

STREET SCENE

All systems go for 16 Horsepower

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Jean-Yves Tola may be considered the force behind 16 Horsepower, his drumming the backbone of this Denver-based gothic alt-country rock quartet. But when the band isn't on tour, Tola and his bandmates are farther apart than you might imagine. The Parisian-born drummer chooses to reside in California while fellow 16 Horsepower guitarist Stephen Taylor lives in New Orleans. Bassist Pascal Humbert and David Eugene Edwards stayed in Denver. Sounding stronger than ever, the distance between them hasn't hindered a thing.

"The tour has been going on for a couple of weeks," said Tola from his cell phone in that unmistakable French accent. "I'm just trying to be healthy and to be ready. We've had really good crowds."

The crowds are coming to hear 16 Horsepower perform songs

from its most recent Razor and Tite release, *Secret South*. The first single, *Clogger*, along with the slow-build of *Cinder Alley* and the band's ethereal cover of Bob Dylan's *Nobody Cried You* make this album one to keep. For the first time, Tola had more of a hand in songwriting and production.

He and Edwards have been working together since a first chance meeting — building movie sets on a Los Angeles studio lot in 1992. Shortly after, the darkly foreboding, strangely engaging sounds of 16 Horsepower came to be.

But Tola has been a musician since the age of 7, when his parents insisted each of their five children choose an instrument.

"When I was 12 years old, I didn't want to play the flute anymore. I went for the farthest thing away from the flute, which is drums."

Rhythm came easily to him in any genre. From classical music to hard core punk rock bands in

Paris, Tola's tastes ran the gamut.

"A lot of classical music was played around my house," he recalled. "My brother was a guitar player and he was really into Bob Dylan and Cat Stevens. I love those guys now, even though I didn't know it then. It got into my head."

The depth and inspiration of such artists shines in *Secret South*. For the first time, 16 Horsepower approached recording this project with a few songs yet to be finished. *Silver Saddle* and *Just Like Birds* came full circle during the recording process. "I'm really happy with what happened with those songs at the studio," he said. "We just kind of let go of ourselves in there. That was kind of a great thing to do — to be able to not have to be so prepared. I think sometimes you lose a lot of the spontaneity, some of the ideas you come up with, if you're too settled."

Fans of the band will finally

find it easier to get their hands on *Hoarse*, a live album recorded in 1998 at The Bluebird Theatre in Denver and Bataclan in Paris. "We did that as a little plus for our fans, to make a little extra money on the road. But the problem is, we're selling as much of these as *Secret South*."

16 Horsepower finally decided to release *Hoarse* on Checkered Past Records. Until now, it has only been available through mail-order. "It's just really a compilation of older songs, before *Secret South*," said Tola. "We didn't really worry about what songs they were. We were more concerned with quality and performance."

Right after the band's show at Detroit's Magic Stick, 16 Horsepower will begin the European leg of the tour, starting in Greece. But it won't be much of an adjustment, said Tola. He feels audiences vary more by region than by country. "In Germany, we know 80 percent of the people don't understand the



Kick it into gear: 16 Horsepower will stop in Detroit, Saturday, Feb. 17, while on tour to support "Secret South."

words. But we're a little bit more popular in Europe than we are in America. One thing (they have) in common — they are very

nice, very supportive. We're very fortunate to have such a following."

American Mars' music 'lingers around sunset'

Recently added to the bill, the Detroit area's own American Mars will open the 16 Horsepower show. Thomas Trimble, the band's voice and songwriter is looking forward to the show. Here's what he had to say to the Observer & Eccentric! Newspapers:

O&E: How might American Mars be a complimentary choice to open this particular show?

Thomas Trimble: "While I would never compare our band to 16 Horsepower, I think in many ways we are interested in a lot of the same things, musically and lyrically. They are working with some very powerful cultural tropes that deal in history and myth whereas I think we are more interested in trying to make sense of the present state of things."

O&E: How does your music compare to or contrast with 16 Horsepower?

TT: "16 Horsepower is a very powerful group. My sense is that we share a lot of the same influences, Dylan, the Gun Club, Joy Division, but that we come at those bodies of work from different directions. While they seem to go further into night, I think American Mars prefers to linger around sunset."

O&E: Do you consider yourself a fan?

TT: "I'm a huge fan. I saw them open for Grant Lee Buffalo several years ago and have followed their work ever since. Their music physically impacts me like almost no other band I've ever heard. The Dirty Three is the only other band I know of that can do that."

Look for a new album by American Mars this Spring. So far, the working title is *No City Fun*.

— Interview by Stephanie Angelyn Casola

Who: 16 Horsepower with American Mars
When: 9 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 17
Where: Magic Stick, Detroit.
Tickets: \$12 for this 18 and older show. Call (313) 961-8961.

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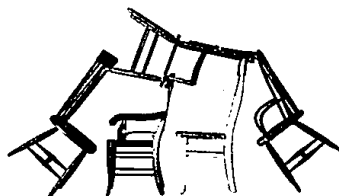
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