

Street SENSE



Musical mix: Downy Mildew includes guitarist Charlie Baldonado, bassist Nancy McCoy, violinist Stan Garza, singer Jenny Horner and drummer Rob Jacobs.

Downy Mildew is magic on 'Train'

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

When Los Angeles native and Downy Mildew guitarist Charlie Baldonado talks of fragility and disintegration, he's discussing the riots that took place in his neighborhood.

"It was strange," said Baldonado, whose neighborhood was hit during the unrest. "I always wondered what held the social fabric together and it just fell apart so quickly."

A corresponding feeling can be drawn to Downy Mildew's sound, which teeters on a tenuous base of swirling atmospheric guitars, ethereal textures and a tap-team of bustling harmonies.

When these brooding elements converge, there's magic as the band's High Street/Windham Hill release "An Oncoming Train" attests.

Triumphant in their music, which draws cursory comparisons to R.E.M. and 10,000 Maniacs in most reviews, is a tightness that makes it wholly indelible. Attribute it to the arrangements says Baldonado, who makes up the band along with bassist Nancy McCoy, violinist Stan Garza, singer Jenny Horner and

drummer Rob Jacobs. Rest assured, Downy Mildew works hard at it.

The band, in fact, waited four years to release this album. Biding time until the right record came along, Downy Mildew forged their reputation as one LA's preeminent club acts.

The lengthy period between albums was rather surprising. The group landed opening gigs for the likes of Jazz Butcher and 10,000 Maniacs.

R.E.M.'s Michael Stipe touted Downy Mildew as a band to be reckoned with in 1988 after directing one of their videos.

"He's not a record company," Baldonado said.

Stipe's sterling recommendation actually has been a source of consternation for the group. For one, it has fueled comparisons to the Athens, Ga., outfit.

"You see it all over the place," Baldonado said. "It gets sickening after awhile. . . . It's reference point as far as a genre, but it has nothing to do with us."

Downy Mildew will perform Sunday, Oct. 18, at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. For information, call 832-2355.

■ Alejandro Escovedo's "Gravity" is a haunting, poignant 11-song journal on the harsh and brutal realities of love. What it doesn't reflect is a music career that has its origins in the punk movement of the '70s.

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER



Alejandro Escovedo will stop himself every once in awhile.

"Does that make any sense?" Escovedo will ask periodically after revealing another interesting facet of musical craft in a telephone interview from his Austin, Texas, home.

After becoming familiar with his recent work, "Gravity," a haunting, poignant 11-song journal on Watermelon Records, Escovedo's query proves rather ironic.

After all, Escovedo's capacity to communicate the stark, sometimes harsh and brutal realities of love is what has critics praising his genius.

On the surface "Gravity" is an exceptionally diverse and ambitious in scope, striking chords of bruising rock'n'roll, heartfelt twangs of country and celestial sounding forays. Stripped away from their musical stylings are aching lyrics.

Since Escovedo in the country setting of "Broken Bottle": "So pour your drink from a broken bottle/And fill my glass with the dirty water/What I've gained has no name/And I'll take my leave once more."

As much as those songs are routed from the heart, they could aptly describe the rough-and-tumble musical resume of their writer.

Starting out of the punk scene in San Francisco with a band called "The Nuns in the mid-'70s, Escovedo went on to form the cowpunk outfit Rank and File later in the decade. His punk days continue to serve him to this day, though, using emotion to make the primary connection with listeners.

"You just got up and played what you wanted to play and sang what you wanted to sing," Escovedo said. "We were trying to



Deep meaning: In his latest release, "Gravity," Alejandro Escovedo looks at the harsh realities of love.

break down that barrier between the audience and the band."

His impact, musically, would later be felt in the highly-lauded roots rock outfit True Believers he formed with brother Javier in 1984 (Escovedo's musical lineage includes brother and former Santana member Pete Escovedo and Pete's daughter Sheila E.).

True Believers recorded two highly-anticipated albums for EMI with only one getting released by the label. The band broke up in 1988, which signaled the onset of professional and personal suffering for Escovedo.

He kicked around with Buick Mackane, a raucous bar band in Austin while also turning up for acoustic showcases at coffee houses. Then personal tragedy hit

with the death of his wife, Bobbi, in April 1991.

"Gravity" is a culmination of wrought feelings from that desolate period.

"A lot of songs are about break up of relationships," said Escovedo, 41, who has five children and one grandchild. "A lot of them were written during that time (of his wife's death). . . . A lot of them take on a different dimension, though."

One such number open for interpretation is the evocative, soft piano strew "She Doesn't Live Here Anymore," which Escovedo actually wrote for a friend whose lover had left him ("Your footsteps echo in the hallway/Your footsteps echo in the hall-

way/Your picture hangs above/The faucet dripping in the kitchen/It's just the rhythm of the blues").

His heartfelt lyrics will be at the forefront in his visit Friday, Oct. 16, to the LaCasa Folk Music Series at Birmingham Unitarian Church. Unlike his recent performance at St. Andrew's Hall, Escovedo will perform an acoustic set without his five-piece band.

"It's just the way I've always written," Escovedo said, "what's on my mind."

Alejandro Escovedo will perform with Michael Fracasso Friday, Oct. 16, at the LaCasa Folk Music Series at Birmingham Unitarian Church, 651 Woodward. For information, call 646-4950.

STREET SENSE

More to dreams than remembered



BARBARA SCHIFF

Dear Barbara: I have the craziest dreams every night. Nothing in them seems to make any sense. Does this mean anything? I often talk to my friends about this, many of whom say they never dream. Do you know anything about the difference between those who do not dream and those who do?

In one of my dreams, a big bird picks me up and flies me above the Earth. It is beautiful and I feel suffused with its majesty. In another one I am digging a big hole and in yet another, I am doing intricate ice-skating maneuvers on a small pond. Sometimes my dreams repeat themselves and sometimes the do not.

Can you tell me what my dreams mean?

The Dreamer

Dear Dreamer: Dreams seem crazy when we don't understand them. When we do understand them, they make good sense and are creative works of art. They may be deliberately jumbled so that the dreamer should not understand them.

Sometimes when the dream does not disguise the dream enough and the meaning becomes too clear, the dreamer will awaken

so as not to face the full truth. For example, should the dreamer have a sexual dream with an unseemly man, he might awaken with fear as he turns his face toward her so that she could recognize who he is.

Although your friends say that they never dream, this is scientifically untrue. Studies in dream labs prove that everyone dreams four to five times every night during REM sleep. This is true even though they do not remember any dreams.

I cannot tell you what your dreams mean because you remember the observable content of the dream. It would take answers to many questions and your associations to the dream to get to the hidden content of the dream and its deeper meaning.

There are objects in dreams which are called universal symbols and through them we could often get some idea of what the observable or manifest content of dreams is about.

However, I will go no further with your dreams except to say that you sound like a happy, healthy, creative individual with a delightful love of life. I hope I am not wrong in this uncalculated guessimation.

Barbara
If you have a question or comment for Barbara Schiff, a therapist, dreamer, and experienced counselor, send it to Street Sense, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

IN CONCERT

Monday, Oct. 12

PARADISE VALLEY JAZZ JAM
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit.
823-2355

VINX
Michigan Theatre, 603 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor.
996-2748

RADIO CAROLINE
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.
996-2748

Tuesday, Oct. 13

CHISEL BROTHERS WITH THOR-RETTA DAVIS
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit.
823-2355

HIP HOP
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.
996-2748

KAREN PERINICK
The Ark, 637 1/2 S. Main, Ann Arbor.
761-1451

GOING IN SIXTY SECONDS
With Supersuckers at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit.
961-MELT

Wednesday, Oct. 14

BIG DAVE & THE ULTRASONICS
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.
996-2747

SOUTHERN CULTURE ON THE SKIDS
Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.
334-9292

CHEAP THRILLS
Giff's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac.
334-9292

MYX RISE & MARY MCGUIRE
Gottman City Cafe in Ferndale.
398-7430

RED DEVILS
Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, Dearborn.
846-1920

Thursday, Oct. 15

NEOPHYTE NATION
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.
334-9292

HOPSCOTCH ARMY
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit.
823-2355

OROBOROS
Rick's Cafe, 611 Church, Ann Arbor.
996-2748

UNCLE CHUCK
Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.
996-8555

MARTIN WYNDHAM-READ
The Ark, 637 1/2 S. Main, Ann Arbor.
761-1451

SONNY LANDRETH AND THE GONERS
Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, Dearborn.
846-1920

MOVE
With Rebel Bass at Paychecks, 2932 Caniff, Hamtramck.
872-8934

Friday, Oct. 16

CHRIS WHITLEY AND JOHN CAMP-BELL
Majestic Theatre, 4140 Woodward, Detroit.
334-9292

ALEJANDRO ESCOVEDO AND MICHAEL FRACASSO
La Casa Folk Music Series at Birmingham Unitarian Church, 651 N. Woodward, at Lone Pine Road.
846-1920

GROOVESPOON
Lil's, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck.
875-6555

FORMOSO POP
Giff's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac.
334-9292

BIG GUITARS FROM MEMPHIS
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit.
823-2355

GEORGE BEDARD AND THE KINGPINS
Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.
996-8555

THE SPECIAL CONSENSUS
The Ark, 637 1/2 S. Main, Ann Arbor.
761-1451

SHRIEKBACK
With Pop Suicide and Sky Kids Mary at St. Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit.
961-MELT

MONSTER BAIT
Finney's Pub, 3965 Woodward, Detroit.
831-8070

BRYN MESSIAH'S
With Baby Jayne at Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, off I-75.
365-3829

LEON RUSSELL
Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, Dearborn.
846-1920

CHAOS
With Del-cats at Paychecks, 2932 Caniff, Hamtramck.
872-8934

JAMES WALLIN
Moby Dicks, 5452 Schaefer, Dearborn.
581-3650

STEVE GORNALL & BLUE COLLAR BLUES BAND
Moby Dicks, 5452 Schaefer, Dearborn.
581-3650

LOUISIANA HEAT
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit.
823-2355

K.D. LANG
Hill Auditorium, 825 N. University, Ann Arbor.
Tickets are \$20 and \$23.50.
99-MUSIC

ESABURE
Music Hall, 350 Madison, Detroit.
963-2366

LONNIE BROOKS
Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, Dearborn.
846-1920

GOLDENTONES
Lil's, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck.
875-6555

SKELETON CREW
Giff's Grill, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac.
334-9292

HOPE ORCHESTRA
With Mummy Heads and Obnoxtones at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit.
823-2355

SOUTHOING ZAK
Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor.
996-8555

GARNET ROGERS
The Ark, 637 1/2 S. Main, Ann Arbor.
761-1451

TRUST FUND
With Hush and Confuse a Cat at Finney's Pub, 3965 Woodward, Detroit.
831-8070

MYX RISE & MARY MCGUIRE
Mr. B's in Troy.
869-6070

248
Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Caniff, off I-75.
365-3829



Song man: Lonnie Brooks will perform Friday, Oct. 16, at Rick's Cafe, 611 Church in Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-2747.

LARRY MCCRAY
Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, Dearborn.
846-1920

BRIGHT BLACK
With Top Soil and Smoke at Paychecks, 2932 Caniff, Hamtramck.
872-8934

MARC FALCONBERRY
Moby Dicks, 5452 Schaefer, Dearborn.
581-3650

UNCLE JESSIE AND THE 28TH STREET BAND
Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit.
823-2355

SUNDAY, OCT. 18

DOWNY MILDEW
With Duck Hills at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit.
823-2355

JODY STECHER & KATE BRISLIN
The Ark, 637 1/2 S. Main, Ann Arbor.
761-1451

LYNN WOODARD ORGANIZATION
Sully's, 4758 Greenfield, Dearborn.
846-1920