

Millvale Music Festival A Success in First Year



Lee Prisby of Klaymore performs at The Grist House metal stage.

Randy Jarosz/Sound Scene Express

By Randy Jarosz

Millvale saw its inaugural music festival go off with out a hitch May 13. The festival marks the third all Pittsburgh band music festival in the city. That is quite the testament to the musicians around town. R.A.N.T. in

August features the Lawrenceville area, while Deutchtown Music Festival in July features the North Side of Pittsburgh, in particular the Deutchtown neighborhood. The Strip District had a similar type festival in

the past but has stopped since losing their feature venue, The Altar Bar. Estimates of 5,000 people were in attendance spread out over 16 venues. Brian Crawford, one of the festival organizers and

Millvale resident said, "We had a booking committee who looked at the various venues and the artists who applied (over 400). Our committee matched up bands based on what styles would fit appropriately with various stages and who could fit into each stage.

See more photos on page 3



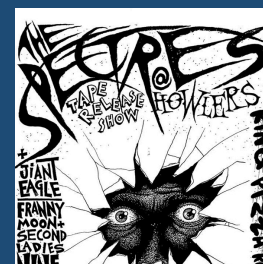
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Molly Alphabet Shines on Classic New EP, “Traces”



By Melanie Stangl

The last original recorded material from local country outfit Molly Alphabet came out in January 2012. So it’s safe to say we’re overdue for their brand new five-song EP, *Traces*. It officially drops on Saturday, May 13th, with a release show that same night at the AOH Club in the band’s home base of Lawrenceville. It’s unfortunate that the wait was so long, but it’s clear that that time was well-used. *Traces* exemplifies all of country’s best characteristics.

“Country” has the capacity to be somewhat of an off-putting word for many music lovers, but this record shows just how captivating it can be when done well. Storytelling; having new, interesting things to say; classic instruments that come together in smart, thoughtful ways; and a little bit of twang—this is what good country is really about. Luke Bryan, Miranda Lambert,

and their insincere ilk can have a seat. Rockabilly and folk influences are also apparent here, in touches such as rollicking guitar riffs and shimmering organ-sounding keys. This makes for a blend of classic styles that’s very much their own.

Each song on the group’s 2012 self-titled release was written by Molly’s collaborator and husband, Chet Vincent (of the Big Bend.) On *Traces*, however, he only pens the fourth track, “White Wine.” He, of course, remains an important instrumental contributor, but Molly’s songwriting chops are on full display here, and they’re impressive. The EP is consistently charming, intimate, and thoughtful. It somehow manages to be a comforting listen while repeatedly surprising you. Easy-to-listen-to instrumentals, which ebb and flow so seamlessly, tend to accompany uncomfortable or heavy lyrical subject matter. It’s as if she’s cleverly wrapped her problems, or things she might have trouble saying, in the warmest, most

timeless packaging. Her lovely voice, through which her lifelong Pittsburgh residency shines, is a key element of that as well. Simply put, this is old-fashioned done very, very right.

The band consists of Molly Alphabet on lead vocals and acoustic guitar, Teal Fitzpatrick on keys, Patricia Imbrogno on bass, Daniel Dickison and Chet Vincent on guitar, Read Connolly on lap steel, and Josh Carter on drums.

We start off strong with the title track, “Traces.” A lilting, head-nodding beat and pleasantly drawling instrumentals (especially Connolly’s steel) comprise a backdrop for some impressive lyrics. The song is about a certain type of nostalgia: a resigned honesty of acknowledging memories and the power they can have over you, even when you’ve moved on in life and are objectively doing better. The use of specificity to tell a universal story is one of the primary aims of songwriting. It’s a tough balance to get right, but here, Molly Alphabet nails it. I could really quote the whole thing as an example, but I’ll just stick to the bridge: “I can’t predict the things that bring you to my mind/Unless it’s petty theft on TV or a well-cast fishing line/Zippo lighters at the county fair, tire tracks at the county line/Though my heart’s moved on twice over, mem’ry sometimes falls behind.”

“Lickin’ the Windows” picks up the pace and shows off the higher part of Molly’s vocal range. She explains the unconventional title in the first verse: “In French they say if you ain’t shoppin’/you keep walkin’, you’re just lickin’ the windows.” It’s a fun, compelling take on a legitimate concern in a relationship—the other person

having a cinder block on their gas pedal. Lines such as, “But if we move too fast, we’re bound to pass/the beauty stuck in midair,” and “I like the ways in which my face is getting older/and, I like the ways in which my friends are getting bolder,” capture the combination of insight and sass that embodies Molly’s style and delivery. The song’s overall fast speed is contrasted by the drawn-out melodic walkdown on the repeated word “through” at the end of the chorus. This choice seems deliberate for a song in which the speaker is encouraging their loved one to stop “crank[ing] up the juice” and take the time to slow down, breathe, and enjoy the ride. Listen for the organ-esque key solo from Fitzpatrick during the bridge; it’s a delight.

“He Loves Me, He Loves Me Not” keeps the energy high with a cheeky, grown-up take on that familiar childhood flower-petal-picking game. Molly spends the verses listing various types of flowers: “Baby’s breath and daffodils/Me and black-eyed susan and the wine we swill/Lord have mercy on the worries we kill/by the time, we reach, the top;” and the chorus being feisty about them: “He loves me, he loves me not/He can kiss my you-know-what/I’m not countin’ flower petals anymore.” Between the cool rockabilly guitar riff, the hand claps that come in at the third verse, and the breakneck pace of the ending, this tune is a reminder that music can be fun and playful without getting sloppy.

The transition into a slower ballad (written by Vincent), “White Wine,” demonstrates this EP’s sharp sense of pacing. The first three songs progressively grow in speed and energy, building excitement.

See the entire review at soundsceneexpress.com

Ryan Hoffman Takes us Through the Wilderness with “The Pines”



By Duncan H. Ros

The Pines by songwriter Ryan Hoffman is a deeply atmospheric album encumbered with a sense of rural space and contemplative introspection. Hoffman’s vocal style, which is clearly influenced by classic literary songwriters like Leonard Cohen and Bob Dylan, weaves poetic narratives within finely wrought arrangements which span from sparse and simplistic to complex and ornate.

Hoffman, who studied journalism and International Affairs at the University of Pittsburgh, currently works as a musician as well as a freelance writer. Currently, he contributes to nextpittsburgh.com as well as works for the Hear Me project at CMU. Hoffman’s journalistic background and knowledge of the world seems to inform his narrative writing style and sense of worldly observation evident in the release.

Songs off of his five-song album such as “Desert” seem to take classic country-western themes and instrumentation, reinventing these tropes into an anthemic indie rock tune. “View and the Void” seems to address the lost stories of both people and places through the progression of modern society and its development. At the musical

precipice of the song Hoffman sings: “It’s the longest roads that lead you home / and I hope there’s a better way.”

“Funeral” explores even darker territory. Hoffman describes a sense of weariness with the world that has a rare blend of both honesty and clarity. The existential dread described in the song seems to be softened by the almost eerie yet calming nature of the music. Hoffman sings: “It’s a little too late for the funeral / pack up your black dress and let it go.”

As a work of both musical and literary significance, this album can also seem to harness more sadness than hope without edifying outright despair. While not exactly something you would want to throw on at a summer kegger, the thoughtfulness and depth of the album will hopefully get its due as an artistic work.

The Pines was recorded by J Vega at Wilderness Recording Studio. Vega has an impressive track record, having recorded other Pittsburgh artists such as LoFi Delphi, Arlo Aldo and The Armadillos.

Millvale Fest

continued from page 1

Millvale has a lot of smaller venues so obviously we wanted to fit more solo performers in those stages. We plan to mix things up from year to year so you will see some new faces to the festival next year,” he said. The committee did a great job mixing up the bill bringing in a number of different styles of music from the laid back Arlo Aldo to the heavy metal outfit of Klaymore. The next fest is scheduled for May 12, 2018.

Rocking Out the Brillobox



Ross Heastings (left) and Caleb Pogyor of the Talkers



Joey Troupe of Paddy and the Wanderer

Photos by Melanie Stangl

Chase and the Barons



Chase Barron of Chase and the Barons



Tyler Handyside of Chase and the Barons

Photos By Zach Nellis



SOLARBURN rocking out the Grist House Metal Stage



Vinni Longhi of Semi-Supervillains

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The Nox Boys closing out the Main Stage



Jon Bindley of Bindley Hardware Co.



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Photos by Randy Jarosz

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Dress Loud, Play Louder: An Interview with Chase and the Barons

By Zach Nellis

A few weeks ago, local indie/rock band Chase and the Barons put out their debut EP, Purpose a Toaster. They celebrated the release with a show at Stage AE which, unfortunately, I missed. But Luckily for me these dudes have been booking shows around the Burgh like crazy to help promote their new music. So I caught up with them at a house show in Oakland where they headlined a show with support from Gaffer Project, liteweight, and Sam Pellegrino. All the bands were amazing and it felt good to be back in that same South Oakland basement where I had shot some early Denzell shows a few years back. Between sets I managed to pull Chase and the Barons out onto the front porch to ask them a few questions about the EP, bright colors, and their summer schedule.

SSE: Sorry I missed the Purpose a Toaster EP release at AE, but how did it go?

Jake Stretch: EP release at Stage AE was fire as fuck [background laughter]. No but seriously it went really well, we played a good set, I think at least.

Mike Saunders: It went by really fast.

Jake Stretch: It was the debut of like the most poppin outfits I think we've had on stage yet, which is cool. We sold some merch, we played pretty well, and I think the audience was genuinely invested

Chase Barron: There was a wide variety of people there and they were all groovin which is what we love to see.

SSE: So going off the whole outfit comment, what started the whole Chase and the Baron's image with the flashy colors?

Jake Stretch: I guess I'll field this this one... So in high school I started to wear really nice clothes by the end of senior year, like senior year I did not wear a t-shirt once and I did not win the best dressed superlative and I felt really butt hurt about it so i bought even more nice clothes and continued to wear them and then we started this band and I'm like wow this is a really groovy band, I have all these groovy clothes, we should all wear these groovy clothes and look really funky cause no one looks groovy, Well I don't mean that in an insulting way but like....

Mike Saunders: No groovy is a very specific look, its like these crazy 70s colors. Like you know, you watch a Herbie Hancock video him and Head Hunters and he's wearing like platform shoes and red pants and a tan shirt and its just funky as fuck dude and it looks awesome.

SSE: You kinda know they're ready to party.

Jake Stretch: Dude there is no doubt that Herbie Hancock and the Head Hunters were ready to party at all times. I mean they stripped down at one show to like completely nude and played still. So yeah. But so our first show we played in the basement of our friend Sigfried's house and I lent everyone some ties cause not everyone had like colorful pants and shirts and stuff and we played and a lot of the people at the show were like "man those clothes are really cool" so like we were like okay this could kinda be a thing. And I was like already 100% on board but after our next couple shows everyone was wow, everyone was noticing it was kinda our thing so we decided to keep doing it. And now at this point I did not give anyone here an article of clothing besides Riegers tie.

Chase Barron: Dress loud, play louder

SSE: Back to the EP, Any reasoning behind the name or is it just a play on words? And back story behind it?

Tyler Handyside: We just tried to come up with a bunch of toast puns because it steamed from the one toast lyric we have in Rule the World. And yeah we just brainstormed, came up with some good ones, but we all ultimately decided that Purpose a Toaster fuckin rad.

Jake Stretch: We had CommaToast, which was one of our other favorites, but our label said that we couldn't use it, soooooooo

SSE: Was there reasoning behind that decision?

Jake Stretch: They're a college and they didn't want to purpose something that could be potentially offensive and I can see CommaToast being offensive to those who have lost relatives to comma's.

SSE: Yeah I guess you gotta play it safe.

Mike Saunders: And I mean like, the various drug references they aren't okay with and stuff like that which is totally understandable. I mean that isn't something that were all about like selling crack on the streets and like pimping out people...all the time.

Jake Stretch: But if you listen to the EP really closely you can tell that all the songs are secretly about being a pimp and smoking crack.

Chase Barron: Well if you listen to it backwards....

Mike Saunders: No I mean, I think in the end they definitely had our best interest in mind with like pushing us to get couple different name ideas instead of just going with the first one that popped into our heads. Because we were pretty dead set on CommaToast, so we were a little upset when they said we couldn't use it, but luckily Purpose a Toaster was a close second and still got our point across.

Jake Stretch: But we're definitely happy about the toast though. Its given us a lot of merchandising ideas like we have the toasted t shirt which is just a slice of toast that says toasted on it.

Mike Saunders: We can sell it at Subway. Be like, "Would you like your shirt toasted?"

Jake Stretch: We put toasters all over the stage when we played at AE. We had like 4 or 5 toasters on stage with us. Our merch was sold inside of a toaster.

Chase Barron: If you get the CD you'll realize that the CD is actually just a bunch of pieces of toast. You can't even put it in your CD player.

Jake Stretch: Yeah you take the cellophane off and you immediately have crumbs all over your lap.

Chase Barron: It like, to get the music to play you have to put the CD in your toaster and then put it on high and it'll play the songs.

Mike Saunders: Gotta get that four slot toaster, it's a four toast album

Tyler Handyside: Put your toaster on shuffle



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The Spectres Tape Release

By Duncan H. Ros

The dynamic two-piece rock group The Spectres will be releasing a new tape called *Baby, You're Too Pretty To Rumble* on King Pizza records May 27th. This release show is scheduled at Howlers with accompanying acts Jiant Eagle and Franny Moon + Second Ladies.

Hailing from Greenfield in Pittsburgh, The Spectres have been spreading the gospel of bare-bones rock 'n' roll all through the city, blending a combination of '77 street punk, '60s garage rock, do-wop and surf.

The band started when multi-instrumentalist Dan Spagnolo moved to Pittsburgh for graduate school. Through the wonders of Craigslist, Spagnolo connected with James Thompson who had a one-man-band recording project.

The two began writing and performing together in the summer of 2014. Notable acts that they have shared the stage with include No Bunny and King Congo.

My question is, when are they going to be playing with King Khan and the BBQ Show?

Much like other hard-hitting duos, they use the simplistic tried-and-true raw rock 'n' roll techniques to get their point across—mainly energy, catchy songwriting and volume. The Sonics and the Ramones carry influences in their sound that are hard to miss.

Baby, You're Too Pretty To Rumble is a ten song joyride through everything rock 'n' roll. With song titles like "Night Goes Rolling By," "Hot – Rod" and "Drive – In Tonight" you know you are going to get a good dose of the care-free all-American vibe of milkshakes, baseball, fast cars and girls.

Upon listening to the record, however, there's also the decadence and attitude you'd find in work by the Black Lips, New Swears or Johnny Thunders.

Despite only being a two-piece, The Specters manage to utilize everything they've got, including two-part harmonies.

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- June 17 - HughShows 50
- June 17 - Weird Paul Rock Band - Sidebar
- June 19 - Open mic w/ Liss Victory & Liz Tripoli - Pints on Penn
- June 23 - Steelesque CD Release - Cefalo's Banquet
- June 28 - What Cheer Brigade Blak Rapp Medusa - Blumcraft
- June 29 - Pittsburgh Hip Hop Showcase - Boom Concepts
- June 30 - Beauty Slap Album Release - Spirit
- July 1 - Decaffeinated Grapefruit EP Release - Howlers

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- Heather Kropf releases new album "Lights"
- Radio for the Daydreamers release new album "Enouement"
- The Dark Lines Release EP "Future Self"

Chase and the Barons *continued from page 5*

SSE: How long were you guys working on this toasty EP? was like uhhhh I guess you're right.

Chase Barron: So yeah, it all started when we got signed to Pioneer Records. Then a lot of the time was thinking of the concept and what songs would be on it because we were coming into it with like 16 original songs pretty much, and then like 20 of my songs too. We had this giant collection of songs and we all sat down and listened to them all which was super weird. But yeah we ended up picking the four in late 2016.

Jake Stretch: We were signed in October and then the album song listing was finalized by the end of that month and then we started recording by the end of November.

Chase Barron: Yeah and then we did recording for like a month probably.

Jake Stretch: But we finished in Feb cause of winter break.

Chase Barron: it was probably like a month total, i mean we just spent like the weekend up there

Jake Stretch: We cant even imagine how much it cost. We never saw a bill for it and Jesse definitely gave us a lot of free time.

Mike Saunders: It was so cool though. the environment was so loose like we weren't rushed for time, everyone was like "just sound good, do whatever you gotta do to sound good"

Chase Barron: Yeah we had like this hour long conversation about Star Wars and then Jesse was like, "See that needed to happen so that the next take you guys are super relaxed" and I

Jake Stretch: That was like a \$50 conversation...but worth it.

SSE: Okay so then this EP wasn't recorded in your basement (Jake Stretch) like where I originally met you guys when Denzell was recording?

Jake Stretch: We started this whole process of like getting our music somewhere by recording in my basement where we did some demos. So last summer, Chase's family lives out Dubois, PA really close to Punxy. And we uhhhh went out there [interrupted by Jackson Boytim who is the bees knees] but yeah we planned on going out to the cabin and we took all our gear there and we recorded the album, then we sent it to Point Park just to like apply and see if they would be down to sign us, and they liked it. But we've actually only used like 3 songs that we recorded in the cabin and they were all released before the EP came out.

SSE: I saw that you guys did a video for Rule the World, pretty tight. Was that something you guys already had the idea for or was something that came out of signing the record deal?

Chase Barron: What happened there was part of the Pioneer experience. They gave us the opportunity to make a music video, which they have done the past two years but no one really took it to the extreme like this year. Cause Point Park has a cinema program so they actually had a class get together with 10 cinema student and 10 SAEM students (Sports Arts Entertainment Management) and they all just spent an entire

semester making a music video for us.

Jake Stretch: As far as ideas came to the table, we knew that Rule the World was the leading single for the EP just from like hearing the crowd response to the song. Like normal people in the audience, not just musicians, were really into that song and we got a lot of nice compliments on it so we were like, "I guess this is the one that people want to hear". And Point Park agreed with that and everyone on the label was kinda on board so we came to the table knowing that we liked the OkGo videos and we really want a lot of color and just a lot of fun in general. And we also wanted to try to do everything in one shot.

Tyler Handyside: Yeah the idea kinda came from that one episode of It's Always Sunny In Philadelphia, where the health inspector comes the bar and just the one shot idea is so cool looking, just seamless.

SSE: I dig the Always Sunny reference, but down the road is there talks of doing any more music videos or are you guys waiting to release some more music?

Jake Stretch: The only thing that we have really thought of music video wise is, we have the song Sasquatch Sightings which opens the EP. We really want Jack Links to realize that it exists and we wanna make a video with Sasquatch. But other than that, as far as music videos go we really have no plans.

Chase Barron: Basically our plans right now are that were just focusing on pushing this EP everywhere and trying to get out of Pittsburgh a little bit. Ya know start doing some weekend tours that will hopefully turn into week long tours.

SSE: On that note, what are your plans for the summer?

Tyler Handyside: Yeah we have a few shows booked throughout the summer, between April and May we've played about 25-30 shows.

SSE: Are those all shows that were around here?

Tyler Handyside: We've played out in Lancaster, a few shows out there and at the Launch Music Conference. Then Boobies brewery...

Mike Saunders: It's actually Boobs Brewery, I've talked to several people who have said it was Boobs Brewery.

[Inaudible arguing over Boobies vs Boobs Brewery]

Jake Stretch: Were playing the Millvale Music Fest now which is supposed to be bumping.

Tyler Handyside: Theres a ton of bands on that roster.

Jake Stretch: Whats cool is that it actually filled up and we thought we missed out, but they got back to us a today actually and said there was like one slot left and that we should play so we jumped right on that. So we will be playing at Element Church for that. But yeah oddly enough we haven't really done anything to book shows ourselves. Everything we've played has been set up by people reaching out asking us to play which is cool. But now that the EP is out and the craziness that was promoting it is over, we're focusing all of our efforts on getting some reviews on the album and getting it out to some indy blogs and playing more shows.

SSE: Think thats about it, any last words from Chase or the Barons?

Chase Barron: Yeah dude Chase and Barons is a party that everyone can go to.

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