

Ben Schneider is a visual artist who studied painting, and his music – as Lord Huron – reflects that. It's not merely the covers for his two EPs – warmly evocative, slightly foggy images that showcase the natural beauty of figures, water, landscape, and light together. The ethereal, tropical songs themselves have their origins in the visual.

Schneider and his four-piece backing band will be coming to RIBCO on May 4, and in a phone interview this week, he described the translation from the visual to the aural.

"When I'm writing songs, I usually try to tell a story ...," he said. "A lot of times, the way I'll start is by getting an image in mind and then try to translate that image ... sonically. ... I just kind of try to make a soundtrack for that image. It's almost like making a little film in your head, and then making music that will go with it."



For "Mighty" – the title track of one EP – he said: "I had these visions of these animals. They're all teeth and claws and power. But [I saw] sort of this celebratory confrontation between animals. … I think the cover art for that album has a bit of that, too – that majestic, almost royal, quality that animals can have. And that incredible power."

On "Into the Sun" – the title track for Schneider's other release – "I had this weird thought about being out in the open ocean and hearing this music sort of washing across the waves, almost like it was coming up from the bottom of the ocean – you can hear it rising to the surface, kind of bubbling its way up."

Crafting a Mythology: Lord Huron, May 4 at RIBCO

Written by Jeff Ignatius Wednesday, 27 April 2011 19:32

While those imagined scenes provide inspiration, he emphasized that he also sees "the visual components of this project as being really key to it. ... We're trying to kind of create this world, this mythology."

Schneider, who's now based in Los Angeles, said his music draws heavily from the tension between his deep roots in Michigan and a need to travel. "I've always had this sort of weird internal struggle between my strong ties to my home and my family and my sort of wanderlust," he said. "I think there's a lot of that in the content of the music that we make."

While the songs have gentle but dense and dynamic soundscapes – with their world rhythms, harmonies that hide darker lyrical content, and bright, precise guitars – Schneider recorded both EPs by himself, and without necessarily being competent on the instruments or software he used.

"I really tried to ignore what I had played well ... because I didn't know the kind of sounds I wanted to get and the feel that I wanted to get, so I just tried my best to do it, even on instruments I don't really know how to play," he said. That was especially true of the rhythm elements so essential to these songs – "Drums are tough for me," he said – but he got what he wanted with unlimited takes, a metronome, and a click track.

And home recording gave him the freedom and time to experiment: "I was kind of familiarizing myself with the program and the process."

Schneider said he didn't want to "shy away from some of my musical tendencies that are often looked at as a little embarrassing, I think. People say the words 'world music,' and that usually induces some gagging. And I understand that I tried to embrace all those guilty pleasures that I have in music and go for it. I could tell there could be something interesting there if I gave it a try."

Others agree, as his homemade recordings have generated significant buzz. The *L.A. Times*' music blog

<u>said</u>

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: "The band's self-released *Mighty*

EP is full of lush acoustic guitars and Midwestern-accented harmonies as warm as a winter fireplace, but it's the Caribbean-influenced percussion that fans Lord Huron's folk sound into flame." In another article, it

called

the EP "the sort of record you expect to hear upon entering a national park, a soundtrack to the ordinary world at its most extraordinary. There's little studio wizardry, just bongos, beautiful guitars that churn like cataracts, and Schneider's big-sky voice, a salient reminder that the universe is not composed strictly of concrete and steel."

Schneider said he and his band have set aside June and July to work on writing and recording, and he added that he hopes to release a full-length album in the next nine months. But he also said he isn't sure to what extent his bandmates will ultimately be involved in the writing and recording process. "The project is really personal to me," he said. "So we're going to feel it out and ... see what happens when we get in the studio together."

Lord Huron will perform on Wednesday, May 4, at RIBCO (1815 Second Avenue in Rock Island). The all-ages show starts at 7 p.m. and also features Break Up Art. Cover is \$6.

For more information on Lord Huron, visit LordHuron.com.