

Mike Mountain Interview



by
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Mike Mountain is a well known band from New Bedford. They straddle a fine line between the noise-rock underground and catchy, hook filled tunes. I had a few choice words with lead singer Michael Montagano about cultural diffusion, spontaneous combustion, rock and roll and Portuguese cuisine.

How did Mike Mountain get started?

Michael: I had known (bassist) Jeff for a while. I was impressed he was able to quit his job to make a living playing music. I toured down to Miami in an early version of the band with Jeff and got to know him better. Eventually it coalesced into something more permanent. The guitarist Steve and I had played on and off for years, and Jeff used to play with our drummer (also named Mike).



How do you guys come up with your songs? Is there a magic formula? What's it all about?

Michael: There is no set pattern. Jeff comes up with bass lines first for most of the songs, but some have started with Steve on guitar or my lyrics. A lot of bands jam and make songs from those sessions. We don't really do that. Lyrically I tend to gravitate to open ended meanings that people can attach their own significance to. It is

a kind of stream of consciousness. I don't over think it.

I know you are recording a new album. How is that going?

Michael: Great! We are recording at Feedback Studios in Freetown with the New Wave Cafe's main sound engineer Ron Poitras. Ron has been great, very professional but laid back. Its inexpensive but very big sounding. We are almost done, just some some guitar and vocal overdubs left.

What impelled you to play music in the first place?

Michael: Most of my formative years were spent going to shows in the early to mid 1990's. Lyrical influences, well I try to take what influences me from different genres. I like Bob Dylan and The Kinks from the 1960's, Bruce Springsteen and the Swell Maps from the 1970's, Drunks with Guns and the Birthday Party from the 1980's, Pavement, Royal Trux and the Jesus Lizard from the 1990's. A lot of things appeal to me, it is difficult to quantify.

It is obvious from that response that it may be difficult for Mike Mountain to fit in with a certain scene or clique in New Bedford. How do you manage?

Michael: Because we are all in our mid 30's there is a certain desperation to do our best work now, not like we are young kids and will have a lot of future bands. We can't afford to worry about the little stuff. We cover a song by A Stoveboat. All of their songs were about Whaling, its kind of a sea shanty. I feel like a lot of poets come from New England and we fit in that with a sort of New England perception. We have an original sound but we like to think we can appeal to the average person. it is hard for us to be grouped into one scene but hat may be beneficial to us eventually. Our first two CD's have a wide range. We don't want the songs to sound alike.

What do you make of the New Bedford area since you started at nearby U- Mass Dartmouth about 20 years ago?

Michael: Downtown was a ghostland. It is nice to see a cultural renaissance, made all the more remarkable during a recession. There are places to play and hear music, eat and get out in general.

What's coming up for Mike Mountain?

Michael: Jeff and I have the freedom socially to just go out and play and not worry about money, so we will do more touring, but we have to work around the other guys lives. We will have our second album out on 75 Or Less Records soon. We want to tour as much as we can, but you will still see us playing around town.

Mike Mountain will be playing No Problemo and the New Wave soon, so keep a lookout for New Bedford's best kept secret.

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