

CD releases by Edmonton musicians tell stories of heartache and laughs

BY SANDRA SPEROUNES, EDMONTON JOURNAL APRIL 15, 2014 9:35 AM



Musician Josh Eygenraam's new album is titled Brutal Love.

Photograph by: Shaughn Butts, Edmonton Journal

EDMONTON - Dysfunctional relationships, self-deprecating wit and phones unite three of this week's album releases by Edmonton and expat musicians.

Here's a quick rundown:

The Fuzz Kings

Album: ReTurn of the Century, a 10-song, '50s-flavoured rock 'n' roll scorcher.

Frontman Fat Dave Johnston and his bandmates — guitarist Tom Kerr, bassist Alex Thurgood and drummer Nathan Ouellette — are also releasing a seven-inch, [I'm Your Goon](#), on green vinyl for Record Store Day. Listen via thefuzzkings.bandcamp.com.

Inspirations: Surf-rock pioneer Dick Dale, life as a broke, independent musician, and the ups and downs of maintaining relationships. Yet these songs won't bring you down — not only are most of the lyrics tongue-in-cheek, they're couched in revved-up, feel-good riffs, surfy-Latin grooves, and girl-group backup vocals provided by Colleen Brown, Alice Kos and Karen Struik.

"I really love playing with who I'm playing with," explains Johnston, who used to front such bands as Black Market Inc. and Fat Dave Crime Wave. "We have a lot of fun and I think it shows and I think

other people have a lot of fun, listening and hanging out at shows.”

Dialed in: “Well, I disconnect the phone / And then I sleep till you get home,” he growls on *Crawlin’ Outta Bed*.

Standout track: *Can’t Give You Anything*, a jaunty, Tex-Mex flavoured look at a floundering couple. “Musicians are hard to be married to,” Johnston admits.

Gigs: The Fuzz Kings are everywhere this week — playing CD release shows on Wednesday (The Pawn Shop), Thursday (Burnsy O’Flannigan in Leduc), Friday (DV8), and at four separate venues on Saturday, which happens to be Record Store Day. We can’t list ’em all, so check out fuzzkings.com for details.

“Everyone’s putting out an album this year,” says Johnston. “That means, everyone’s having a CD release party this year. Therefore, it’s no longer a special event, so we thought, instead of getting lost in the shuffle, we’d have SEVERAL. Don’t come to us, we’ll come to you.”

[Josh Eygenraam](#)

Album: *Brutal Love*, an eight-song pop-rock chameleon, with hints of sarcasm, David Bowie’s art-rock, Jason Mraz’s lilting guitars, Weezer’s power-pop and ’60s psych-rock.

“I’m still trying to find my voice, but I’m sure my next record will be more focused ... or maybe not. There’s no method, really. It’s just floundering,” laughs Eygenraam, who also plays bass in Unwed Mothers and Royal Tusk.

The three acts are part of the Ruffian Art Collective, a group of friends and artists who create — and even live — together.

Inspirations: Cigarettes, snow, the impossible hipness of Montreal, breakups and makeups.

“Almost every song I’ve written is about the same girl,” says Eygenraam. “There’s a whole world of terrible things that could happen that I could write about, but right now, I’m just writing about love. I could get into a tragic accident of some sort, maybe lose a toe. Probably a good album right there, I bet. I’d prefer to lose the smallest toe, but if I lost the big toe, it would probably be a better album.”

Dialed out: “I need a place / I need an address/ Where I can go to get my phone fixed,” he wearily sings on *Broken Phone*, a warm and bubbly number. “Cracked communication / And hearts are breaking cuz I can’t text you up.”

Standout track: *Brutal Love*, a soul-rock ditty with searing guitars. The accompanying video stars a scantily clad woman knockin’ the stuffing out of Eygenraam. “It felt good, it felt liberating,” he says. “It’s funny, I think, and it’s also a visual embodiment of the song.”

Gigs: His CD release party is Thursday at The ARTery with Cantoo and Diamond Mind. Tickets via yeglive.ca. Eygenraam will also perform with his Ruffian friends, including Motorbike James, on Thursday, May 15, at The Common.

[Christian Hansen](#)

Album: Small Fry, a five-song, synth-pop EP, is the Edmonton expat's second batch of tunes since moving to Toronto in 2011.

Yet he still can't shake Dirt City from his system. He recorded these songs at [Edmontone Studio](#) and enlisted local rapper Mikey Maybe to drop some existential rhymes to a remix of the title track. Listen via soundcloud.com/christian-hansen-band.

Inspirations: Hip-hop and Hansen's uneasy relationship with Toronto — giving Small Fry a much darker, more menacing feel than the giddiness of his Sonic hit, Cocaine Trade, from Power Leopard (2009) or the power-poppiness of C'mon Arizona (2011). Car crashes, murder, snow and gold Kalashnikovs are some of the lyrical images on Hansen's latest EP. "I think it had something to do with settling in Toronto and feeling lonely in a city full of so many people with so much going on," he explains. "It can be isolating."

Dialed in: He often came up with his lyrics as he walked along the streets of T.O., listening to the tracks on his iPhone.

Standout track: The Claim, which references Hudson Bay blankets and guns, is about the gradual wimpification of men. "I've been interested in this whole concept of lineage and legacy and how that changes generationally," says Hansen. "I feel like I don't know as much at my age as maybe my forefathers did and that can be demonstrated through the inheriting of something like a family gun. At one point, it existed as a real tool you would use and now, it's a museum piece. It represents how soft and useless I am."

Gigs: Hansen, wife/keyboardist Molly Flood, and their Edmonton-based rhythm section, Doug Hoyer and Doug Organ, play an all-ages show on Friday at The ARTery, an 18-plus gig on Saturday at The Pawn Shop. Tickets at yeglive.ca.

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