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Digging in the sky for diamonds

Skydiggers go back to the basics and try to harvest their 'moments'

Skydiggers

With AA Sound System and James Murdoch Band
Sunday, 19 November at 6pm
The Powerplant

SHAWN McMULLEN
Arts & Entertainment Writer

You can't really accuse Skydiggers of doing it the easy way. After nearly two decades of record-company trauma, marathon tours, getting the Most Promising Artist Juno and still trying to remain relevant, the story of Skydiggers is as rich and compelling as their music. Country-tinged songs of heartache and joy like "I Will Give You Everything" and "Slow Burnin' Fire" have earned them the kind of loyal following you don't get without a challenge.

"Things have changed and morphed considerably in the whole 'biz' of recording and promoting records. It's kind of gone back to where it all started in the very early days of just trying to reach fans," says bassist Ron Macey, over the phone from Toronto. "You go in and play and hope that the word of mouth will stimulate interest in the band, and a few people come back the next time and then you sell a few records ... I still think that the best thing to do is for a band to get up and get in the truck and drive and go play in order to reach people that way."

Not that touring is the only means of promoting themselves. Apart from being in Skydiggers, the members of the band have other pursuits—including running their own label, MapleMusic Recordings.

"Andy [Maize], our singer, he actually works at Maple during the day," Macey continues. "And Josh [Finlayson], our guitar player, he's busy writing with a number of people, and he's down in Nashville a lot working on tunes and working the publishing angle and what have you."

But despite the fact that the members have going concerns outside the band, they still find the time to be, well, Skydiggers. Earlier this year, the band

released an album in collaboration with long-time friends and one-time bandmates, The Cash Brothers, and the whole process of recording and doing shows with them is one that Macey recalls with fondness.

"There's certainly a long history, musically and friendship-wise, with the Cash Brothers," Macey explains. "Pete [Cash], he was one of our original members, and he some years ago left the band and went out and was recording and doing shows with his brother Andrew [Cash], and many years ago our singer, Andy Maize, he used to sing backup with Andrew, so there's this real sort of cross pollination."

"Things have changed and morphed considerably in the whole 'biz' of recording and promoting records. It's kind of gone back to where it all started in the very early days of just trying to reach fans."

RON MACEY

"Basically, [Skydiggers and the Cash Brothers] went into a studio in Toronto called Monumental Sound and just spent a weekend tracking things pretty much live ... we were just trying to capture a moment," Macey continues.

And capturing a moment isn't easy, especially when it means changing with the times and thus shifting your appearance—like when guitarist Josh Finlayson pseudo-shaved his beard.

"He never got rid of it completely," Macey laughs. "There have been times where he's been all fresh faced again, but he's been inching it back for years. That really big ZZ Top beard—that pretty much disappeared in the '90s."

"The next time we drive through Beardmore, Ontario, it'd be a good time for a shave," Macey concludes.



NEAL WILDING
WHO IS THAT MASKED WOMAN? The Bicycles manipulate gender roles at The Third Space.