

## Forcing Freshness: The David Mayfield Parade, November 1 at Rozz-Tox

Written by Jeff Ignatius

Tuesday, 25 October 2011 14:50

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A lot of bands decide to track their albums largely live in the studio, but until I talked to David Mayfield, I'd never heard such a strong rationale. The typical goal (outside of saving money and time) is to capture a live energy, with the incidental benefit of retaining some charming flubs.

But for the self-titled debut of the David Mayfield Parade, this bandleader knew that live tracking – including recording the drums with a single microphone – would get the best out of the players.

“I think there’s some merit to limiting your options,” said Mayfield, whose band will perform as part of the Communion Tour at Rock Island’s Rozz-Tox on November 1. “It really helped to just put us in a mindset of pulling the trigger and making these choices early on. All the lead guitar, and drums, and bass are in the room together, and there’s so much bleed that you couldn’t go in and fix something. You had to just choose a take and live with it, which kind of made everyone ... more precious about their performance.”

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With the modern way of recording, he said, “you lose a preciousness, because everything’s isolated, and you can do 20 takes and take the best bits out of each take, and so you just play *whatever*

. But if you screw up [tracking live], then everyone has to play again. [It] kind of keeps everyone on the edge of their seat a little more.”

That kind of wisdom reflects Mayfield’s status as a well-traveled veteran in the music industry, starting with playing in his family’s bluegrass band (One Way Rider) beginning at age 12. His credits include stints as a jack-of-many-trades sideman for country artist Andy Griggs, as a performer in the backing band of his little sister Jessica Lea Mayfield, and as a member of Cadillac Sky. He also has a Grammy nomination for producing Barry Scott & Second Wind’s *In God’s Time*

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*The David Mayfield Parade* is a joyfully eclectic roots-rock collection that shows a surfeit of songwriting, performance, and production skills. There’s the lush opener “Blues Skies Again,” whose yearning strings, gentle guitar, and warm singing support an expected refrain: “Suddenly I can see blue skies again.” Yet they build to a lovely, bold, pull-out-the-rug admission – a late-arriving honesty: “It’s not easy to pretend / That I can see blues skies again.”

The articulate lead guitar of “I Just Might Pray” is matched by Mayfield’s earnest voice – lovestruck to the point of finding religion: “Dear God, don’t let this one slip away / I don’t believe it / I just might pray.” The straight-from-the-early-days-of-rock-and-roll “Noreen” and the bright, in-your-face keyboards of “Looking for Love” provide startling but buoyant and well-executed change-ups.

Yet nothing can quite prepare the listener for the strangeness of album-closer “I Have Been Known to Be Wrong from Time to Time But I’m Afraid I’m Right.” For almost four minutes, it’s a first-person love song straightforward and true, but as it climaxes, with three voices joining for the word “I” in “I tried,” another enters: “David, what have you done? You pushed her away, now she’s gone.”

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This point-of-view U-turn is jarring, and as traditional songcraft goes, the introduction of a conscience-like outside perspective feels wrong. Yet it's a brave, naked choice that Mayfield said he had to make. He called the track "kind of this worried love song, and I had written it when things were looking really good in a romantic situation ... . And then I screwed things up really badly, and then that ending of the song kind of became added on after the fact. ... I couldn't sing that song anymore without kind of validating ... at the end that I screwed it up ... – to make me able to perform it and not feel like I was telling a lie."

Mayfield would be worth catching by himself, but the Communion Tour promises lots of other treats. The show is unusual in blending its acts together. As Mayfield explained: "There's no set change; there's no break between bands. We all share equipment and we all collaborate with each other, so each act sort of morphs into the next act."

More specifically, he added: "Lauren Shera opens the show solo, and toward the end of her set members of my band start to join her and accompany her, until eventually my whole band is on stage. And then she leaves and I come out, and we play, and then members of Matthew & the Atlas join us until eventually they're all out there and we're all gone. And then they play. And then at the end we all come back out and play songs together."

When we talked last week, the three acts had performed one show together, in Los Angeles. "Everything seemed to go, uh, pretty well – not exactly as planned, but it wasn't a huge disaster," he said of the debut. "There were no fistfights."

Mayfield said there was a keyboard "hiccup" between his set and that of Matthew & the Atlas. "There wasn't exactly a seamless transition. There was a big, glaring seam," he said. "If it takes 10 minutes between bands, that's normally great, but with this concept there's supposed to be no time."

Furthermore, he said, the roles in the collaborations – who was singing what verse, for example – hadn't been established, so "that was kind of a big cluster up there, but I think that's entertaining to watch, too."

Mayfield said he wasn't concerned, though. "None of us acts knew each other before this tour," he said. "That whole thing is going to take a little time to mature."

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But he said he doesn't want it to become too polished. "I'm hoping we work the glitches out, but I don't want it to get refined," he said. "I think one of the fun aspects of this show is ... the freshness that it's forcing out of all of us, because we're not just doing what we're used to doing on tour.

"But also I think the fact that it looks like the whole thing might fall apart at any moment is kind of an exciting element."

*The David Mayfield Parade will perform on Tuesday, November 1, as part of the Communion Tour at Rozz-Tox (2108 Third Avenue in Rock Island). The event also includes Lauren Shera and Matthew & the Atlas, and the show starts at 8 p.m. Advance tickets (\$10) are available at the venue, and admission is \$12 at the door. For more information, visit [RozzTox.com](http://RozzTox.com).*

*For more information on the David Mayfield Parade, visit [TheDavidMayfieldParade.com](http://TheDavidMayfieldParade.com).*