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Valley Entertainment

Wye Oak's Shriek takes the band in a new direction

It can't be easy being a two-piece band. With seemingly fewer unique sounds available at their disposal – in theory – it seems more likely that it may grow stale after a few albums. Some, like The White Stripes and The Black Keys, have made fairly prolific careers, evolving quite drastically. Others, like Death From Above 1979, flamed out early, heading their separate ways. Japandroids have released only two records, and who knows when the next one will be released (if ever).

Baltimore's Wye Oak released *Shriek* this week. The fourth record in the band's discography is an incredible shift in style, though not in a way that seems clumsy or out of place. The first three albums (including 2011's incredible *Civilian*) are heavily rooted in folk song-writing style with occasional bursts of manic guitars. They always played the light and dark really well, while including a sleepy dreamlike quality that created an excellent balance.

Jenn Wasner abandons her guitar for bass in *Shriek*, while Andy Stack maintains his position behind the drum kit with a keyboard under one hand at all times. What comes out the other end is still pulsing with surreal dreamscapes, but it lands in a much spacier realm. The folk roots are layered there still, but they're buried deep beneath the beats and loops. It's much more of a 80s techno-pop sound, and Wasner's smoky voice fits right in. It's a bit of a meeting of two worlds after she did a side project in 2013 called *Dungeonesse*. A slick pop



Jason Wilson
Liner Notes

record in its own right, it has moulded onto Wye Oak in a very welcome way.

As track three, "The Tower," breaks down into one of the juiciest bass lines of the album, it seems impossible not to be enchanted. If the first two songs, somehow, don't do the trick, "The Tower" ought to finish the hypnosis.

It's a progression that won't work for all fans of the band, and many newcomers would be wise to check out the band's previous albums whether they like this one or not. *Shriek*'s less organic and more mechanical flow will definitely turn some people off. That it could double as a soundtrack to a science fiction movie will simultaneously be a deduction and a benefit.

There is a moment in "Sick Talk" where Wasner's lyrics and the bass and synth drop out for a moment before jumping back in. It's a jarring moment that has the potential to make a listener stop and consider what he or she just heard. It's a subtle moment that shakes up the flow and adds yet another layer.

Shriek is a fascinating moment after moment that doesn't lose the emotional core beating through the band's previous releases. It shifts and weaves. "Schools of Eyes" features Wasner going



Wye Oak members Andy Stack and Jenn Wasner. PHOTO SUBMITTED

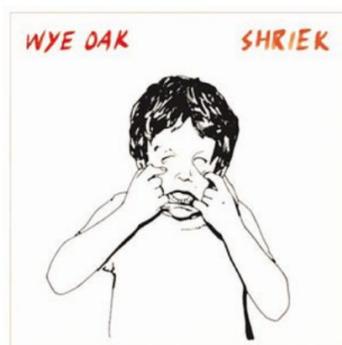
back and forth in lyrical style, providing something of a conversation between her two halves. The song is all over the place, but due to Stack's control of the beats as it accelerates to its tumultuous end, it never gets entirely unwieldy or chaotic.

Never is the 80s vibe more present than in "Despicable Animal," which opens with a riff akin to Tears for Fears' "Everybody Wants to Rule the World." Following that is the somewhat ironically titled "Paradise." It's a frenetic and relentless song that would feel at home in the sci-fi chase scene near the climax. This is appropriate because it comes third from the end.

It's nice to listen to an album that is organized in a way that makes perfect

sense (I tend to shy away from greatest hits collections). The best records do this. In fact, it might be one of the primary things that turns a really good album into a great one. If it all works as a piece with an interconnection that feels like a narrative structure (the pinnacle is probably Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon*), then you have a potential masterwork. *Shriek* has potential; its longevity will determine its place. The best albums also tend to coerce constant listeners years after their releases.

Most exciting are the possibilities for the live show, both for the band and its audience. While the album is a singular shift in a specific new direction, it is doubtful Wye Oak will simply abandon the songs that helped develop its



Wye Oak's latest album, *Shriek*, was released on April 29. PHOTO SUBMITTED

growing following. Wasner has more weapons at her disposal by having songs where she'll use bass or guitar. An interesting scenario would be seeing what kind of sounds they could get out of older songs using the bass-led set up, and vice-versa.

Wye Oak is an exciting band. The two-piece is not afraid of taking risks. And *Shriek* is most definitely a risky endeavour. Fortunately, it's one chock full of rewards. It's one of the most hauntingly beautiful recordings of the year so far.

Jason Wilson

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Mike Bochoff to play CD release concert Saturday

DOUG DICKINSON
BUGLE-OBSERVER

A belated CD release show will be held this Saturday, May 3, at Dooly's in Woodstock at 9:30 p.m. to celebrate the release of Mike Bochoff's new album *Start 'Em Young*. There is no fee to attend the show. The Hartland native released the album – his third to date, and first with a full band – on March 29. Bochoff told the Bugle-Observer that they already held a CD release show in Halifax, where they are based, but had to wait to hold their show in Woodstock because drummer Mathew Budreski got married and keyboardist Stephen Hare was on vacation.

"I hope people are entertained and have a good time," Bochoff said of the upcoming Woodstock show. "I've been touring as a solo act for six or seven years, so this will be the first time playing the home town with a full band. It is a bit of a different dynamic. A little bit more action and more crowd involvement. I guess the key word is 'entertaining'."

When asked how the band got together to record this new album, Bochoff said he had been jamming with Budreski and Hare over his original songs, which was giving his songs a boost due to being written as solo acoustic songs.

"We developed a rapport and started enjoying it and playing more shows," said Bochoff. "They eventually became the band."

Bochoff released his previous album – *Horror Culture* – nearly five years ago in 2009.

"I had toured behind (*Horror Culture*) and done a couple of cross-country



Mike Bochoff's band are, from left, Mathew Budreski, Mike Bochoff and Stephen Hare. PHOTO: SUBMITTED

tours with that album and took a little bit of a breather around 2011 and 2012," Bochoff shared. "At the start of last year was when I started writing new songs and got the band together, and last summer we went in and recorded most of these songs and we have 11 new songs on the album that we are super proud of and are really eager to get out to people."

Bochoff went on to explain that his first two albums were solo acoustic albums with support from other players, but this is the first album he has done with a full band, which means each song is shared as opposed to his own.

"I think it sounds a lot different (from

previous records), said Bochoff. "I would say the first half is more high-energy and the second half is a little more mellow and certainly a lot more personal than my other records."

According to Bochoff, fan reaction towards the album has been amazing. He said he isn't certain of the sales numbers, but after they have been available on iTunes for a month, the feedback he has been receiving has been phenomenal.

"People are really digging the new songs," he said. "It has been awhile since I've released an album, so as far as people who enjoyed the last record, I feel like they haven't tossed me aside.

They have been waiting for a new album, and it sounds like they have been very pleased."

When it comes to a potential tour, Bochoff said they are working on a possible tour in western Canada this July. For now, they are just playing shows in the Maritime provinces.

"(We are) based out of Halifax so trying to get a lot more shows in Halifax, and I still have a lot of ties to New Brunswick, so I try to get up to Moncton and Fredericton as much as I can," said Bochoff. "Between Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, and hopefully Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland won't be too far behind. We would really like

to get all over the East Coast as much as we can."

Bochoff and his band have also found recent success through the CBC Searchlight contest, which ran this March and April. Their song "The Death Song" – which is included on their new album – was in the contest and moved on from 4,500 songs competing nationwide to rank in the top 230 in the country and the top 10 in the regional finals.

Bochoff said it was awesome to see the song do so well in voting for the contest, especially coming on the heels of the album's release.

"It has been a great way to promote the record," he said. "I think we picked up a lot of new fans through CBC Searchlight and this song as a way to introduce people to the new record. People who are already fans have been supporting the song and new album even more so. The CBC Searchlight has been nothing but amazing."

Having grown up in Hartland, Bochoff said it means a lot to come home to put on a show in the region.

"I still have a lot of good friends in Hartland and the Carleton County area," said Bochoff. "For me it is more of an excuse to go home and hang out with friends and play a show in the meantime. My family is there as well, and it is a great time to get home and party with friends. The album has been out for a month, so I hope people come in prepared as far as knowing the songs and singing along and just join in the fun."

Mike Bochoff's album *Start 'Em Young* is available for \$9.99 on iTunes or at the show for \$10. For more information on Mike Bochoff's band, visit facebook.com/mikebochoffmusic or mikebochoff.com.

Smith Dance Academy to hold recital May 10

Smith's Dance Academy has been holding its annual recitals.

Students from Perth-Andover, Florenceville-Bristol and Woodstock will

perform jazz, tap, hip-hop, lyrical, and cheer-leading routines. To date, recitals have been held at Perth-Andover Middle School on April 25 and Carleton North

High School on April 26. The final recitals will take place from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday, May 10, at Southern Carleton Elementary School in Bedell.

Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$8 for youth and seniors and can be purchased at smithdanceacademy.com or at the door.

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May 2 - May 8

New this week:
Spiderman 2 (PG) 3D
Nightly @ 6:45 & 9:30
Sat & Sun @ 1:45

Draft Day (PG)
Nightly @ 7:00 & 9:20

Join our VIP to be entered
for free movies.

Returning:
Heaven is Real (PG)
Nightly @ 7:10 & 9:10
Sat & Sun @ 2:10
Rio 2 (PG)
Sat & Sun @ 1:30

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Woodstock Trailmakers
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ANNUAL MEETING
Elections of Officers
Tuesday, May 6th - 7 p.m.
105 Prince Williams St.
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HUNTER COMMUNITY
CEMETERY MEETING
STICKNEY REC. CENTRE
Tuesday, May 6th
at 7:00 pm
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BUSINESS
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YARD SALE
Woodstock Wesleyan Church
Lockhart Mill Road at 560
Friday, May 2nd • Noon - 8pm
Saturday, May 3rd • 7am - Noon
SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE!

Wedding Shower
for
ALISON FARRELL & ADAM PAUL
Tuesday, May 6, 2014
at the Debec W.I. Hall @ 7pm
Please bring refreshments