

## STREET SCENE

## Clearing the confusion: The two sides of Everclear



STEPHANIE A. CASOLA

does to a guy. You see it was Everclear's first headlining tour in about two years. And Marquette isn't an easy name to remember when you're from Washington.

"We've been in the studio for a long time," he said with a sigh. The result came in the form of two contrasting full-length releases in 2000—the pop-oriented *Songs From An American Movie Vol. One: Learning How To Smile* and the brash *Songs From An American Movie Vol. Two: Good Time For A Bad Attitude*.

It was quite an unconventional decision to release these records just four months apart, rather than stagger the albums with at

least one year of touring in between them. But the project was an unusual one from the very start.

## Two sides

"Volume One was originally going to be Art's solo record," explained Montoya. "He started it. We went on a couple of tours. He had throat surgery. When he went back to it after a four-month break...he called Greg and I up and asked us to listen to a couple tracks."

The project wasn't taking shape as singer and songwriter Art Alexakis intended and soon Montoya and drummer Greg Eklund were working on new songs for the record — two released as the singles *Wonderful* and *AM Radio*.

All of a sudden, it became the unlikely follow-up to Everclear's *So Much For The Afterglow*. Complete with a cover of Van Morrison's *Brown Eyed Girl* and an ode to Otis Redding, the record showed a sort of music nostalgia and penchant for pop culture, right down to its *American Gothic*-inspired cover art.

"Volume One used more vocals

to where we would normally put more guitars. It seemed to work. We always knew we were going to do *Volume Two*, a full-on rock and roll record."

*Volume Two* boasts the radio single *When It All Goes Wrong Again*. If asked to choose, Montoya admits *Vol. Two* better reflects the rock he was raised on. "We pumped out the whole thing pretty fast," he said. "We knew exactly what we wanted. We played loud. We played angry. That's what we're about."

He admits though that the decision to release what seemed to the public to be two albums at once was a bit confusing. "People didn't know what to think."

"My brother and my father both played guitar," said Montoya, who grew up in Spokane, Wash. "There were always guitars hanging around the house."

Montoya grabbed his first guitar at age 15 and held on tight. "In the 80s, everyone wanted to be Eddie VanHalen," he explained. "It was the only thing I ever really felt passionate about when I was a kid. When things got tough, I just listened to music. When I was upset

about something, I would crank the music."

While Montoya's small town existence didn't offer as much exposure to popular television and radio, he said he grew up listening to rockabilly, his father's Oldies station and learning about muscle cars. His quintessential "American movie" might fall in line with *American Graffiti*. "I didn't watch TV as a kid," he said. "I didn't watch *The Brady Bunch*."

Scaling down their 1 hour 20 minute headline set to 50 minutes for the Matchbox Twenty tour, Montoya said: "We're gonna put on the best show we can." The difference between headlining and touring with another radio heavyweight is simply the size of the venue. Everclear will go from performing in clubs and theaters catering to about 3,000 screaming fans to giant arenas — like The Palace of Auburn Hills.

"It will be kind of odd, we've only been on two other supporting tours, when we first started." Those tours included Detroit's *Sponge and Filter* and came around the time the band



Ever-popular: Everclear is Craig Montoya (left), Art Alexakis and Greg Eklund. Catch them this weekend at the Palace of Auburn Hills with Matchbox Twenty.

released its major label debut, the acclaimed *Sparkle and Fade*.

"The only hard thing about touring is being away from your family," he said. "I just got divorced last year. I know its effects. That's the only part."

"Besides that touring is a blast. You get a very little sample of different places."

Check out Everclear opening for Matchbox Twenty, along with Lifeshouse, 7:30 p.m. Saturday, March 3, The Palace of Auburn Hills, 1 Championship Drive, Auburn Hills. Tickets cost \$24.50-\$34.50. Call (248) 645-6666.

Stephanie Angelyn Casola writes about popular music. Call her at (734) 953-2130

## CD REVIEWS

## Opening Time

The Push Stars  
Co-op Pop Records

The Boston trio that lent *Everything Shines* to the smash film *There's Something About Mary* returns this month with a follow-up to *After The Party*. Proving that perhaps the party has just begun, The Push Stars offer *Opening Time*, a collection of 13 contagiously catchy and unmistakably heartfelt tunes rooted in melodic guitar riffs and story-like lyrics.

Singer-songwriter Chris Trapper, drummer Ryan Macmillan and bassist/keyboardist Dan McLaughlin performed Jan. 31 at Fordale's Woodward Avenue Brewery to an enthusiastic crowd of college co-eds, curious music journalists and die-hard fans. Since the band is contemplating a split from Capitol Records, *Opening Time* was released independently this month. Politics aside, the record itself takes over where *After The Party* left off. Here, we hear a solid trio conveying the heartache of past relationships, a search for something meaningful and a way of looking at life with your eyes wide-open in



wonderment.

From the intriguing energy behind *Waiting*, *Watching*, *Wondering* to the scaled-down, intimacy of Trapper's voice on *Last Night's Dream*, we hear The Push Stars at once yielding and clear. But it's the vivid storytelling of songs like *Who We Are* and *Over You* that give that relate-ability and earns the band its faithful, ever-growing following.

Macmillan — who blushes when asked what he thinks of the new album — admits it's less polished, but true to their sound. And he's right. There are no surprises here, aside from maybe

the bonus track.

The Push Stars' music possesses a genuine quality that deserves to be heard by so many more. *Opening Time* seems appropriately titled. Look them up on the Web [www.pushstars.com](http://www.pushstars.com).

## Instant Classic

The Beatles  
Magic Donkey Records

While The Beatles manage to harbor the top selling album in the country once again, the Detroit area's own Donkeybeats, are climbing the ranks on their own. With the recent release of *Instant Classic*, The Donkeybeats meld melodies, drifting chord structures and tones befitting retro rock radio, the sound is

something you can't help but enjoy.

With lyrics that tell a story and wind around your mind, The Donkeybeats show off a distinct talent for songwriting covering serious matters — *Life Worth Giving* — perfecting romantic ballads — *Save a Place* — and even showing a dark, comic sensibility — *He's Got a Big Truck*. The band is Jordy Bradley, Thad Bradley, Pete Peltier and Buddy Grell. The album comes complete with a black and white warning that advises "good tunes" are in store. With 14 catchy tracks, *Instant Classic* is an enjoyable music experience for anyone with a pop craving. Learn more at [www.donkeybeats.com](http://www.donkeybeats.com).

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