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Wylie and local friends get a little *Unruly*

The Dana Wylie Band lay down temporary roots in town for their second album

musicpreview

Dana Wylie Band CD Release Party

With Guests
Saturday, 29 March at 9pm
Velvet Underground (10030 102 street)

PAUL BLINOV
Arts & Entertainment Editor

Dana Wylie is homeless. Sort of.

Though the Canadian songstress isn't begging on the streets and sleeping in dumpsters, she hasn't set roots down anywhere, either, having spent the last few years living in various parts of the world: a few years in England, a few more in Taiwan. Right now though, Wylie's setting up a temporary residence in Edmonton to properly promote her band's sophomore release, *The Unruly Ones*. Over a Starbucks coffee, she explains that the band has always been a globetrotting affair—her bandmates are both from the UK, and she met one of them halfway across the world.

"Jez [Hellard] is the drummer, harmonica-player, [and] guitarist," she explains. "We met in Taiwan. He'd lived there for about five years; I lived there for about a year and a half. We just met in a music store."

They started playing together after Wylie gave him one of her demos featuring her on piano and her then-boyfriend on drums; now, that boyfriend's long gone, Wylie and Hellard are a couple, and they've fleshed out their sound with Nye Parsons on double-bass. And while Wylie hopes the assembled trio is the band's solidified line-up, their usual distance from each other still poses a problem for the future.



"If we become as successful as we hope to become, it's going to get complicated, with visas and all that kind of thing," Wylie says. "In the seven months we've been in Canada, we've flown him over three times. I don't know how we do it; we're totally broke."

But those are issues that will be addressed as they rear their respective heads; Parsons will be in town for the release party, and the reunited trio will augment themselves with a couple of local guests as well. *The Unruly Ones*, recorded here in Edmonton, features a number of local talents. Wylie, who knew some of them from her time spent in Edmonton as a Grant MacEwan-trained actress, found that the album's guest talents were happy to lay down a track or two.

"The musicians just sort of booked themselves; we were at Sasquatch festival, and I just saw Jason [Cody] there. I hadn't seen him for years," she says. "Once we got all caught up, when we were saying goodbye, he said, 'So you'll come back here for your tour in the fall, and I'll play on your album.' I called him on it; a few months

later, I called him and said, 'You're booked!'"

Another contributor, the mandolin-slinging Mike Sadava—whose day job is reporting for the *Edmonton Journal*—heard through a mutual friend that Wylie was making an album and sought her out. And though they didn't have a previous engagement with Cam Neufeld, their guest fiddler, Wylie watched him perform at Sasquatch, then sent him a MySpace message, and he, too, contributed to the album. For Wylie, the local support is more than she could ask for: having grown up in a small town and having spent years in the Edmonton theatrical scene, the musical community is where she feels at home.

"Personality-wise, I feel more at home in a group of musicians than I necessarily do in a group of actors. I always knew I was going to be a musician, maybe, but I just came at it from a different direction. I had to spend my early 20s finding out what I like to do because in a small town, you don't have the opportunity to be in the drama department and learn about all that stuff. I had to do it all afterwards."

Black Mountain refuse to define their *Future*

musicpreview

Black Mountain

With Ladyhawk
Monday, 31 March at 8pm
The Starlite Room (10030 102 street)

CODY CIVIERO
Arts & Entertainment Staff

Vancouver-based rockers Black Mountain put forward an absorbing, hypnotic sound that can be very broadly described as classic rock with a modern hipster twist. It's quite a balancing act, but they manage to resurrect an intriguing progressive rock sound without sounding overly nostalgic or dated.

Veteran rocker Stephen McBean shares singing duties with Amber Webber, providing a nice rotation between McBean's laconic vocal style and Webber's summoning of the spirit of a wailing Grace Slick. But when it comes to nailing down their music, keyboardist Jeremy Schmidt is hesitant to slap on a label.

"We don't really endeavour to describe our music; we let other people do that," he explains. "I guess we fit into the classic progressive rock idiom to a certain degree, but we don't feel particularly compelled to describe it beyond that."

According to Schmidt, the band has many influences, encompassing "everything from old country rock to new wave," though he personally cites "German progressive rock

and Krautrock" as particularly heavy influences.

Giving their new album, *In The Future*, a quick spin offers a few suggestions for labelling the band. Opening with "Stormy High," a heavy stoner-jam, the album includes a Neil Young-esque sound in "Stay Free" before peaking with a sprawling, 17-minute prog rock trip in "Bright Lights." It would be nearly impossible to come up with an all-encompassing general description of the material presented, but it's certainly managed to establish pockets of fans all across the country.

Although they've been busily touring across North America as of late, they remain strongly attached to the Vancouver community, where several members of Black Mountain work at Insite, the city's controversial safe injection site. Regarding the effect that these experiences have on themselves and their music, Schmidt thinks of it as subconscious at best.

"We don't address it in any direct way. What you do in your everyday life, regardless of how banal it might be or how extraordinary it might be, finds itself into what you do creatively. It affects your worldview, and that sort of dictates where you are coming from when you are approaching any kind of creative endeavour."

It's hard to say whether they're rockers with a social conscience or social workers with a rock band, but in addition to the pair of job descriptions the band already carries—musicians and safe-injection

supervisors—Schmidt can add artist to his own resumé. He personally designed the psychedelic cover art for their new album, the ironically titled *In the Future*. He credits Storm Thorgerson, known best for his work with Pink Floyd, for making the covers that enthralled him as a child.

"[It's] the type of sleeve art that you kind of get lost in. I think all of us had that experience growing up—listening to albums and sitting there, investigating the gatefold, and staring at the cover. It's like this slightly lurid, magical world that these covers allude to. It's something I've always been enamoured with, and I set out to create something a bit like that."

Whatever Black Mountain has created with *In The Future*, it's raised the band's popularity to newfound peaks. But fresh from a recent appearance on Conan O'Brien, and with a new album debuting on the UK Top 100, Schmidt remains modest about his band's successes.

"I wouldn't really say that [we're going to be the next big thing]. I feel like we may have broadened the listening base with this new album and reached a few more people. We had an unprecedented success on the first one, and that set the template for the second one, with more people who are interested in our next move. I don't think that any of that is indicative of some meteoric rise or anything. It doesn't really affect our outlook in any way."

Joe Clark is no square—he loved last year's "gag issue"



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