

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Watch out for Zuma this summer at local venues

Kent Aitken
Reporter

Occasionally CDs just show up in the Cadre office, sent by artist or record labels looking for press. I gave up on the Cadre collection in a hurry; album covers featuring girls with zombie makeup wearing bikinis fail to inspire me.

With that in mind, the Zuma CD that appeared one day was a nice break. The handwritten note taped to the case was a nice touch, asking us to listen to it twice and emphasizing that point with no less than two exclamation marks.

Zuma, as it turns out, is made up of 4 Islanders who previously had been playing as a cover band. "Pleased to Meet You," the 10-song album they sent us, is their first CD as well as a showcase of their recent evolution to original music.

"Zuma is a Neil Young album from 1975. It's also a beach in California," explained Iain McCarvill, "we threw out about 100 names and that's the one that stuck." Iain shares the front of the stage and the songwriting duties with Dan Paynter. Iain's cousin, Liam McCarvill holds down the bass and Derrick Curley plays drums.

The boys draw heavily on classic rock for their sound, citing The Beatles, Led Zeppelin, Eric Clapton and Pink Floyd as influences, but Zuma's their name for a reason.

"We're all huge Neil Young fans."

The classic rock shows in their songs. Many of their songs definitely reflect a Neil Young vibe and the scattered harmonica reinforces it. In an indie-rock culture, launching into the style Zuma has is rare. While their age, unfortunately, is betrayed in their songwriting, the songs are generally well put together and Zuma puts a respectable effort for the tradition they want to carry. "Any Road" is a great song and an example of their effort;

"UFO" is an example of their age and I can't help wishing the song was about something completely different.

Two of Zuma's members currently go to school at UNB, so although the CD was recorded recently, the band is laying low until the summer.

"Basically [we] would just like to play a few gigs at Baba's and around."

In the meantime, K-Rock's been playing two of their songs, "Pleased to Meet You" and "Second Hand Stoned."

McCarvill explained the song Sec-



Local band Zuma poses in this undated handout photo

Submitted photo

ond Hand Stoned.

"It's about a guy who made a promise to his girlfriend that he wouldn't get high, so he'll just go into the room with [his friends] and breath in the air."

After mentioning that their CD is being recorded through talks with Lloyd Doyle, the head of PEI-based Sandbar Music, McCarvill said they weren't concerned about getting signed, instead focusing on gigs and building a fan base.

"Maybe get some people looking

into us rather than us looking into them," he said.

With the semester winding down and Zuma's members coming home, you might start spotting them around town. Zuma's got the rock sound impressively figured out, throw around some sincerely appreciated harmonica, and Paynter and McCarvill harmonize well. As their songwriting gains experience Zuma could add a distinctly different flavour to the Prince Edward Island scene.

Japanese Folklore, Murder, Summer Romance and More Murder: The Decemberists going four for four so far in CD releases

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Japanese folk legends don't generally play the muse for North American rock bands, but The Decemberists deserve better than skepticism. In the past they've turned sea shanties and Celtic folklore into their unique sound (an entire EP in the case of *The Tain*, née "Táin Bó Cúailnge" when it was merely an Irish epic), so why not a story about a man marrying a woman who is secretly a crane?

Two or three stories, actually, depending on who's counting. The title tracks for the new CD include "The Crane Wife 3" and "The Crane Wife 1 and 2." This isn't the only occurrence of blended songs in their

repertoire – Besides the three separate songs making up "The Island" on *The Crane Wife* (released October 3), *The Tain* EP was a single track with 5 parts clocking in at just under 20 minutes.

The unique storylines fit well into front man Colin Meloy's style, whose songs are usually as much short stories as they are songs anyway. In "The Island," Meloy weaves together a setting in part 1, introduces characters (and unspeakable intentions) in part 2 while managing a "Whiskey in the Jar" quote, and implies the climax in the denouement in part 3. The entire tale drifts over 13 minutes of evolving music, but as it's winding down you ask "wait a second, did he

actually do what I think he did?," and probably will have to wait for another listen.

Meloy actually narrates songs from the point of view of a killer at least a few times over his 4 LPs and 3 EPs. It makes you wonder how he manages to tell such varied stories as if he's lived them while praying that he hasn't.

It's not all tragedy, murder and revenge though; The Decemberists step out of the darkness as often as necessary to lighten the mood with quicker moving and less disturbing songs, which generally come with less detailed stories. *The Crane Wife* splits the track space equally between these two themes. They produce songs

that immediately entice you but have enough quality to avoid the reprehensible label of "catchy," all the while staying true to the rich feel that makes you think they were brought up on a pirate ship.

I can't say that the ambitious *The Crane Wife* is their best album, owing to the quality of their previous releases so far and the slight drag I feel mid-album. Fortunately, that's only a couple handfuls of minutes out of a great hour and The Decemberists' talent for putting songs together is still working like a charm. Some would call The Decemberists an acquired taste. Agreed. It's the Johnny Walker of indie rock and it's worth getting into.