

# MUSIC IN WONDERLAND

944 takes a trip through a sonic rabbit hole and discovers the magic of Detroit's indie music scene

by **Rebecca Stevens**

photography by **Michelle Matiyow** for LM Studios



## Silverghost

**W**hen Marcie Bolen and Deleano Acevedo met at a Fourth of July party, the exploding fireworks weren't the only sparks flying. A shared interest in music brought the duo together and sparked the founding of Silverghost, their futuristic space-rock band.

Bolen grew up listening to her father's record collection and co-founded the Baby Killers, which eventually became the Von Bondies, and Acevedo started playing guitar when he was 12, but soon transitioned to the electronic instruments he uses today. Their musical pasts shaped and influenced their sound, and now the band is poised to release their first LP,

*The Year We Make Contact*, and three 7" records this summer.

"Every song that is on our new album captures our sound," says Bolen, who describes Silverghost as "Stooges-type guitar sounds with Gary Numan/Tubeway Army synthesizers."

Acevedo adds, "We are inspired by our emotions. The subject matter in our lyrics is heavy with conflicting issues that we both channel from real life experiences. Also, the psychological connection between technology and humans is a theme that recurs throughout our newer songs."

Catch Silverghost's unique sound this summer when they tour with The Murder City Devils.

[myspace.com/silverghostmusic](http://myspace.com/silverghostmusic)



## The Silent Years

**J**osh Epstein, Cassandra Verras, Ryan Clancy and Michael Majewski had all been playing music in Detroit for years before they came together as a band. Now collectively known as The Silent Years, the group has released an EP and two albums.

"It's hard to describe [our sound] without sounding egotistical," Epstein, lead vocalist and the band's founder, says. "I would like to think it has the good attributes of pop, but without the cheesy connotations — I hope."

The band has nothing to worry about. Their songs — including standouts like "Baptized," "On Our Way Home"

("It was kind of a starting point for us," Majewski says), "Forest Fire" ("It's a pretty good interpretation of what the band is like," Clancy says) and "Madame Shocking" ("It's whimsical and plays on different things from the history of pop music," Epstein says) — are infectious.

And with a new album on the horizon, there will be more music to love from The Silent Years in the near future. Epstein says, "I'm proud of the fact that we've been able to keep being a band and keep having things get better — keep making music that sounds better, that we're happier with."

[thesilentyears.com](http://thesilentyears.com)



## Zoos of Berlin

When Zoos of Berlin — Trevor Naud, Daniel I. Clark, Collin Dupuis and Will Yates — recorded their first album, *Taxi's*, they had a distinctly D.I.Y. approach. “We built a temporary recording studio from scratch, self-recorded and mixed the album, and then self-released it,” says keyboardist Will Yates.

That work ethic has made the band an indie success story. They now have a permanent studio space in Detroit where they’re currently working on their second album, and it’s had an interesting effect on the songwriting process. “Traditionally, Trevor and Daniel will start songs together, writing chord progressions and melodies, then

bring the unfinished songs to practice where we’ll flesh them out as a band,” Yates says. “[Now that] we have the luxury of recording whenever we want, we’ve been using the recording process itself as a songwriting tool — someone writes a part, we record it on the spot, and then we listen and write another part and build the songs that way.”

And the songs they’re crafting strike the perfect balance between pop and art, Yates says. “Having interesting textures and parts is important to us, but so is writing enjoyable pop music.”

[zoosofberlin.com](http://zoosofberlin.com)

## The Hard Lessons

“First and foremost, we are a rock ‘n’ roll band,” says Augie Visocchi, guitarist and vocalist for The Hard Lessons. “But we’re not afraid to try anything. We’ve experimented with shades of pop, country, punk — whatever inspires us at the time or whatever we feel the song calls for.”

That spirit of experimentation has been part

of The Hard Lessons’ story since Visocchi and keyboardist/vocalist (and now his wife) Korin Louise started the band six years ago in a tiny Michigan State University dorm room.

“It had a drum kit, bass rig, guitar amp, 4-track recorder and a couch,” Visocchi says. “We didn’t really have a long term plan.”

Despite their beginnings, Visocchi says the band, which now includes drummer Ryan V., has

accomplished more than they ever dreamed. They played one of the last shows at the original CBGB, opened for the Stooges, played Cobo Hall, toured Europe and released three LPs — including their latest, *Arms Forest* — and three 45s.

“As people who appreciate music history,” Visocchi says, “it is rewarding to have brushes with it, if not to create a little bit of our own.”

[thehardlessons.com](http://thehardlessons.com)



# Prussia

**B**rothers Drew and Ryan Spencer met Andrew Remdenok and Brenton Bober in high school. So when they decided to form a band, the group fit together naturally from the beginning. A few months ago, bassist/percussionist Adam Pressley, formerly of the band Otis, joined the group, and now Prussia is putting the finishing touches on their next album, *Poor English*, set to drop later this year.

"Our whole new album, I'd say, is quite the accomplishment," bassist Andrew Remdenok says. "As far as us playing our instruments, I think we've all become more technical with them."

For a band that grew up together, jamming their way through high school, growth and innovation are the cornerstone of their "psychedelic Motown" sound. Remdenok says, "Whatever we're listening to at the time is kinda what — I mean, not that we steal from it, but each one of the guys in the band has a different phase of listening to music. Somebody will be listening to dub, somebody will be listening to country, somebody will be listening to hip hop, and then it all comes together."

[myspace.com/prussiamusic](http://myspace.com/prussiamusic)





photo assistants **Megan Boltz** and **Rob Cousineau**  
hair/makeup (Silverghost, The Hard Lessons) **Sara Winter**  
special thanks to **Vogue Vintage, Neiman Marcus, The Loving Touch, The Trumbullplex, Shannon Coombs, Josh Stevens, Dante Caponecchia** and **The Spiveys**

Silverghost Photo Credits: Alice + Olivia dress; Christian Louboutin shoes; Vogue Vintage furniture

## Audra Kubat

“Picture yourself on an old Detroit porch with wooden boards and a rickety rocking chair,” says ethereal folk chanteuse Audra Kubat. “Young and old sit on the steps and in the yard, and together we find the will to live in this broken land, and our hearts can think of nothing to calm us but the sound of music mixing with our tears. This is how my music sounds.”

Kubat, a self-taught musician who began composing on the piano at 8 years old, weaves an evocative sense of narrative through her music, which is inspired by Detroit. “This city holds a tragic beauty that is difficult

to define,” Kubat says. “The struggle between surviving and suffocating here creates an amazing balance that then pushes one to create its parallel through art.”

Kubat, who has also scored several films and is currently pursuing an English degree at Wayne State University (“Any experience I can have with language helps me,” the songwriter says), is crisscrossing the Midwest this summer on a campground tour before returning home to record her new album, tentatively called *Uncommon Phenomena*.

[myspace.com/audrakubat](http://myspace.com/audrakubat)