



ONCE DESCRIBED AS A ONE-MAN MUSIC INDUSTRY, MULTI-TALENTED TODD RUNDGREN IS STEPPING OUT WITH JOE JACKSON FOR A GIG IN THE CITY. **STEVE PUMFREY** TALKS TO 'THE RUNT'

CITY SCENE

DAVE DAVIES

"FILLING Your Boots with Roots!" – that's the promise of the Musician in Clyde Street, and they usually keep their promises.

Friday sees Diesel Park West's John Butler and Rick Willson in acoustic mode. If you haven't seen the supercharged performances of their songs and covers of The Byrds, Beatles, Stones, Love and Moby Grape classics, you're missing out.

"Acoustic" is not really the right description of their style, but it's not surprising that a whole new generation of city musicians is influenced by their superb vocal harmonies and guitar playing. EMI is releasing an expanded deluxe edition of their legendary debut album, Shakespeare Alabama, this summer. Watch this space or check out their website for rare tracks.

www.dieselparkwest.com

CITY Scene Band of the Year, The Dirty Backbeats, are supporting The High Plains Drifters at The Musician on Wednesday.

Ben Weatherill and DJ Gumbo are also lined up to perform.

The Dirty Backbeats' unique mix of blues and 60s garage freakbeat should go well with The High Plains Drifters. The band has been described as a "two-piece phenomenon with the power and energy of a full-scale orchestra". Critics describe them as "garage band blues and psychedelia with high-wire extrovert guitar and vocals anchored with power hammer drumming". Sounds good.

www.themusicianpub.co.uk

TOO young to go to venues to see bands? Fear not, The Shed holds all-ages matinee showcases on Saturday afternoons.

This week features Doss with Dania, Dandelions, Chloroform, Cardboard Box and Last Orders.

www.shedvenue.co.uk

THE Mercury/Charlotte Showcase on Tuesday is your chance to see new bands at a bargain price. This week's bands are Tell Tale Hearts, Singe, Yes My Ninjas? and Kill Carbide, and admission is just £3, or two for one with the exclusive voucher on this page. Information on 0116 255 3956.

www.thecharlotte.co.uk

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Todd Rundgren laughs at the suggestion that he might fancy a cameo part in Desperate Housewives after the producers picked one of his songs for the show's soundtrack. "It's not a show I've watched," he confesses. "Television is too banal here, and anyway, I don't know what they would do with me."

That's the thing with "The Runt": he never does what is expected.

His early 1970s records are shockingly good, combining Californian harmonies with rock guitar and Beatles-esque production.

Problem is, Rundgren has a habit of derailing his career with ambitious, idiosyncratic production experiments that antagonize the critics and confuse his fans.

His breakthrough album, Something/Anything, included the pop nuggets Hello It's Me and I Saw The Light. The follow-up, A Wizard, A True Star, was, well, different.

"I suppose it started with the Beatles," he says down the line from Hawaii. "They were the first band to push out the boundaries and conceptualise."

"The Something/Anything album was well received by the record company and had hits.

"They were waiting for the next one and instead I came up with A Wizard, A True Star which included echoes, feedback, even my dogs barking.

"The record company hated it.

"It was more difficult to be eclectic in the 1970s because there was too much commercialism, but I was already way out there."

Rundgren then had a lengthy digression with pop-rock group Utopia, which resulted in a lot of entertaining albums but not a lot of success, locking him more tightly into the image of a cult star.

Liars, released last year, was his first album of all-new songs for 10 years.

"It was much better received in the UK than over here. It was gratifying to get such a good reaction."

During the development of Liars, Rundgren produced material for his internet patrons and

IT'S THE
TODD
COUPLE

toured a "greatest hits" package – played in bossa nova style.

He is also a renowned producer: Meat Loaf's Bat Out Of Hell is just one of his credits. His latest collaboration is with sharp-suited 80s boy Joe Jackson, who guests with him at De Montfort Hall in June.

Todd said: "I didn't really know Joe, but he joined me on stage for a couple of songs at the Delacourt Theatre in Central Park, New York, and we hit it off."

"In the blink of an eye, we're doing five weeks in the States and five weeks in Europe, supported by the string quartet, Ethel. We can certainly promise eclecticism."

INFORMATION

TODD Rundgren, Joe Jackson and Ethel play De Montfort Hall, Leicester, on Friday, June 3. Tickets on 0116 233 3111.

12 BAR

STEVE ENGLAND

THE Week 12 Bar Best Performance Award winners Dark Side of the Wall set off with a new line-up on Saturday.

They are appearing at the Nicholas Chamberlaine School, Bedworth.

Then they are playing at Stoney Stanton Social Club on April 23. Get tickets by ringing Jim on 01455 272 492.

Taj Mahal and his distinctive blend of blues and world music comes to De Montfort Hall on June 24.

The timing is unfortunate, because Robert Cray is making one of his extremely rare appearances at the Royal Concert Hall in Nottingham on the same night!

The Taj Mahal tickets cost £15.50 and £17.50. Call the box office on 0116 233 3111.

The Robert Cray tickets cost £22.50 and are available on 0115 989 5555.

Another concert lined up for June 24 is Flamenco guitarist Juan Martin at The Y. Tickets cost £12/£10 on 0116 255 7066.

Harpist Doug Jay and his talented band The Blue Jays were on form at the Musician recently. He has a new CD out entitled Jackpot.

Meanwhile, Rollo Markee appears with his Tailshakers on Saturday at the Musician.

Howard Smith and the Razors play at the same venue on April 23, and the Smokehouse Blues and Smokestack Blues Bands play on April 30.