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SOUND SCENE EXPRESS

Your Source for Pittsburgh Music News

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By Melanie Stangl

This month's editon of the persuasion. Pittsburgh's Very Own which Showcase, styles for a one-of-a-kind performance on the Mr. Smalls Main Stage, featured those of the psychedelic rock

The bill was packed with some of the city's brings finest: The Garment District, together five bands of similar Nox Boys, Delicious Pastries, Wwoman, and Misaligned Mind as a closer. The show lived up to every trippy expecta"on. Between the

colorful, ever-shi/ing visual e0ects projected onto the background screen. Delicious Pastries' trademark paisley shirts and patterned scarves. excellent music delivered by all the bands, and the

jaw-dropping, crowd-entering performance of Misaligned Mind guitarist Zack Wiesinger, it was a night you had to see to believe. Be sure not to miss the next PVO Showcase.

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Guest Review: Kayla Schureman Is Timeless In New Album, "Kiss the Ground"

KAYLA SCHUREMAN



KISS THE GROUND

By Jeff Betten, General Manager of Misra Records

My tongue-in-cheek response to SSE's own Melanie Stangl after remarking that she didn't care for Taylor Swift: "Well, I'm glad you've so far managed to live a life in which you haven't had to feel."

I was of course having a bit of fun at the expense of my friend, but my point was that for those of us who've been kicked around a little bit, you need to blast a song like "Treacherous" or "All Too Well" while barreling down the highway every now and then. Catharsis is good for the human soul. (Editor's Note: I have been kicked around a little bit and do, in fact, feel; T-Swift just isn't my catharsis music of choice. - MS)

Which, of course, brings us to Kiss the Ground by Kayla Schureman. The album is out now, and upon attending the release party I realized that SSE

had not yet made mention of what is easily a contender for album of the year, even still in the early spring chill of April. (Our bad, Jeff.) Thus I took it upon myself to offer this guest review to the publication, so that you, dear reader, could be made aware of the fact that you're able to spend your entertainment dollars in a heartbreakingly rewarding manner.

Ms. Schureman has been on my radar ever since I caught her before a gig soundchecking with "Tourist Trap" by Bright Eyes. So we're clearly dealing with someone who had enough taste to recognize one of the greatest songs of the 2000s; never mind that it was only a Bside. That taste is on full display from the first track of Kiss the Ground, in which the songwriting of guitarist Evan Palmer is fully realized by the vocal performance. Kayla knows a great tune when she hears one, and she's not about to let ego get in the way of letting it kick off her debut record. It's actually the perfect choice to do so. Visions of an album credit that

reads "all music and lyrics by..." be damned, it was the right call. It's an old approach that's sadly fallen out of fashion in some circles, but could stand to make a comeback to the betterment of album quality everywhere.

In general, this is a record that's afraid to take older approaches. Everything from the musical style to (according to reports) the recording process itself seems to hearken back to another time. The ghosts of Bakersfield and Laurel Canyon are haunting us here, for sure. But there's a difference between being retro and being timeless, and what makes this collection of songs truly remarkable is their ability to hold up outside of any era. The production is not full of smoke and mirrors designed to trick us into falling for a disc du jour, only to see the hype fizzle upon repeated listenings. This CD simply has not left my car stereo in the two weeks or so since it arrived in the mail, and the album is spoken of with awed breaths and hushed tones among even the most august musicians and industry insiders throughout the city. Indeed, Schureman and her band are onto something here:

And I don't want to smoke your cigarettes, and I don't want to wash your shirts

And hear about the scars and the bloodstains, like you're the only one that hurts

I keep coming back to "Airshow," the opening song from which that couplet comes, because it manages to find a universality in the solipsism. All of us are alone in our pain, yet we all have it. Whether standing outside a hotel in Phoenix, crossing Idaho, or making your way over the San Fernando County line, the rest of

the album implies we can't shake it with travel, either (though of course, that won't stop us from trying.)

Perhaps Rust Cohle was right when he said, "Men and women, it's not supposed to work." Schureman and Palmer (along with Amelia Curran, who contributes to the song "San Andreas Fault") would appear to be sympathetic to this claim. In the world of Kiss the Ground, hearts are made to be broken and a relationship is just material for a breakup song that's already being written. Of course, I might remind you that country music was defined by Harlan famously Howard as "three chords and the truth," so according to recent divorce rates, the world of Kiss the Ground is at least half-true. But Schureman & Co. do such a fine job of exploring these ideas that you won't even mind the aching in your chest as the pedal steel lets out another wail.

Hear the album and purchase it at kaylaschureman.bandcamp.com



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The Me Toos Rock Steady on New Album



By Melanie Stangl

With all the genre-bending, experimental acts shaking up pretty. Pittsburgh, such as Starship impressive range and a keen Mantis and Beauty Slap, it's sense of how an album should sometimes easy to forget the flow from one song to the next. virtues and appeal of straight-up Particular standouts include rock n' roll. Luckily, The Me "Set the Moon on Fire" (with Toos are here to remind us. Their its brand new album, "Ghost Fly slow, well-layered build and By," which will have its release enjoyable show this Saturday, April 29th, at explosive guitar) and the song Spirit, gives strong echoes of The "Ghost Fly By" Shins, in all the best ways.

The group consists guitarist/singer Jesse Baldoni, the speaker.) There's also a bassist Ben Vivio, drummer/backup singer Kevin bass-it's used to its full Koch. This will be their second engrossing, rhythmic potential, full-length record, alongside their adding enjoyable dimension previous two EP's, since the band throughout the record. I always kicked off in 2008.

way through, from the head- essential but not special. It nodding on-off guitar strums of deserves more attention, and the plaintive opener, "Spark My The Me Toos provide it. Embers," to the contemplative

slow swing of the closing track, king at pictures followed "Suffer." The band describes this sharply by embarrassment at collection of songs as being about how cool you thought you were "the lingering ghosts of regret versus how uncool you actually and embarrassment, leading to were...in other words, turning the unhealthy catharsis of the thirty." But they've managed to suffering that comes along with confront those cringeworthy dwelling on those thoughts." That moments with honesty and intimacy and honesty comes skill, and turn them into through in both the lyrics and the something better. If that's not passionate tone of Baldoni's vocals, who recalls a more

openly pained James Merc(Other acts the band lists as influences include Velvet Underground, The Sonics, and Car Seat Headrest.)

"Ghost Fly By" cycles through rollicking numbers "Bloodshot Eyes" and the punk-inspired "I've Been Talking to Myself," as well as softer moments, such as the acoustic-guitar-heavy "Skin & Bones," which is downright This shows

moments (whose repeated lyrics and melodic phrases musically embody old of ghosts coming back to haunt and consistent emphasis on Vivio's appreciate when bands do this, because often the bass is left to The record is a solid listen all the be muddled in the background,

maturing, I'm not sure what is.

Pittsburgh's Very Own Concert



Delicious Pastries



Wwomen



Misaligned Mind



Different Places in Space



Beauty Slap



Starship Mantis



Wilkins Block Party

Photos courtesy of Pat Bruener Photography

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Record Store Day: An Interview with Zack Keim of the Nox Boys

By Duncan H. Ros

Zack Keim, best known for leading the Nox Boys, played a solo acoustic set at 4 PM at Juke Records on Record Store Day (Sat, April 22nd) in support of his solo release First Step. This is the second release of Get Hip's folk series. Sound Scene Express had a few minutes to talk with Keim about his new release, his favorite record stores, vinyl and the music industry.

What's the correlation between you getting signed to Get Hip and you working there?

I got signed with the Nox Boys and from there I just had an association with the people at the label. I was looking for part time work. They hired me to do miscellaneous stuff. From there Greg and Barbara asked me to work with record stores. I'm a sales rep now, so I deal with a lot of record stores. It's good. I like networking with people. I'm signed with Get Hip as the Nox Boys, and I'm signed with Get Hip as myself. I'm releasing a solo record. The official release date isn't announced. For the in-store appearance at Juke Records this Saturday, records might be on sale, but that would be exclusive to the event. The official release date will be somewhere down the line. No official release date yet, but I imagine in the next month or two we will release it. I'd say the next two months.

Okay. Tell me about this solo record.

It's very different from the Nox Boys. I'm a big fan of Bob Dylan and Woody Guthrie. I also like more contemporary stuff such as Fleet Foxes and Tallest Man on Earth. That kind of stuff.

That's funny, because one of my questions was going to be who vou would pick, Bob Dylan or

Lou Reed? Not that the two are a folkie at best. I don't know, really comparable, but just in terms of a songwriter's approach, Lou Reed is more the proto-punk guy and Bob Dylan is more the folk guy. So you'd side more with Dylan?

I love Lou Reed and I love Bob Dylan. ľm a big Velvet Underground fan. I think the first record I ever bought was The Velvet Underground and Nico. I mean, you might listen to records or inherit them growing up, but I think that was the first record I ever bought, at twelve or thirteen—I mean prior to having Pandora around so you could stream stuff. But the first record I actually bought with my own money was Velvet Underground and Nico at Juke Records in Bloomfield. From there, it kind of expanded my mind on shit. But Lou Reed is a great It'd songwriter and a great performer. I like his Velvet Underground stuff and his solo records. And Bob Dylan is a big inspiration to me. But being a folk singer and being 20 years old and having the same look and appeal as Bob Dylan, I want people to know that I'm not trying to emulate Bob Dylan. I like Bob Dylan and Woody Guthrie and more contemporary stuff like Fleet Foxes and Tallest Man on Earth. I like Donovan. I might be compared with this next record coming out to being like Bob Dylan, but these are songs that come from the heart. It's just what I'm writing. I like folk music, and I like just taking the riff playing it on guitar. You know what I mean?

tacks, looking at yourself as a where musician and vour inspiration lies, would you say you're more of a folk guy that plays rock n' roll, or a rock n' roller that plays folk?

I would say I'm a rock n' roller and appreciate that when it's

That makes me think of Everly **Brothers or Buddy Holly.**

Oh, I love the Everly Brothers and Buddy Holly.

That mentality just makes me think of rock 'n' roll before there was any differentiation between folk and rock-when they were essentially the same thing. It was all coming out of Sun Records and wasn't separated.

Dude, you know your shit. Exactly. I agree with you one hundred

What are your favorite record mean? stores in town to shop at?

be Juke Records Bloomfield. This guy just bought it a couple months ago. It used to be Sound Cat, but unfortunately it got passed over because the old owner was sick and passed away. It's been around forever. He has a very nice vinyl selection.

second recommend is Attic Records in Millvale. You can find anything old school, and some new contemporary stuff too. There's a Arctic Monkeys a lot. lot of cool 45s.

Cruel Noise records are great if What is it you like about the you are looking for a Misfits record or the coolest punk rock record.

think the attraction is to vinyl?

When you cut it down to brass —first off, you can't even compare listening to a vinyl LP versus something else like an iPod. It's physically in your hands, you're seeing the artwork and reading the liner notes and there's a lot of Oh, Alex Chilton is great. I have effort put into it. How can you

compressed into an iPhone? I have a record collection and it's hard to sell them because every record has a personal meaning to me. It's like a library. If I have a couple of books I like reading like On the Road or Catcher in the Rye, they mean something to me. My vinyl library means something to me.

What about the sound quality?

I know there is some argument as to whether analog or digital sound is better.

I think having a nice stereo and having a record compared listening to something headphones—to have a nice stereo and to throw on a Stooges record, that fuckin' rips. You know what I

What's your favorite Stooges record?

Stooges? I'd say the first Stooges record. Iggy Pop is great. I have a lot of different artists I go to for inspiration that fall into a bunch of different genres. Like mentioned Lou Reed and Dylan. I store I would like Ricky Nelson. Elvis. . . Iggy Pop. I like the Strokes a lot. I have a lot of inspirations. Alex Turner from the Arctic Monkeys. I like the

Arctic Monkeys?

I think Alex Turner is a great singer-songwriter. I think he could of a rock n' roll song and just As a young guy, what do you fall into a more '60s style songwriter over time. Songs by the Arctic Monkeys are all well written I like listening to vinyl records and all of their melodies are great.

Taking a step back a few decades, what about a band like Big Star?

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The Missing Link: Introducing Pittsburgh Jammers Charm & Chain

By Duncan H. Ros

Charm & Chain create organic psychedelic blues infused jams-in the classic sense. Although they don't sound like a rehash of bands like the Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane or Phish, they take a similar freeform approach that leaves room for extensive improvisation and ultra-chill vamping. "The four of us in our current line-up all really have a lot of respect for each other and challenge each other musically," said vocalist and keyboardist Laurie Kudis.

Kudis founded the group six years ago after growing tired of fronting a cover band. "I really wanted to just start singing and recording my own stuff," said Kudis over a crackly cellphone. She wrote eight songs and went into the studio to record them with the studio musicians that were available at the time. Charm & Chain ended up being a project name that stuck.

Kudis uses her lush alto to weave narratives through groovy and sometimes intricate chord progressions backed by bassist Erik Koester, guitarist Eric DiFiore and drummer Ben Sukenik. You can hear remnants of Kudis's classically trained mentality being uprooted by the free-form organicism of the other members, two of which (the rhythm section: Koester and Sukenik) have been playing together for over a decade. "We have a lot of overlapping musical influences and interests," said Kudis, "but at the same time we each have eclectic tastes and we bring that into the band and expose each other to new things."

Although Kudis learned how to play the piano at a young age she didn't actually didn't start singing, writing, or playing in bands until she was in her thirties. She decided to take some voice lessons. Soon she was performing in various projects and eventually writing, recording and forming Charm & Chain.

Kudis has had Koester on bass since the beginning of the project. "I was so impressed with [Koester] not only as a bass player, but as a person. And I

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Hearken "Carte Blanche" EP Review



By Duncan H. Ros

Hearken's short album begins with the inundated sound of a fuzzy guitar riff laced with chorus, coupled with these raw drums that completely decoration in terms production. It sounds like it was recorded in a cave in black and white as a rock 'n' soundtrack to Nosferatu White Zombie. The first thing that comes to mind for me, having grown up in the rock scene of Portland, OR is that this band loves the Wipers and Dead Moon. I would bet money on it.

While the Pittsburgh City Paper

seems happy to portray Hearken

as a sort of redecoration of 90s grunge (in the sense that they're better than a throwback band while essentially calling them a throwback, albeit nicely) I'm going to argue that they are taking the kernels of what germinated into grunge and playing with the pure form. Let's use an analogy from Breaking Bad: essentially, if commercial grade "grunge" as sold to the masses is street grade biker crank, the punk / rock conglomeration that was coined "grunge" in the late 80s (not the 90s kids) by the founders of Sub Pop would be Walter White's blue meth. And that's what I think Hearken is playing with in Carte Blanche-it's

unadulterated brand of rock 'n'

roll. And they throw down for a two piece-it's a big sound, and it's not a tired arrangement like a White Stripes spinoff. Donny Donovan oscillates between street-hassle style talk-singing to long legato melodic wails bubbling out from the cave with plenty of slapback, which is all the rage these days. Donny's vocal sound seems to be a quaint blend of Julian Casablancas and something out of the British post-punk scene. Greg Brunner's drumming style is perfect for the overall low-fi sound. He adds energy and gusto more than anything else, and for their style what more could you ask for? It matches the simplicity and effectiveness of the guitars. But what I love about this record is production. It just beats you over the head.

And I'll completely agree with the CP that this album would go well on the radio (maybe with a slicker more expensive production), but hopefully they get to that point they won't have to go through what Sleater-Kinney did in the early 00s-getting rejected by radio producers and DJs because they don't have a bassist.

Charm & Chain

continued from page 6

have even more respect for him after getting to know him and playing with him all these years," said Kudis. Koester is also a talented cellist, which will be featured on an upcoming release. "We are all friends outside of the band too. We go to see shows and festivals and hang out," said Kudis. "When we hang out, a lot of jamming happen. It's really can communal and beautiful."

Keim Interview

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solo Alex Chilton record—I think it's on Norton Records out of New York. Billy Miller, the owner of that record label, passed away recently, but he released some great records. It's this live record called Alex Chilton: Live at the Ocean Club. You can look it up. It's a really good solo record. He's just playing acoustic Big Star songs and I think he covers "Wouldn't it be Nice" by Brian Wilson. It's really good stuff.

I haven't had a chance to listen to that one.

Oh, it's great. I think my favorite Big Star record is either No 3 or their first record.

I saw that the Nox Boys opened for Mudhoney.

Did you have a chance to meet Mark Arm at all?

Yeah, I know Mark Arm. He's cool. He actually works at Sub Pop.

Right, I heard that. Sometimes he signs notes with the records.

He's their shipping manager. So if you order something from Fleet Foxes, he's packing that up and shipping it to you.

Right, that's crazy. [laughs]

The Cynics are good friends with Mudhoney, so that's how we landed that bill.

What was the first song you learned to play on guitar?

Probably "Day Tripper."

What are your thoughts on being in the music industry and having the vantage point of working at a label like Get Hip?

I think for myself, being twenty, I know it's going to take—It's a lot

of work being in the music industry. It's not easy. But if I have a passion to do it and if it's what's going to make me happy, then I'm going to do it. I've worked a few jobs that I didn't like. I work at Get Hip and it's stressful at times doing sales, but I like it overall. I have two different paths I'm taking with the Nox Boys. I want to be a good garage band people like, and I want to create a scene. I used to do this event about two years ago called Teenage Take Over. Basically the concept is having five bands play with a five dollar cover. We did a lot of social media and street promotion. I want to do something like this once a month. You know how they had teenage dances back in the '60 with garage bands?

Yeah, like a hootenanny.

Yeah, a shindig. This old school DJ spinning '50s and '60s records. I'd like to do something like that. And have the Nox Boys host it. Not to play necessarily. we could have headliners play.

Any final thoughts?

When it comes down to it, it's rock n' roll. You only live once, so if you fuck up, you fuck up. But at least you wanted to do something and you had a passion to do it.







