

STREET SCENE

Carole King helps Billy Mann get 'Earthbound' airborne

For his sophomore effort "Earthbound," singer/songwriter Billy Mann really went back to his roots.

"I recorded the album with my junior high school band. Seriously, we played the 'battle of the band' contests and everything," Mann said with a laugh.

"It was a much more organic way to make a record. It just gelled so well. I went in the studio with all the guys I grew up with. It sort of had a feeling of a reunion. There was that sort of giddy excitement looking around the room and playing together."

Produced by David Korshenbaum (Tracy Chapman, Cat Stevens, Joe Jackson), "Earthbound" also features the piano and background vocals of Carole King on three tracks including "What Have I Got To Lose," which she co-wrote with Mann.

"To have someone like Carole believe in you, it's pretty humbling. She's such a legend that it took a little while for me to get to know her as a person separate and apart from the songwriter and the artist. She's an amazing person. With all the songs that she's written, she's as genuine and as wonderful as you can imagine," he said.

Leading up to the recording wasn't such a carefree road for Mann. Shortly after making his self-titled debut in 1996, his fiancée was diagnosed with cancer.



Two shows: Singer/songwriter Billy Mann will perform songs off his forthcoming album, "Earthbound," at two Pontiac shows.

Within weeks they were married and within a year he was a widower in his 20s. As a result, "Earthbound" is much deeper than Mann's self-titled debut which featured the hit "Killed By a Flower."

"A lot can happen to a person in four years," Mann said quietly. "Earthbound," which hits stores Tuesday, June 2, features the songs "How Do I Say Goodbye," "Make God Laugh," "Numb Heart," and the upbeat single "Beat Myself Up." The bi-polar album successfully wavers between light-hearted and soul-

bearing songs. "Where Are the Happy People" was written with Dominic Miller, Sting's guitar player who wrote "Shape of My Heart" with Sting.

"I wrote that in France. Miles Copeland has a retreat at his castle for songwriters. He picked these certain writers to go and write songs," Mann explained.

"Dominic was there. I was listening to a lot of Jim Croce. I had his collection there with me, so 'Where Are the Happy People' started with that and I just began rambling these comedic, cynical lyrics."

"This is really the record I wanted to make. Nothing to me is more precious than the other," he explained when asked to name his favorite song.

"They all really represent a genuine thing, a complete journal entry."

Mann will preview the record for fans on Friday when he opens for Vonda Shepard, who will perform songs from the television show "Ally McBeal," at 7 p.m. Friday, May 22, at Clutch Cargo's, 65 E. Huron, Pontiac. Tickets are \$10 in advance for the 18 and older show. Call (248) 333-2362 or visit <http://www.961melt.com> for more information.

Mann will also perform as part of radio station CIDR's "Riverfest" with the Brian Setzer Orchestra, Big Rude Jake, Agents of Good Roots, Patty Griffin, Steve Paltz, Stewart Francke and Jill Jack at noon Saturday, July 11, at the Phoenix Plaza Amphitheater in Pontiac. Tickets are \$21.50 in advance for the all-ages show. For more information, call (248) 335-4850 or visit <http://www.961melt.com>.

Some of whom are his family. His father and mother were born in Detroit but moved to Philadelphia, where Mann was raised. He expects some distant cousins to attend the Clutch Cargo's show.

"I've never brought a full band to Detroit," Mann said cheerily. "It's been really very exciting. It's also just musically interesting to go out and play with great musicians and guys I grew up with. I'm very lucky to be in this position."

Billy Mann along with Willy

Porter open for Vonda Shepard, who will perform songs from the television show "Ally McBeal," at 7 p.m. Friday, May 22, at Clutch Cargo's, 65 E. Huron, Pontiac. Tickets are \$10 in advance for the 18 and older show. Call (248) 333-2362 or visit <http://www.961melt.com> for more information.

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Mike Dirt of Green Day is another musician looking forward to coming to Detroit.

"I just like the town. It's industrial. I like things like that. The big iron fist, that's really cool. It says, 'Hey (mess) up here, we're gonna hit ya,'" Dirt said forging an Italian accent.

Green Day is coming to the Detroit area to play a secret show in a small club for listeners of WXDG ("The Edge").

The band chose the city because Detroit's so cool. Not every show (on the tour) is like that. There's only one small show

on the tour, really. Usually we're playing places that hold about 1,500 to 2,000 people."

"We tried to play a small show in Corpus Christi (Texas) and it didn't turn out that way," the bass player said. Swarms of fans found out where the band's gig was scheduled and tried to get in.

Nevertheless, club shows, he said, are fun to do.

"It's good to stir up the soul every once in a while. We'll mix it up."

Aside from Dirt, singer/guitarist Billy Joe Armstrong and drummer Tre Cool, Green Day is bringing along the No Doubt horn section.

"We thought we'd try it out. For the first half we had two guys from the Voodoo Glow Skulls and it worked out well. We're just trying to keep it interesting for ourselves."

The band recently spiced up its single "Brain Stew" for the "Godzilla" soundtrack which was released this week. Along with a little remixing, it features the vocals of the giant reptile itself.

"We tried to do something eerie. Do you like that guitar part at the end? I made them put it in."

He wouldn't say who played said guitar part except for "some guy."

To try to win tickets to the Green Day show e-mail "The Edge" at studio@radioedge.com

'Live to tape' has some tense moments

BACKSTAGE PASS



ANN DELUSI

Here's a quick lesson in television vernacular. *Backstage Pass* is a "live" show to the extent that it's not post-produced - it's not a bunch of pieces edited together. But when you watch the big show at home, *delusi* you're watching a tape being broadcast by the station. You see, in a great phrase that should be added to George Carlin's list of oxymorons, we go "live to tape." Lots of talk-shows do it. When you watch Leno or Letterman at 11:30, it was recorded live to tape earlier in the day, at around 6:30.

The benefit of going live to tape is that the people on the studio floor get a sense of the show's continuity. If you don't make any mistakes, you run through the show in real time, just like it airs. When it's clicking, the venerable Detroit Public Television studio is crackling with energy.

"Of course, we do sometimes make mistakes. And when you go 'live to tape,' mistakes can cost you a lot of time. Here's why: since you're not going to

edit the show later, you have to find a point before the mistake at which you can start up again - a "pick up point." Sounds easy, but a sentence or two before the goof and start fresh from there.

Not so. For technical reasons of which I attempt to remain blissfully ignorant, you need a cut (a straight image-to-image transition), not a fade or dissolve. Preferably, there's a silent moment, what they call "clean audio." And video tape takes two seconds to get up to full running speed. So you need to a spot that meets all the aforementioned criteria, back the tape up by two seconds, roll the tape, then time your "pick up" to hit that spot exactly as it rolls by on the tape. Good luck.

Since so few moments in a show meet all those requirements, if we make a mistake in the first third of a show, we just start over. And it so happens that the most difficult part of the show is the first five minutes. First we roll the pre-produced open (the one with me walking backstage at area venues). The music that trails out of the open brings you into the studio, where a camera attached to a crane makes a difficult sweeping move, during which there are three light cues. The end of the music is my cue to tell you what's com-

ing up on the show. Then our musical guest plays live music under a tape which acknowledges our underwriters while I switch places on the set, usually joined by our first segment host. When the tape ends, we chat about the first event we're covering while the band sneaks off the set so they can chill in the green room until their full performance.

So odds are that if we're going to goof, it's going to happen early, and we're going to start over from the very beginning. Which means we're going to do the toughest, most mistake-prone portion of the taping again. It switches repeatedly. On a tape. We all love our opening music, but it's suffered from an unfortunate conditioned-response: we associate it with the tension of having to start over from the top. Sometimes repeatedly. On a tape. Really, really bad day, you might hear that opening song six times.

Choose your all-time favorite song. Now play it over and over every time you make a mistake. Every time you're a wee bit tense. It may still be your

favorite song, but pretty soon it'll give you an ulcer. Pavlov's ringing the bell, but instead of food, he's swatting us with a rolled-up newspaper. So by the third or fourth time we hear our show's opening music, we're wincing.

Luckily, we often run through the show in real time, no mistakes. And we've got a great one this week. Marsha Miro gives us a sneak peek of new construction that will double the size of the Cranbrook Institute of Science (it doesn't open to the public until June 13). Blair Anderson will host a performance from "Joe Turner's Come and Gone," currently playing at the Floureshares Theatre. And we'll get music from Billy Mann and the Dirty Dozen (formerly The Dirty Dozen Brass Band), renowned worldwide for revitalizing the once-dormant New Orleans brass band tradition with a funky new musical vision.

That's all on *Backstage Pass*, tonight at midnight, repeated tomorrow night at 7:30 p.m. on Detroit Public Television.

COMING ATTRACTIONS

Scheduled to open Friday, May 22

"FEAR AND LOATHING IN LAS VEGAS"
Explosive pop culture comedy based on Hunter S. Thompson's 1971 cult book that chronicled the writer's drink-and-drug-fueled road trip to cover a motorcycle race. Stars Johnny Depp, Cameron Diaz.

Scheduled to open Wednesday, May 27

"I GOT THE HOOKUP"
Comedy about two street entrepreneurs who are running a shopping center out of their van. When they start dealing in hoodied cat shoes they find themselves scrambling to stay ahead of unhappy customers and the FBI.

Scheduled to open Friday, May 29

"HOPE FLOATES"
When a woman's picture perfect life comes crashing down around her, she returns home to start over. There her life becomes even more complicated, but she finds the strength to reclaim her life and rediscovers something she had almost given up on, hope. Stars Sandra Bullock, Harry Connick Jr.

Scheduled to open Friday, June 5

"A PERFECT MURDER"
A wealthy and powerful man hires someone to murder his unfaithful wife. Stars Michael Douglas, Gwyneth Paltrow.

Lewis & Clark across the uncharted American West. Stars Chris Farley and Matthew Guest.

"SEYDOW SILENCE"
Movie set in a small German town chronicles the life of a young girl raised by deaf parents.

"WHY STELLMAN'S THE LAST DAYS OF DESCO"
Set in the late 1970s this romantic comedy centers around a youthful group, living, working, and playing in New York City. Stars MacKenzie Astin, Kate Beckinsale, David Conrad.

"WILDS"
Exclusively at the Landmark Main Theatre. A biography of the legendary Irish wit Oscar Wilde. Stars Stephen Fry, Jude Law, Vanessa Redgrave.

Scheduled to open Wednesday, June 3

"I WROTE DOWN"
Action thriller about an ex-con forced to team with a small-time hood to find a missing gangster and his loot. Stars Brendan Gleeson, Peter McInerney.

Scheduled to open Friday, June 5

"A PERFECT MURDER"
A wealthy and powerful man hires someone to murder his unfaithful wife. Stars Michael Douglas, Gwyneth Paltrow.

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