

10,000 Maniacs Push Their New Album On Tour

By CHARLES BOWEN

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There were punk, power rock, new wave and rockability. Now Jamestown's 10,000 Maniacs are beginning their second tour of the Southeast coast billing themselves as makers of new folk music.

"It's simple melodies and strong rhythms," keyboardist Dennis Drew says, describing the Maniacs' music.

"A lot of bands today will sacrifice rhythm for melody and lyrics. We emphasize melodies, but the rhythm is still strong," Drew said during an interview with *The Post-Journal*.

The Maniacs began a 14-city, 23-gig tour Sept. 24 in Richmond, Va. Playing all club dates, the tour will take them as far south as Tampa, Fla. and includes dates in Athens and Savannah, Ga., Gainesville, Fla., Chapel Hill and Raleigh, N.C., Baltimore, Md., and Trenton, N.J. and as well as Albany, Rochester, Buffalo and Cleveland.

A similar journey was embarked upon in March. This time out, however, the band is playing in support of its first 10-song album — *Secrets of the I Ching*.

A five-song extended-play (EP) record *Human Conflict Number Five* was released last year and sold out its 1,000 copies in four months. The success of the EP, which was distributed by the band, prompted the album.

"The distributors called after they [the first records] were gone," Drew recalled.

After much debate among the band members, the group decided to record an LP, rather than simply press more copies of *Human Conflict*.

The band will again be hustling the album themselves, although Jean Records and Import Records of New York are lending a hand with the distribution.

Secrets contains no surprises, just what you would expect to hear if you've listened to the band perform live. Their strong characteristics — Robert Buck's space age guitar work and Natalie Merchant's performance of complex, socially cognizant lyrics — are again the springboard to the album's new wave, reggae and dance music sound.

New to the band is Jerome Augustyniak, formerly of The Elements, on drums. Augustyniak, who joined the Maniacs

in March, is the band's 10th drummer in their two-year existence.

Nine of the 10 songs on *Secrets* are new material with only *Tension* repeated from the EP. Some of the better efforts include *Katrina's Fair*, a bossanova piece about a woman with multiple personalities, *My Mother the War*, a straight ahead rock number depicting just what the title indicates, and *Daktari*, a reggae-type song that Miss Merchant describes as "fun and nonsensical."

The lyrics for *Daktari* were written by Miss Merchant and bassist John Lombardo while the pair watched a Buffalo Bills training camp session at Fredonia State College. The song describes people and their mannerisms, Miss Merchant said.

Other titles include *Grey Victory*, *Death of Manolete*, *Pit Viper*, *The Latin One*, and *National Education Week*.

The second song on the album, *Pour de Chirico*, about Giorgio de Chirico, considered the father of surrealism painting, could aptly apply to the Maniacs themselves.

"Artists are categorized with other artists in the same period of time," Miss Merchant said about the tribute to the Italian painter.

Despite Drew's labeling of the band's music as new folk, Miss Merchant said, "We have a hard time categorizing ourselves."

Referring to the band as "American pop, a combining of different forms of music," Miss Merchant admitted that folk music laced with electric guitar cords, in the 1990s tradition of The Byrds, have influenced the Maniacs music. Drew put the Maniacs in the same category as new folk music makers Aztec Camera, Translator, Alarm, and R.E.M., all of whom use reverberating electric guitar licks and straightforward rhythms as integral elements of their music.

A future project for the Maniacs is an Oct. 30 date in Jamestown to benefit the United Way. Long-range planning includes a possible video of *Katrina's Fair* and a single release of *Rum and Coke*.

Drew said the band aims to sell 2,000 pressed copies of *Secrets* with hopes of sales eventually reaching 5,000.

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