Written by Jeff Ignatius
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Keegan DeWitt is inviting his fans along on his journey, in what passes for real time in the music industry.

The Nashville-based musician and composer has many of his film scores available for free on his Web site. His earlier solo recordings found him in singer/songwriter mode. A trio of singles over the past year have shown him making the transition from solo artist to bandleader. And he hopes that all those elements will come together on the album he and his band are working on.

A Daytrotter.com veteran with three sessions under his belt and an EP (last year’s *Nothing Shows*) released by the Quad Cities-based site, DeWitt will perform as part of the September 3 Daytrotter Barnstormer 5 concert in Maquoketa’s Codfish Hollow Barn.

Two years ago, he said in a phone interview this week, he recorded largely by himself with a couple of string players. As he’s built a band, he said, “we wanted to make sure that everybody was following us on that trajectory, instead of listening to something that was super-outdated. ...

We wanted to make sure that through this process of making music ... we weren't waiting on anybody."

So the band has recorded and released singles – including "Colour" earlier this month – as progress reports to fans. "Can we cultivate that kind of fan base, where they know that we're always active and always have something going as long as they're looking for it?" he said. "Once you empower people to find your music once, that kind of continues down the line, I think."

The shift from folk to bright and unabashedly pop is evident from *Nothing Shows* to the singles, but DeWitt said he hopes his band's album synthesizes all of his aspects, from the minimalist bent of his scores to the "big, loud, efficient fun machine" of his rock outfit.

He used to view songs and scores as separate entities, he said, but he's begun to recognize how complementary their aesthetics can be.

In film, he said, the composer can dictate mood with the smallest music cue, and the work of Michael Nyman and Ryuichi Sakamoto "taught me what it meant to score a movie, in terms of restraint and the power of restraint in film scores."

The band's live show, on the other, builds massive sound, and DeWitt said an album presents "the cool, unique opportunity to blend those two worlds together. The super-minimalistic moments of really awesome, sharp, definitive focus, and then other moments of giant, overwhelming, intangible layers of things."

But he admitted that it's frustrating to kick an album down the road as a concession to touring. "The most precious thing in the world to me is the idea of a record as a concept," he said. "That's the end goal, to release a perfect nine-song record. I think that that's the purpose of pop music. But we have to be as practical as possible," and the singles are the result.

DeWitt said his band has helped him recognize the common ground shared by scores and rock music. When he was working mostly by himself, he said, he would write songs and then fill them

out, sometimes with little thought given to the *purpose* of the additions.

The band dynamic, he said, has put more attention on all the components of the music – similar to the way his scores seek their effects through sparsity. "We're figuring out how to be able to build things just based off of a drum loop," he said. "There's one thing that pop musicians, and especially indie musicians, to a certain degree don't think about, which is the awesome lesson of jazz: You shouldn't play anything unless it's definitive, unless there's some definitive reason why it should exist.

"And of course, we're all guilty of totally not fulfilling that expectation; I think that's kind of the point of that expectation. But when you're starting to build with a band, and you pay attention to each individual element, I think that it puts you in a good brain space to be able to be as loyal to that idea as possible. What is this drum part? Okay, what can happen on top of that? ... You're a lot more thoughtful about how you build songs."

Keegan DeWitt will perform as part of Daytrotter.com's Barnstormer 5 tour on Saturday, September 3, at Codfish Hollow Barn (3437 288th Avenue in Maquoketa, Iowa). The concert also includes White Rabbits, Wildlife, Princeton, Hacienda, Madi Diaz, Nona Marie & the Choir, and Hundred Visions. The show starts at 6:30 p.m., and tickets are $20 in advance and $25 at the door. For tickets and more information, visit RCReader.com/y/daytrotter5 . For a 2008 interview with White Rabbits, visit RCReader.com/y/rabbits .

For more information on Keegan DeWitt, visit KeeganDeWitt.com .