

Three Chords and the Truth

By Ronnie Narmour
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Welcome to post Labor Day! Got your felt hats ready to go? September is here and the masses have departed. Football is on the tube and the kiddos are back in school. Life is good... so is the music. I saw some amazing talent last week and want to tell you about a couple of upcoming shows you won't want to miss. But right now, time's a wasting... let's roll!

Milk Drive...



Milk Drive played the House of Rock on September 2nd.

I saw an absolutely amazing show at the House of Rock last Sunday when Milk Drive (Austin, TX) opened for Folk Family Revival (Houston, TX). I first heard about Milk Drive from my Okie friend Joe Mack. They're a young New Grass band who are turning heads all over the nation. Of the four members, Brian Beken, Noah Jeffries and Dennis Ludiker are multi-instrumentalists that trade around guitars, fiddles and mandolins like they would baseball cards. Matt Mefford plays upright bass. The term "New Grass" describes this kind of progressive bluegrass using traditional bluegrass instruments (acoustic guitar, stand-up bass, mandolin, fiddle and banjo) but incorporating jazz and rock into the arrangements and sometimes using non-traditional chord progressions and electric instrumentation. Nickle Creek, The String Cheese Incident, Bela Fleck and the Flecktones and New Grass Revival are examples of this flourishing genre.

In the course of their performance, Milk Drive played all the songs from their latest CD, *Waves*, of which all but three were original. The covers were by Bruce Robison (*Leavin'*), The Beatles (*Dear Prudence*) and James McMurtry (*Gulf Road*). There wasn't a dull moment the entire 90 minutes. It was rambunctious and lively from get to go. I was so impressed I haven't stopped playing their CD. Their arrangements were supremely complex and tight and their three part harmonies were spotless. These boys are on a dead run right now. They've been coast to coast twice in the past three months. Keep an eye out for Milk Drive... they are nothing short of magnificent.

Folk Family Revival...



Folk Family Revival played the House of Rock last Sunday.

Folk Family Revival followed Milk Drive. I knew nothing about this band but liked the sound of their name. I was a little tired from moving into a new apartment all weekend and thought I'd listen to a few songs and head back early. Not to happen. These guys came out with the vengeance of Nitocris. The band consists of three brothers, Mason Langford (vocals, acoustic guitar and harmonica), Lincoln Langford (drums), Barrett Langford (bass) and lifelong friend, Caleb Pace (lead guitar, mandolin and lap steel.) The Langford brothers first started playing music in church where their dad was music director. They enlisted

the talents of Pace early on and consider him a brother.

There's only one vocal mic on stage and Mason's behind it. His voice is clear and sexy, with a repressed fury he lets out one degree at a time. The band is tight... like you'd expect from family. The songs often start simply with just Mason on his customized Taylor or Godin. The bros ease in so smoothly, it's like watching a clear stream turn into a churning class five rapid. Their sound surrounds the audience with a lush and furious intensity. The vintage amps and totally tweaked out drum kit don't hurt either. It's not just folk or Americana or alt rock or gospel... it's all that... and something more. These boys have found a unique sound. Their edgy slant to the gospel song, *I'll Fly Away*, converted me. They wrote all 13 songs on their CD and the lyrics seem wise beyond their years. Their tune, *Unfolding*, is a stand-out. *Dream All Night* is the most passionately confessional love song I've ever heard. *Addicted to the Road* is a Nashville hit yet to happen. These guys are really on to something.

DO NOT MISS LIST



Mike Williams will play his CD Release Party with Rocky Arnold at the Tarpon Ice House on September 12th.

Mike Williams & Rocky Arnold CD Release Party...

Port Aransas crooner, Mike Williams, and 91 year old jazz keyboardist, Rocky Arnold, will release their new CD, *Ballads*, at the Tarpon Ice House on September 12th from 6:30 to 9:00 pm. I listened to the recording and it's a delightful collection of torch songs. Williams and Arnold do an excellent job on such gems as *Unforgettable* and the Sinatra classic, *This Love of Mine*. The eleven song package was recorded locally by L. Leon Sands and features the drumming efforts of Rick Lehman and Bob Hinckley. Rocky Arnold is a career musician who has played with such luminaries as Paul Desmond, Bud Freeman, Jack Teagarden and J.C. Higginbotham, and recorded with Slim Whitman. When I listened to this record, I envisioned a scene from Casablanca... two lovers at a dark corner table, a tuxedo clad waiter pouring champagne and a spotlight on the grand piano with rattan fan blades slowly turning...an elegant crooner singing love song after beautiful love song. This is truly beautiful music from a classic musical era. Congratulations to Mr. Williams and Mr. Arnold for putting this wonderful recording together. You can see Mike and Rocky perform every weekend at *Hemingway's* in Rockport.

John Prine...



Grammy winning folk artist John Prine will play Selena Auditorium on September 22nd.

Folk maestro, John Prine (Nashville, TN) and Austin's darling, Alejandro Escovedo, will play Selena Auditorium on Saturday, September 22nd. I know this show is a couple of weeks off, but

I want to talk about it now so you have time to secure your tickets.

LIVE MUSIC EVERY NIGHT

Tuesday, Sept. 11
Dart League Starts

Rocky Arnold & Mike Williams
CD Release Party Wed. Sept. 12

Tiffany Tuesday & The Rum Devils
Every Tuesday (7:00 pm)

Saturday, Sept. 15 Billy Snipes

TARPON ICE HOUSE

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The amazing Alejandro Escovedo will open for John Prine at Selena Auditorium on September 22nd.

I bought John Prine's first album in 1971 and learned every song. All my friends in Lubbock did too. For us, Prine set the mark. There was no finer comment on the times than *Paradise, Donald and Lydia, Hello in There, Sam Stone or Illego Smile*. His off center take on life and amiable finger picking style immediately made us disciples. I practically learned to play the guitar listening to Prine, Townes Van Zandt and Bob Dylan. In my mind, there were no stronger voices in this world. I pretty much still maintain that attitude.

Forty-one years and twenty-one records later, those songs still stand up and at 66, Prine is still "out there running just to be on the run." Poet Laureate, Ted Kooser, once said, "... (Prine) is truly an original writer, unequalled, and a genuine poet of the American people. ... He's taken ordinary people and made monuments of them, treating them with great respect and love."

Prine's latest CD, *The Singing Mailman (Oh Boy Records, October 2011)* is a two disc look at his early years circa 1970. His wife supplies the liner notes recalling the days when he was a mailman by day and singer-songwriter by night. Prine's body of work is staggering and if ever there was one, this is the DO NOT MISS SHOW not to miss.

Alejandro Escovedo...

Alejandro Escovedo will open for John Prine. Let's get something straight right now... I think this guy hung the moon. I first became aware of Escovedo when I was a bartender at *Hut's Hamburgers* in Austin in 1980. He played in some cool bands like Rank and File and True Believers (with Jon D. Graham) and was pals with my boss, the late Chuck Gist. We knew back then that he was the real deal every time he played *Hut's*. He's released 14 records since 1992. His 2006 CD, *Boxing Mirrors*, is arguably one of the finest collections of songs I've ever heard, short of Leonard Cohen.

In 2003, having lived with hepatitis C for many years, Escovedo's health began to decline and his medical bills began to climb. Friends and admirers from around the country organized benefits for the ailing artist and a tribute album, *Por Vida*, was recorded by contributing musicians that included Steve Earle, Jon D. Graham, Lucinda Williams, John Cale, Jennifer Warnes, Ian Hunter, The Jayhawks and Son Volt.

Escovedo's songs are on the dark side with a slicing poetic edge. The pairing with John Prine is an interesting choice, but it works, I think. He's playing all six of Prine's Texas engagements. Wouldn't you love to be a fly on the wall in that tour bus?

And that's the truth!

LIVE MUSIC TONIGHT

Sunday, September 9

Open Electric Jam w/ Rockin' Ricke @ Tarpon Ice House

Strung Out/ The Swellers/ Such Gold/ One Dollar Bob @ House of Rock

Henry & the Invisibles @ Dr. Rockits

Dave Matthews Tribute Band @ Brewster Street

Brian Permenter @ Scuttlebutt's

Monday, September 10

Open Jam w/ Antone Perez @ Doctor Rockits

Acoustic Monday w/ Justin Estes @ House of Rock

John Eric @ Scuttlebutt's

Tuesday, September 11

Tiffany Tuesday @ Tarpon Ice House

Open Mic w/ Rev. Matt Martinez @ House of Rock

Steven James & Shakedown @ Dr. Rockits

Jordan "Piano Man" Layton @ Scuttlebutt's

Wednesday, September 12

Rocky Arnold and Mike Williams CD Release @ Tarpon Ice House

Open Mic @ Executive Surf Club

Open Mic w/ Wolfjaw @ Flats Lounge

Beat-Off Drum Competition @ House of Rock

Rich Lockhart Band @ Dr. Rockits

Blake Sparx @ Scuttlebutt's

Thursday, September 13

Free Beer Band @ Tarpon Ice House

Ziegfest Battle of the Bands @ House of Rock

Antone & the All Stars @ Dr. Rockits

Trysum @ Scuttlebutt's

Thursday, September 6

Free Beer Band @ Tarpon Ice House

Street Dogs/ Koffin Kats/ The Booked/ Roll the Tanks/ Downtown Strutts @ House of Rock

John Cortez @ Dr. Rockits

Cody Canada & the Departed @ Brewster Street

Fabian Rivera @ Scuttlebutt's

Billy Snipes @ Shorty's

Friday, September 7

Aloha Dave & the Tourists @ Back Porch

Ray T & the City Crew @ The Flats Lounge

Tyga/ Kirko Bangz/ Iggy Azalea/ Jinsu @ Concrete Street

Reno & the Groovegetters @ Dr. Rockits

Flashback @ Executive Surf Club

Spazmatics @ Brewster Street

Fabian Rivera @ Scuttlebutt's

David & Barbara Brown @ Coffee Waves

Saturday, September 8

Mike Milligan & the Altar Boys @ Back Porch

Tejas Brothers @ Third Coast Theater

Vallejo/ The 71's @ House of Rock

Shawn Pittman @ Dr. Rockits

Nick Gaitan & Umbrella Man @ Executive Surf Club

Second Saturday Sing-Along Piano Show @ Brewster Street

Mad Dog Wolf @ Scuttlebutt's

Ruben Limas @ Office Lounge

Earl Gard @ Coffee Waves

BACK PORCH

FRI. 9/7	SAT. 9/8	FRI. 9/14
Aloha Dave & The Tourists	Mike Milligan & the Altar Boys	Buster Jiggs

Fri. 9/22 RANDY MCALLISTER

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