*

Various long-form writing samples for website copy, press releases, and journalism.

DUM DUM GIRLS

*Only in Dreams*

*Sub Pop*



*California Ghouls: Dum Dum Girls make deceptively sunny garage-pop.*

**O**n early singles, L.A.'s Dum Dum Girls seemed determined to out-scuzz and out-fuzz contemporaries Vivian Girls and Best Coast as if 'lo-fi' was a race to the bottom. But behind the scuzz and the fuzz (and gothy visage) lay a knack for catchy, sunny pop songs, brought to the forefront here thanks to squeaky-clean production from girl-group production vet Richard Gottehrer and The Raveonettes' Sune Rose Wagner. The Girls clean up nicely—the songs shimmer with garage-pop appeal, from the call-and-response chorus of opener "Always Looking" to the cinematic six-minute plus slow burner "Coming Down". 🇺🇸

BEN BLACKWELL

*I Remember When All This Was Trees*

Cass Records

When his house burned down in a fire a couple years ago, Dirtbombs drummer and scene fixture Ben Blackwell left Detroit for Nashville to help run Third Man Records, prompting a “Where Is Ben Blackwell?” bumper sticker campaign to spring up around town. Turns out Blackwell misses Detroit, too: his first solo record comprises entirely of odes to Detroit, varying from acoustic folk to takes on hip-hop and electronic music.

He may be nostalgic, but apocalyptic themes pervade—“I Can’t See Through The Plywood Windows” could be about Blackwell’s or the hundreds of other burnt-out houses of Detroit, while “Gordon Newton, 1970” is a burst of guitar noise as abstract as the junk assemblages of the Cass Corridor artist it is named after. “The Nain Rouge” is perhaps the album’s centerpiece, a “Sympathy For The Devil” parody about a little known red demon of local lore said to appear whenever bad happens, sinking the Edmund Fitzgerald, throwing the brick that started the ’67 riots... even bringing the People Mover, among other references. It’s a rough and scattered collection, and Blackwell never treats it too precious— the songs were performed and recorded by Blackwell directly to his laptop— but it functions well as a sonic diary of someone who will always be a Detroiter at heart. 🇺🇸



*Where is Ben Blackwell? Making his solo debut, that's where.*

DOOM BOP

*800beloved front man Sean Lynch's surprising penchant for teen pop proves he ain't all doom and mortuaries*

**B**ased on his morbid pop music sensibilities, not to mention his day profession, it's easy to imagine Sean Lynch being a nocturnal person. Thus, it's not at all surprising when Lynch says he can meet for an interview after midnight.

"It's not conscious — like I say to myself, 'You're going to write another song about death,'" Lynch says of his band 800beloved and its recently released *Bouquet* album, a collection of 11 spooky (albeit romantic) pop gems. The darkness "is evident; it's all around," he continues. "You really can't avoid it. It's not like I'm extra privy to it because of where I work."

Lynch is referring to his day job as a cosmetologist at the suburban Milford funeral home run by his father, the famed author Thomas Lynch. Sean Lynch will admit, however, that working with the dead on a daily basis makes it harder for him to forget or even ignore the dark subject.

"The difference is that when most people are going about their weekend, they aren't aware that death is always there," he says. "But when I get off work, I have to think, 'What are you going to take from this? Should you shove it to the forefront? Or are you going to try to see something else behind it?'"

A casual listener might not pick up on the goth side of *Bouquet* ... at first. Despite the singer's otherworldly baritone drone, many of the album's songs sound deceptively upbeat to the uninformed ear.

"The formulas are all the same" in pop music, he argues, noting the big choruses, hooks, and bridges method that's been the basis of the pop song since the form began. The music "was just me trying to stay conscious of the pop format. But it's no different than, say, the Kelly Clarkson chemistry."

And that pop-meets-goth formula is apparent on the song "Mortgage Your Organs," which blends horror-movie synth jabs and trembling vocals



with his aforementioned technique. "Mortgage' is basically about twentysomething culture," he says, "about dropping your pants after a few drinks in a bar. When you're in your 20s and early 30s, you give yourself more room to fuck up in terms of

**"IT'S NOT CONSCIOUS – LIKE I SAY TO MYSELF, YOU'RE GOING TO WRITE ANOTHER SONG ABOUT DEATH."**

nightlife. On that song, I'm playing devil's advocate. It's actually a real cute song disguised as a real dark song. But in the end, it's just saying, 'Party, kids, party!'"

Lynch rapidly rattles off his influences for *Bouquet*, which he refers to as a "template" record with an intentionally limited palette. Most of the overt influences are '80's and '90s British post-punk bands such as the Psychedelic Furs, the Jesus and Mary Chain, early Primal Scream, My Bloody Valentine and the Vaselines. And lurking in all the songs is that

aforementioned undeniably strong pop sensibility.

"I tend to easily do post-punk music," he says. "It's harder for me to write really jangly pop music, though. That whole *Degrassi-meets-Saved By The Bell* thing — which just screams 'After-school special' is hard for me to write." He pauses. "I wish it came as easy as the whole doom and gloom thing."

Those two opposing forces — pop's lust for life and death's omnipresence — comprise the core of 800beloved. For the band's record release show at the CPOP Gallery earlier this year, Lynch decked the venue out in streamers, balloons and funeral flowers. Combining that setting with the group's swirling mix of shoegaze noise and dance beats, the whole thing gave the creepy impression of a high school prom held as a sort of *danse macabre*.

"It's not anything original, though," Lynch admits, citing similar traits in such current bands as My Chemical Romance, Interpol and the Cure. "But coming from a small town, as I do, and the fact that I can't exactly shake the funeral business ... well, I think there's a little bit more validity to what I do."

The album closer, "Cut Flowers," is another good example of Lynch's meditations on mortality, as he muses on the temporal nature of beauty.

"It's not so much about how flowers are beautiful," he says, "as it is a comment on how everything is just this momentary thing. The flowers will only last for a limited time. The cover of *Bouquet*, which has this beautiful woman on it, is the same theme. The artwork just kind of happened — but someone could look at it and think, 'Well, she's momentary.' The songs are all momentary. Any interest in this record is momentary."

That may be. But the effort put forth by Lynch in the recording of the album was a little more than just momentary. Started in September 2005, the record took more than three years to complete.

"People kept telling me that I had to learn a professional program like ProTools," he says. "And every day that I worked on it, I learned something new that I couldn't do before." The long process found him switching from physical gear to learning how to use computer software.

The next step was transforming 800beloved from a studio project into a performance unit, which hasn't been easy with the band going through ever-shifting incarnations since its first show in 2006. (Lynch is currently the only permanent member of

800beloved.) And then there was the small matter of finding a record label. Fortunately, he found some big 800beloved fans at Moodgadget.

"I don't know how correct I am in saying this," he says, "but they might be some sort of incestuous cousin of Ghostly," the latter referring to Ann Arbor-based Ghostly International, which shared Moodgadget founder Jakub Alexander as an A&R exec. "When you're working on a record for 39 months, doing everything yourself, the only words you're looking for [from a label] are 'May I help you?' So things clicked when Jakub wrote me an e-mail that read: 'I'm a big fan of this music, and even if we're not involved in a professional sense, I'd love to help get it out there.'"

In the foreseeable future, Lynch plans to play more shows, although his funeral business means that shows will have to be intermittent for now. There are, however, plans for a June tour.

"I'm not one of those people who has to play night after night to get my rocks off," he says. Nevertheless, Lynch feels a responsibility to give back to 800beloved's developing fan base. "I feel like there's something that's owed to the kids who waited for the record for three years. We had some kids who drove 12 hours from Kansas City to see us when we played in Chicago."

As for the next 800beloved record, "I don't want to do another giant 'three years in the making' huge effort," he says with a hint of weariness, announcing that the next 800beloved release will be an EP called *Everything Purple*.

"I want to do something that sounds like four people recorded it in a weekend this time, just kind of fun and playful. [The music] will probably be more of that wanting to write an intro song for a melodramatic teenage film, though."

For someone who spends his days meticulously preparing corpses for viewing, it's understandable why Lynch would avoid similar treatment in his music's post-production and go for a more lively approach instead.

"I'm not using any plug-ins this time," he says. "I'm boycotting the computer. I don't want to see my music anymore. I want to hear it. That's why just throwing up a mic on a proper amp and closing my eyes is going to be the best routine." 

OF BATS AND BEATS

*Phantasmagoria mix digital and organic sounds for a dreamy racket that is all their own*

The band Phantasmagoria is pretty weird. Not its members, couple Christopher Jarvis and Lianna Vanicelli, themselves—they are cute kids who are happy to answer questions over coffee about their music and their promising debut, *Spirit*, recently released as a download on the website Bandcamp. But the weirdness at the core of the band bubbles up occasionally, like when they are asked about “Bats!”, a song off their record that also turns out to be named after one of its... well, unlikelier vocal contributors.

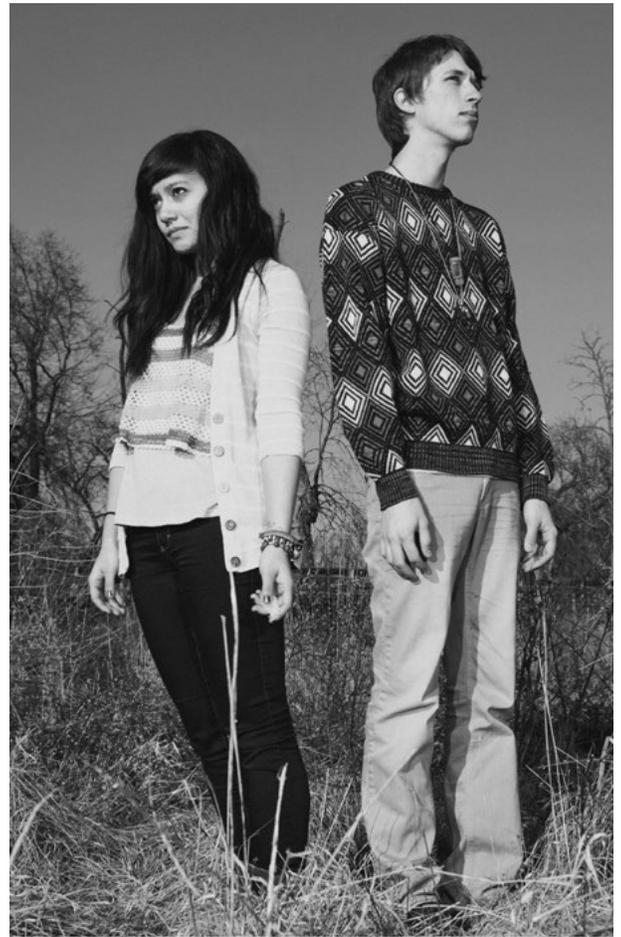
“I started making that song with eight samples of actual bat frequencies,” Jarvis says. “I was looking for all kinds of different animal samples and I found those.”

So, why bats? Jarvis answers matter-of-factly: “It sounded cool.”

Well, what’s it about? ““Bats!”... is about a lot of things,” Vanicelli replies. “It’s a lot about frustration, like, frustration with people. And also the beginning of our relationship. And buildings...”

The band, with its idiosyncratic answers and genre-defying songs, proves to be hard to pin down. Jarvis coolly describes Phantasmagoria’s music simply as “electronic pop”, and with Vanicelli’s beautiful vocal delivery and the duo’s penchant for synth-driven music it is a fair description. But the songs’ arty tendencies cannot be ignored, most of which are lush arrangements that surpass the five-minute mark and are known to possess any combination of clean, meticulously layered electronic beats, primitive, tribal-sounding live percussion, or samples of animal noises—oftentimes all in one song.

“We both like techno,” Jarvis explains, “but we wanted to do something that was not so cold and computerized, with kind of a warmer feel to it.” *Spirit* album-opener “Indian Burial Ground” offers a good demonstration of Phantasmagoria’s



collision of digital and organic sounds, starting off with a programmed beat that makes way for a world where campfire chanting and drum-banging

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coexist with hypnotic, glitchy voice samples.

Or perhaps “Oscoda” does a better job at summing up the Phantasmagoria ethos: over squeaky-clean synth riffs, Jarvis admits, “*But it felt good/The animal in me coming out*”. Other songs incorporate a variety of other sounds, both machine and nature-made— chirping crickets, birds, bubbling water, and fireworks.

The band’s moniker, then, is quite fitting— ‘phantasmagoria’ means a dream-like sequence

of images (Jarvis stumbled upon it while reading *Into The Wild*). Jarvis cites experimental bands like Radiohead, Boards of Canada, and Dan Deacon as personal influences, while Vanicelli mentions acts like Broken Social Scene and Shiny Toy Guns, with the duo professing to a shared love of The Beatles. Jarvis also admits to an adoration of the Ann Arbor-based electronic music label Ghostly International, but is quick to squash any delusions of grandeur: “Too bad they already have Phantogram on their label,” he jokes.

Phantasmagoria has been the focus for the two for about a year and half, and the band has only played ten or so shows in this incarnation. “We were in another band before this, like an actual rock band,” Vanicelli explains. “This kind of evolved from the last band. We’ve always been more into electronic music so we started making songs together.”

“When we first started we didn’t really have any idea at all that it would become this. It was just us making songs for fun,” Jarvis says, who started the project with some sonic experiments he made alone on his computer with no intention of them being Phantasmagoria songs. It was only after he showed them to Vanicelli for her to make lyrics to that the songs took on a new life. This method—Jarvis as a lone mad scientist, with Vanicelli breathing life into his creations—is how the pair have and continue to create all of their songs. “I’ll pretty much make a whole song, like an instrumental cut, before [Lianna] even hears it, and then she’ll write a vocal melody for it. And then I’ll recreate it based on her vocal melody.”

Jarvis is usually surprised at the directions the songs wind up going once Vanicelli adds the human element of her voice. “It’s nothing at all what I ever expected it to be,” he says. “It’s way better.”

Though both consider themselves fans of electronic music, Vanicelli doesn’t consider herself an electronic musician, per se. “I’m primarily a vocalist, and I play percussion on the live aspect and on some of the records”, she says. Neither started in electronic music. Vanicelli was in the drumline in high school while Jarvis started on guitar.

“I’m not musically trained at all. I don’t know anything about music, to be honest,” Jarvis claims. “We’re more overall just into melodies and creating pop songs, I guess. You don’t really need technical instrumentation all the time.”

*Spirit* was made in a makeshift studio by the two over the course of a year. “We did it all in my bedroom,” Jarvis deadpans. The trick was finding a way to play the songs, which only ever existed as files on Jarvis’s computer, live with just two people. “One minute I’m playing a drum, one minute I’m playing a keyboard, one minute I’m turning knobs,” Jarvis explains of the band’s live set up, with a hint of mock-exhaustion. “You have to get used to the sequence of everything.” The live set up is a mix of high and low tech—computer software for DJing samples, a pair of keyboards, a tom, a cymbal, and a maraca.

The two admit it is a strange set-up, but have declined the impulse to add any other band members. “We’ve thought a bout it. We’ve gotten offers to,” says Jarvis. “But right now I think it’s easier with just the two of us. We’re both into it equally.”

The band caught attention early in their career playing a house show organized by friend and fan Randy Chabot (better known as local electro-pop fave Deastro) at last year’s first Woodbridge Oktoberfest. “There was a stage right outside the Woodbridge Pub, and we played down the street [from it] on a porch,” Vanicelli says. “We started playing and all these people came down the street. It was like a big block party.”

In 2011, the band hopes to keep things moving forward. They plan on playing some impromptu house shows on the way down to the South By Southwest Festival in Austin with their friends The Kodaks. (“We just met them, actually,” Vanicelli adds. “It was really nice of them.”) The band also hopes to put out more music, and is already working on the next album. “We definitely want to do some physical releases,” Jarvis says. “It’s my dream to put out vinyl.”

And then there’s Detroit Produce, an electronic collective Phantasmagoria is a founding member of, made up of mostly friend DJ’s. The collective has put on a show at CAID in December and have another one coming up at Oslo after Blowout, with plans to put out a compilation as well. Jarvis acknowledges that Phantasmagoria is not a typical dance-oriented electronic band but says that the collective has been a good match regardless: “We open the show, because we really don’t fit anywhere else.” Vanicelli adds, “We open it, and then after that it’s a dance party.” 

## THE DIRTBOMBS

*Party Store*  
*In The Red*

**M**ick Collins has always seemed a little resentful of his rock and roll hero status. As the Dirtbombs' frontman and member of influential garage band the Gories, Collins has found himself repeatedly downplaying his relationship with garage rock, insisting his musical interests lay all across the map. Perhaps as a reaction to this, the Dirtbombs became known for an arsenal of smart, if unlikely, cover songs. Their landmark *Ultraglide In Black* was a conceptual covers album of mostly R & B and soul songs that could mash up Curtis Mayfield with Bauhaus, while their prolific singles catalog features a range of covers from the Temptations to ADULT.

Which is why the announcement that the band's latest LP *Party Store* would be an *Ultraglide* sequel centered on 80's Detroit techno sounded surprising, but not impossible. A decidedly self-conscious choice given the Dirtbombs' dual reputations as a 'Detroit band' and a 'rock band', but *Party Store* serves as a decent primer to the genre. Songs by each of the Belleville Three, Detroit techno's founding fathers, appear here: two songs from Juan Atkins's outfit Cybotron (regarded as the first Detroit techno release), as well as Kevin Saunderson's Inner City and Derrick May's Rhythm is Rhythim.

But *Party Store* isn't just a history lesson. The songs that work the best strip the originals' absorption with then-new technology and cut to the hooks. Without its drum machines and samples, Cybotron's "Cosmic Cars" is reborn as an aggressive, muscular rocker. A Number of Names' "Shari Vari" stays close to the original's slinky noir-ish disco, but Collins ditches the original's digitized voice for his best Dracula impersonation. And Inner City's synthpop hit "Good Life" is a knockout, its synthesizer track reimagined as a perfectly out of control guitar riff, with quite possibly Collins' best ever vocal delivery. Overall, the collection feels right at home in the Dirtbombs' vein of sometimes dark, sometimes geeky, but always grungey pop.



That's not to say that this isn't the Dirtbombs' most sonically experimental record. The only times one might really be aware they are listening to a techno covers record are during their inventive reinterpretations of all-instrumental electronic dance tracks like Rhythim is Rhythim's "Strings Of Life" and Aztec Mystic's "Knights of the Jaguar". Not every experiment is perfect, though; "Tear The Club Up" sounds restrained compared to the relentless, manic stupidity of DJ Assault's version. Carl Craig's jazzy "Bug In The Bassbin" gets extended to twenty-plus minutes, alternating between windstorm synthesizers, searing bursts of guitar, and a droning, hypnotic drumbeat. It's the album's most difficult track, but Craig offers the band his blessing by way of some guest synthesizer playing.

In the liner notes to their 2005 singles compilation, Collins explained the Dirtbombs as being "a big, loud, touring kinetic sculpture MASQUERADING as a rock band", able to shapeshift considerably while maintaining a consistent sound. The point? Perhaps that stylistic divisions— rock, soul,

**“SHARI VARI” STAYS CLOSE TO THE ORIGINAL'S SLINKY NOIRISH DISCO, BUT COLLINS DITCHES THE DIGITIZED VOICE FOR HIS BEST DRACULA IMPERSONATION.**

techno— are bullshit anyway. Collins and company have a knack for making every good song seem as though it's a rock and roll song in the end. Which is why the Dirtbombs may very well be the ultimate rock and roll band. 🍷

THE URBAN BEAN CO.

*Local Techno Fan Ignites Detroit Nightlife With  
New Coffee Shop*

From what I understand, it was a hamburger stand in the 50's, then a sub shop, and then an electronic, hip hop, and jazz record store called Save The Vinyl throughout the 90's," explains Josh Greenwood of his unusual building's many past tenants. Its current incarnation is The Urban Bean Company, a chic orange building that contrasts starkly with its gray surroundings on the corner of Griswold and Grand River in downtown Detroit.

The coffeehouse is a labor of love for Greenwood, who bought the building in 2002, and started working on it in 2005. "It was empty when I got it, except for a guy squatting here," he says. "They put up blinds so you couldn't see what was going on."

One would never guess that, looking at the building now. Since it officially opened in late February it is as much a work of art as it is a coffeehouse, with its rigidly applied orange color scheme, carrying from the comic signage outside to the lighting to the coffee mugs. Dormouse, a local design collective that has done work for other cool downtown hangouts like the Magic Stick and Twingo's, did the intricate metalwork details, which includes a DJ booth and a copper bar. "I did a full building restoration," Greenwood says proudly. "I redid the basement, I sandblasted the outside, I jackhammered the floor, I cinderblocked the walls... basically everything you see was not here."

Greenwood picked the location of Capitol Park, a somewhat vacant area just west of Woodward between the recent developments in Grand Circus Park and Campus Martius, because he thought it would soon catch up. Its proximity to Comerica Park attracts baseball fans, but it is also developing a stable of Wayne State regulars who come to use wireless Internet and the upstairs as a quiet place to study.

Presently, the Urban Bean Company offers over a dozen drinks and pastries, from Mexican Hot Chocolate to Chai Latte, and even delivers to the greater downtown area. In Greenwood's own words, "We have caffeine, nicotine, chocolate, pop,



politics, the Internet, television and media... all the stuff that is legally bad for you." Ambient electronic music constantly pulses through the sound system, though Greenwood welcomes people to bring their own vinyl of other styles of music. "We have open turntables, so people can come in and play whatever records they want," he explains, a nod to the building's record store days.

**"I DID A FULL BUILDING RESTORATION. I JACKHAMMERED THE FLOOR, I SANDBLASTED THE OUTSIDE... BASICALLY EVERYTHING YOU SEE WAS NOT HERE."**

Greenwood's electronic music fandom should come as no surprise, because the Urban Bean Company was an official sponsor and ticketseller for the Detroit Electronic Music Festival. It was open all weekend, hosting late night afterparties serving as a transitional step as Greenwood prepares the Urban Bean Company to become a 24-hour coffeehouse.

You can visit The Urban Bean Co. on the web at <http://urbanbeanco.com/> 

WELCOME TO THE FILLMORE, DETROIT!  
*Rebranded as The Fillmore Detroit, the former State Theater gets more than just a facelift*

**T**ake a ride down Woodward and you'll notice a new sign above the marquee of the old State Theater. On June 13th the theater was reborn as the Fillmore Detroit, named after the famous San Francisco counterculture hotspot that gave rise to acts like Jefferson Airplane and the Doors.

"What we're trying to do is establish an identity, like the House of Blues or the Hard Rock Café," explains Jennifer Berkemeier, the Special Events Director at the Fillmore Detroit. The concert promoter Live Nation is responsible for the countrywide conversions, with theaters in Denver, Philadelphia, and Miami recently joining the famous Fillmore East in New York and the original Fillmore in California, with more on the way.

New changes inside the theatre reflect the legacy that the Fillmore Detroit joins. Blue-lit chandeliers, made exclusively for the Fillmore theatres, now hang throughout the lobby and auditorium, contrasted by vermilion red walls and curtains. There is a "rock wall" of framed vintage and contemporary rock n' roll posters, as well as large photographs of Ozzy Osbourne, David Bowie, Ted Nugent, and Patti Smith playing at Michigan venues.

There is also a sign on one of the pillars in the lobby, scrawled with a comic "*Take one... or two.*" On the night of performances, a large basket is placed underneath the sign and filled with apples for guests to eat on their way into the theatre.

Berkemeier laughs at the idea of arming the audience with ammunition to throw at disappointing performers. "We were kind of nervous about a potential mess, but it hasn't been a problem yet," she says of the Fillmore tradition.

Some workers are doing construction on the dance floor area. "There's always some sort of work going on during the day," Berkemeier explains. "It's an old building, and it gets a lot of traffic," she says of the theatre, which was built in 1925. "If your house had this many visitors, you would be doing a lot of cleaning up, too."

Berkemeier walks us through the adjacent State Bar, which she describes as a "sports meets rock n' roll bar". Silk-screened posters by the Detroit artist Mark Arminski line the walls. The big screen TV is tuned in for all big Detroit games. Berkemeier motions out the window at Comerica Park across the street. "If the doors are open you can hear the game as you watch it on TV."

Last month the traveling punk festival, the Warped Tour, rolled into Comerica's parking lot. Though the Fillmore wasn't a venue, it was still involved with the festival by selling tickets. Berkemeier likes the idea of a music district, with Comerica Park across the street, the Fox Theatre next door, and the Max M. Fischer Music Center, the Detroit Opera House, and the Majestic Theatre Center nearby.

But Berkemeier is also hoping that the Fillmore Detroit can branch out beyond being a music venue. Since she moved to her job at the theatre from her job at Live Nation's corporate offices in Farmington Hills, she had made it a point to keep up with the goings-on of the downtown community. Already the theatre has a variety of atypical events lined up, such as a fashion show, the Detroit Motor Sports Awards, and even a boxing match. "I want the theatre to be involved with Detroit happenings," she says. "When people are thinking of a place to host their private parties or weddings, I want the Fillmore to be an option."

For more info, check out <http://thefillmoredetroit.com/> 

**"WHAT WE'RE TRYING TO DO IS ESTABLISH AN IDENTITY, LIKE THE HOUSE OF BLUES OR THE HARD ROCK CAFÉ."**