

Complicated Laziness: The Post Mortems, “Cracked & Crooked”; March 7 at RIBCO

Written by Jeff Ignatius

Thursday, 27 February 2014 11:29

- [Download Microsoft Office 2010 Professional Plus with SP1 \(32-bit & 64-bit\)](#)
- [Buy Adobe Illustrator CS5 on Demand \(en\)](#)
- [Buy BinaryFruit DriveDX 1.2 MAC \(en\)](#)
- [Buy OEM Microsoft Office Professional Plus 2013](#)
- [Download Microsoft Windows 8 Pro \(32-bit\)](#)
- [Download ABest Video to WMV SWF FLV Converter](#)
- [Buy Cheap 4Media DVD to PS3 Converter 5](#)
- [9.95\\$ Lynda.com - Ruby on Rails 3 Essential Training cheap oem](#)
- [Download Intuit Quicken Home & Business 2011](#)
- [Buy Cheap Adobe InDesign CS5 MAC](#)
- [Buy Autodesk AutoCAD Mechanical 2014 \(64-bit\) \(de,en,es,it\)](#)
- [99.95\\$ Adobe Photoshop Elements 10 & Adobe Premiere Elements 10 cheap oem](#)



Bassist and singer Devin Alexander attributes The Post Mortems’ two-instrument setup to laziness, but it’s not *ordinary* laziness – as there’s very little that’s typical about the Quad Cities/Iowa City band.

From its bass-and-drums-rock conceit to its gear to the seven-plus years it took to record its new album *Cracked & Crooked*, The Post Mortems have often traveled through bramble and brush.

But as arduous as that has often been for Alexander and drummer Al Raymond, the band’s March 7 album-release show at RIBCO should provide plenty of proof that the journey has borne fruit. The record successfully hews to The Post Mortems’ two-man core while pushing past the boundaries of what should be possible with only a traditional rhythm section – maintaining a minimalist identity while giving listeners much of the dynamic range and texture they expect from a larger outfit. And Alexander said his recently debuted live bass rig should be a revelation to longtime fans of the band.

“This Is Interesting”

Let’s start with the laziness, because it’s instructive how narrowly Alexander defines it. In a recent phone interview, he said it started with not having to coordinate schedules with other people. Plus, he added, “it was easy to sound tight that way. ... If there’s just two of us, I don’t have to worry about what any other instrument that’s stringed or chording is playing. So we stuck with it because it was easy and we’re lazy.”

There’s more to it, of course. “I was never particularly interested in the sound of a six-string guitar,” Alexander explained, “because to my ear it didn’t have as much power as I wanted it to have. When I heard the bass, I was like, ‘There are the frequencies that I want to contribute to music. I want to be the person putting these frequencies in the audience’s ear.’”

But it remained a challenge to learn how to *use* the bass as a lead instrument. Alexander said he and Raymond thought, “‘This is interesting. We’ve got a lot of experimenting to do with the this.’ And the allure of having to make decisions that were atypical was a pretty strong allure. We liked that.”

The bassist said he was inspired by Les Claypool of Primus and the bass-guitar lines of Nine Inch Nails (even though they weren’t necessarily being played by a bass). “It sort of boils down to effects pedals,” he explained. “I’m not a great bass player. People think that we sound like we’re really good, but that’s why I have a giant pedal board – so I don’t have to be good.” He jokingly added: “It’s all just a series of complicated pre-recorded loops that we activate, and then we mime to it.”

In sum, despite what Alexander claimed, he conceded that “a lot of people would say that it’s not the lazy or easy choice for ... a conventional band”

The long process of making *Cracked & Crooked* provides ample evidence. “We actually recorded it three complete times – or at least 90 percent ... ,” Alexander said. And that was largely a function of deciding the best ways for the bass to fill the roles of guitars and keyboards in normal bands.

Written by Jeff Ignatius

Thursday, 27 February 2014 11:29

For the record, Alexander said that “I don’t feel like I’m playing a lead instrument [with the bass]. I feel like my vocal is the lead instrument, and the bass is still just bass, but I think a lot of listeners would disagree with me.”

Normally with The Post Mortems, he said, the vocals take the place of the typical guitar. “I’m not doing something [with the bass] that a guitar would do,” he said. “I’m actually filling a frequency range that we as listeners are used to hearing playing a melody. It doesn’t matter to me whether it’s a voice or a guitar or a keyboard or in our case a bass” It’s a nod to listener expectation.

“I’m only tired of guitar because I’ve heard it a lot,” Alexander said. “And how many times can I just do some solo that probably somebody’s already written better than me, played better than me, sounded better than me? What we lack in virtuosic playing or guitars or something, we just try to substitute something else in that’s unique and sounds interesting to us. It’s not a purposeful exclusion of the guitar. It’s just an inclusion of that frequency range.”

Seven Years in the Making



The duo began recording detailed demos for *Cracked & Crooked* in 2006, and then it went into the studio to track them properly.

There were two problems at the outset, Alexander said. First, “we just weren’t ready. ... It was mainly just our performances that weren’t up to standard. We just needed to be more comfortable with the material.”

Second, “we made the mistake of comparing demos to what we were getting out of the studio. We put too much effort into the demos, and then it’s very difficult to reproduce that. You sort of fall in love with some particular sound that you made or some particular delivery, even though it

Written by Jeff Ignatius

Thursday, 27 February 2014 11:29

may not even be the best. Not in the best interest of the project.”

The drums ultimately used for the album were recorded in 2010, Alexander said, and then it took him another year to record (and, before that, figure out) the vocal and bass parts. And then mixing took until the end of 2013.

Again, inexperience was one pitfall. “I will hopefully never, ever mix my own stuff again,” Alexander said. “Every time you put your foot down to try to accomplish something, your foot gets stuck, and you get sucked into some mundane detail that I’m sure the audience never even hears or notices.”

But there was also the overarching question of what, exactly, The Post Mortems should *be*. Drum decisions were made early, Alexander said. “But as far as what does a band sound like when there are no guitars or keyboards, that limitation was actually the thing that took the most time, because I had so many different decisions to make for each individual song. What is the normal bass sound going to sound like? What is the distorted bass sound going to sound like? What kind of extra things can I do to this to make it more interesting and fulfill what an audience wants to hear, and especially what me and Al wanted to hear with the bass guitar? The sky’s-the-limit limitation really crippled me as far as how long it took to put it out.”

He likened that process to “a multiple-choice test that has an infinite number of ... choices. ... That discovery is what kept me from becoming sick of the songs but also made it take very long to get them out there.”

Thoughtful Yet Energetic



To these ears, the wait was worth it. *Cracked & Crooked* is surprisingly supple, varied, and rich – a thorough and thoughtful exploration of that infinite number of choices in which each song feels carefully assembled and arranged without sacrificing power or energy.

Written by Jeff Ignatius

Thursday, 27 February 2014 11:29

It does take time, however, to acclimate to the palette.

That process is aided by the album’s sequencing and flow. While it’s not inherently a linear experience in terms of a progression of mood or narrative, listening to it in the given order helps in establishing and building on its atypical, constrained vocabulary.

The feedback, punkish thrash, and explosion of opener “Flarelight” create an illusion of fullness, but that’s undermined by the next song: the stripped-down “Bloodwine,” with its dominant, sneaky, dubious bass; when the distortion kicks in on it, it sounds like a downtuned, fuzzed six-string, but in the context of the song its creation with the bass is apparent enough.

The song deftly segues in to the swinging, hooks-aplenty “Hard,” in which Alexander’s voice reveals itself as a warmly welcoming component. “Striptease” returns his voice to an affected, warbling speaking style of singing, and the song’s contribution to the album’s first third is a slow build to a climax of twinned tortured singing and frenetically elastic bass and drums.

After those four songs, The Post Mortems have established both a depth and a range within their limited instrumentation, and the remainder of the album has the freedom to dance around while staying of-a-piece, with each track boasting a distinct vibe and clear sonic aims. The pulsing “Fall of Home,” the lovely, nearly conventional alt-rock emotional arc of “Hope Falls,” the stuttering interplay of drum and bass on “Brother,” the organ-like wash of “I Am I,” the dull, flat throb on “Golden,” with its angular, metallic punctuation from the bass

That distorted bass is the secret weapon throughout the album, with the fuzz and buzz a satisfying substitute for electric six-string: a forceful, tuneful instrument that Alexander wields with precision. I’m giving short shrift to the drumming, singing, and traditional bass on the album, but that’s only because The Post Mortems’ use of the bass as a lead stringed instrument is so bracing.

As for live performance, don’t expect to hear the album note-for-note. On the album version of “Hope Falls,” for example, there’s a bass solo that sounds like it’s a guitar – whose inclusion Alexander said was the subject of significant debate. “If I could have sung that with my voice, I

Complicated Laziness: The Post Mortems, “Cracked & Crooked”; March 7 at RIBCO

Written by Jeff Ignatius

Thursday, 27 February 2014 11:29

would have,” he said. “We don’t do that solo live. ... Live we’re a different animal. We’re sort of at the apex of some sort of roller-coaster ride at that point, so we can cut loose and be crazy, and Al’s drumming his guts out, and I’m jumping around and probably barely playing anything coherent Live, the solo is [replaced by] the visual part of the song.”

But you *can* expect to hear a more dynamic sound than The Post Mortems have been able to achieve live previously. *Cracked & Crooked*’s release coincides with the unveiling of Alexander’s new rig, which adds two cabinets and two amps and allowed him to cut the number of effects pedals he uses in half.

He said The Post Mortems resisted the equipment upgrade for a long time. “We didn’t want to carry a bunch of garbage,” he said. “We just wanted to be a two-piece band that had almost less than two musicians’ worth of gear.”

But the new setup results in a sound that is bigger, cleaner, and more organic, he said: “It’s so much more powerful, so much more reflexive to what I’m putting into the bass with just my hand.” The equipment now “reflects our dynamics at the hand level – his hands on sticks, my hands on the strings. Now when I flex the muscle of the bass, it gives back to me instead of feeling like a car without power steering. ...

“Now there are four parallel avenues of sound instead of just two. Because of that, it blends more nicely. Things don’t fight one another. ... It’s not easy to *explain* how it feels, but the audience will be able to hear it; whether they realize it or not, they will sense it.”

The Post Mortems’ record-release show will be held Friday, March 7, at RIBCO (1815 Second Avenue, Rock Island; RIBCO.com). The 9 p.m. show also features Satellite Heart and Mutts, and cover is \$5.

For more information on The Post Mortems, visit ThePostMortems.com or [Facebook.com/ThePostMortems](https://www.facebook.com/ThePostMortems)