



A new orbit

At the Drive-In had to die to make way for prog rockers The Mars Volta

By JENNIFER CHANCELLOR
World Scene Writer

He broke up the band. And he's proud of that fact. "A band can become like a romantic relationship that goes stale," Omar Rodriguez-Lopez admitted during a recent telephone interview. "It becomes a mirror of yourself and you stop growing. Then staleness leads to corruption." So, in 2001, he disassembled his influential post-hardcore band At the Drive-In.

"It was holding me back," he said. "I believe that you have to constantly push the envelope in order to show fans that you love them. You can't repeat yourself."

Since that time, Rodriguez-Lopez and Cedric Bixler-Zavala have done more than stretch boundaries with their prog-rock fusion act The Mars Volta.

They have blown them to smithereens. This band is a mind-detonating mix of jazz, art rock, psychedelia, Latin and even funk metal. Live, the eight-piece explodes with auditory pyrotechnics.

Often branded as an improv band, Rodriguez-Lopez was quick to clarify.

Hedefinitely is in charge. "I assign hand gestures to different parts of songs. When I signal, we play that part. There is no set sequence. We pervert the music's existing architecture," he said.

"We are constantly trying out new stuff out on the road . . . But only about 10 percent of what we do is the democratic expression of genuine improv," he said.

Rodriguez-Lopez speaks in a fervent rush. Some critics claim that's because he's actually hard-selling kitsch.

Even Pitchfork magazine admitted "The Mars Volta discography carries an astronomical risk/reward potential."

But success has a way of speaking for itself, and The Mars Volta has the ardent global fan base to prove it.

Of the new album, Rolling Stone crooned that the band is "com-

SEE CONCERT H-2



ROSS HALFIN

The Mars Volta

concert
THE MARS VOLTA

When:
Doors 7 p.m. April 15

Where:
Cain's Ballroom, 423 N. Main St.

Tickets:
\$39.75, available at Reasor's, Starship Records & Tapes, Cain's box office, by phone at (866) 443-8849 and online at www.tulsaworld.com/gettix.

Sneak a peek:
www.tulsaworld.com/TheMarsVolta

Note:
This show is billed as "an evening with The Mars Volta," which means there is no opening act.

String theory

National Fiddler Hall of Fame ceremony to feature all-star lineup



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By all accounts, this is a landmark event. Four of country music's most influential musicians will be inducted into the National Fiddler Hall of Fame on Wednesday, right here in Tulsa.

"This is the center of the universe for the fiddle," said Bob Fjeldsted, hall of fame president and acting executive director.

Indeed, Oklahoma's official state instrument is the fiddle, and its state country tune is the famous Western swing song by Bob Wills, "Faded Love" (also hits for Patsy Cline, Elvis Presley, Ray Price and Willie Nelson).

"That instrument helped make Tulsa famous," Fjeldsted said.

"Western swing is really just jazz in cowboy clothes," he laughed.

Popularized in national broadcasts from Tulsa's Cain's Ballroom stage throughout the '40s, Western swing is a fusion of country, cowboy, polka and folk

music, with a nod to New Orleans-style jazz and blues — all aimed at dancers.

Infused into the whole is the spirit of a hot string band (playing four-and-five-string fiddles) and often augmented with steel guitar, drums, pianos and horns.

Most prominent is the fiddle, "which gives classically trained violin players something fun to do," laughed Shelby Eicher, hall of fame vice president and director of education.

This event will welcome not only legends Johnny Gimble, Dick Barrett, Roy Acuff and Claude "Fiddler" Williams into the hall of fame ranks, but also will feature performances by Roy Clark, Byron Berline, Jana Jae, Whit Smith, Chuck Cissel, Eicher, Rick

Morton, Jared Tyler and more. The Pendleton Family Fiddlers will perform, and there will be a live re-enactment of Wills doing his 1941 show.

Last year Wills was posthumously inducted, noted Eicher. All proceeds from the event will go toward youth education and scholarships, he said.

It is the mission of the National Fiddler Hall of Fame to develop and promote public interest in old-time fiddling, country and bluegrass music and to preserve and educate the public about the art, its musicology, its performance elements and its historical and social significance, said Eicher.

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Photo illustration by BRAD THOMPSON / Tulsa World

event
NATIONAL FIDDLER HALL OF FAME 2008 ANNUAL GALA & INDUCTION CEREMONY

When:
Show starts at 7 p.m. April 16

Where:
VanTrease Performing Arts Center for Education, Tulsa Community College — Southeast Campus, 10300 E. 81st Street

Admission:
\$25 and \$50, available by calling 595-7777 or following the links at www.tulsaworld.com/FiddlerHof

Online:
www.tulsaworld.com/FiddlerHof

Meet the music makers

By JENNIFER CHANCELLOR
World Scene Writer

The 2008 National Fiddler Hall of Fame inductees are:

Roy Acuff

Life: Born Roy Claxton Acuff on Sept. 15, 1903, in Maynardville, Tenn.; died Nov. 23, 1992.

Contributions: World-renowned as the "King of Country Music," Acuff began as a semi-pro baseball player. However, it didn't take long for him to ditch the high-stress game, pick up his father's fiddle and take up a nomadic lifestyle on the road in a traveling medicine show.

He's perhaps most famous for his recordings of "The Great Speckled Bird" and "The Wabash Cannonball," and was a Grand Ole Opry regular in his backing band, Smoky Mountain Boys. By 1940, he was the show's star.

Also, Acuff's 1938 recording of "The House of the Rising Sun" is the first known commercial recording of the now-legendary song.

In the early '40s, he created music publishing venture Acuff-Rose with Chicago songwriter Fred Rose. It was a country music phenom, owning many copyrights — including songs by Marty Robbins, Felice and Boudleaux Bryant and the full Hank Williams song library.

In 1962 he was the first living musician elected to The Country Music Hall of Fame. He won a lifetime achievement award from the Kennedy Center in 1991.

Dick Barrett

Born: Aug. 6, 1918, in Maysville, a small rural community in Garvin County

Contributions: The story goes that Barrett's first love was baseball, which he abandoned for the fiddle in 1927 when he first

watched acclaimed musician Major Lee Franklin. According to the tale, Barrett invited Franklin back to the family farm for a night of breakdown bowmanship.

Not too long later, Barrett's dad was advised, "Save your money, Sam. That kid will never learn anything." Instead, the young Barrett switched to Western swing, which earned him some dough and kept him out of the cotton fields.

He was drafted early in World War II, and after several tours of combat, he played baseball for the military team — the Manila All Stars — in the Philippines. Through it all, he stayed in contact with Franklin, eventually joining him in Texas fiddle jams.

He became one of the most successful competitors ever, with a long and colorful history as a breakdown fiddler. He still performs today.

Johnny Gimble

Born: John Paul Gimble, May 30, 1926, in Tyler, Texas

Contributions: He started playing professional fiddle at age 12.

In the '40s, Gimble played fiddle and electric mandolin with Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys, a legendary act that launched Western swing music — and Tulsa's Cain's Ballroom — into the international spotlight.

When asked to join the Playboys, his now-famous response was, "Would a baseball player want to go with the New York Yankees?" he said. "Would a cow lick Lot's wife?"

From there, he quickly distinguished himself by using a five-string fiddle (most have four).

He has since played with legends including George Strait, Lefty Frizzell, Willie Nelson and Merle Haggard, and released 10

SEE FIDDLERS H-2

FIDDLERS:

Williams was a pivotal figure on the Kansas City jazz scene.

FROM H-1

solo albums. Last year, he released "Last of the Breed" with Haggard, Nelson and Ray Price.

Gimble continues to tour, even fiddling for Carrie Underwood during last year's 49th Annual Grammy Awards.

Claude "Fiddler" Williams

Lived: Born Feb. 22, 1908, in Muskogee. Died April 26, 2004.

Contributions: The jazz violinist and guitarist started young: By age 10 he had learned to play guitar, mandolin, banjo and cello.

The fiddle soon followed, and his career spanned much of the history of jazz. Known for his swinging, bluesy style

and his musical sense of humor, Williams performed and recorded into his mid-90s. He was a defining component of the Kansas City jazz scene, and played on Andy Kirk's first recording, "Blue Clarinet Stomp."

In the 1930s, he moved to Illinois, where he played both violin and guitar in a number of ensembles, including the Nat King Cole Trio and the Count Basie Orchestra. In the 1940s and '50s he played with saxophonist Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson and pianists Hank Jones and Jay McShann, at that point recording his first sessions — and getting a second wind in his career.

In 1993, Claude was recruited by fiddler Mark O'Connor to teach at a camp outside of Nashville, Tenn., where he shared his infectious jump-blues style with everyone.

Sources: Tulsa World archives, NPR online, Johnny Gimble official site, Country Music television online, Yazoo Records online, Dick Barrett online.

CONCERT:

While recording, the band battled floodwaters and the loss of a drummer.

FROM H-1

pressing dissected time signatures and stammering riffs into seizures that sound like three (The Mars Voltas going off at once, splashed with the non-sequitur gore of Bixler-Zavala's singing in tongues.)

Yes, it's intense. Rodriguez-Lopez claims this concept-driven collection was inspired by a weird turn of events after he bought an Ouija board during a curio shop outing in Jerusalem.

A gift to Bixler-Zavala, "I knew better than that. I was raised to be smarter than that. I was born in

the Caribbean, where only trained masters use those things.

"A Ouija board is something very serious, though corporate America's turned it into a game."

During the making of "The Bedlam in Goliath," the band battled studio floods, the sound engineer buckled under nervous stress, they lost a drummer, suffered myriad equipment foul-ups and vanishing drum tracks — then finally buried the thing.

"It was a difficulty that I'd never like to repeat," he said. "But I knew I would not give up on the album. Anything that takes extra energy comes back to you tenfold."

"That law's kept me going. The reward is immeasurable."

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The Aussie hunk heads home

Interesting that in a week when "American Idol" producers were trying to open people's hearts (and wallets) to needy children of the world, they treated one contestant so rudely.

In a bit of a surprise ending, Michael Johns, the ladies' favorite Aussie hottie, was told "see ya!" after host Ryan Seacrest reminded everyone that last year, during "Idol Gives Back," they didn't cut anyone because it would have seemed uncharitable.

Basically, it happened like this: Johns was announced as the surprise contestant in the bottom three (we all knew Syesha Mercado and Carly Smithson were going to be there), then Seacrest said Syesha and Carly were safe, and we all gasped. Ryan took a minute to remind us that last year nobody was cut that week. But YOU, Michael Johns, are not so lucky. Sing for us one last time and don't let the door hit you on the way out, OK?

Ouch, Seacrest. Was it the ascots? Did they offend your fashion sense? Did he sing one too many classic rock songs? His "Dream On" was just so-so, he should have stuck to the bluesy-soul stuff. Or maybe he should just stick to looking pretty. Minus the ascots.

It wasn't David Cook's best week, unfortunately — but we knew he would be safe. Our Lady Peace is one of his favorite bands, and "Innocent" is a great song — but it seemed like the timing was off a bit and it started kind of rough. I've heard from numerous sources that the full-length studio version you can download from iTunes is way better, so maybe fans should just listen to that instead.

I might want to hire a bodyguard before saying this, but it wasn't David Archuleta's best week, either. Choosing Robbie Williams' "Angels" wasn't a bad idea, but it wasn't his best performance by a mile. I'm not the kid's biggest fan, but I certainly know what he's capable of.

Jason Castro made one of the smarter song choices of the night and did a sweet, simple version of Israel Kamaka-



CARY ASPINWALL IDOL MOMENTS cary.aspinwall@tulsaworld.com

wiwo'ole's "Somewhere Over the Rainbow," but I think his stoner dude persona might be starting to wear on some fans. It bothers me only when he doesn't sing well — but what the heck is he going to do during Mariah Carey week?

Kristy Lee Cook proved that she's not this year's Sanjaya (although I do want her to go home soon) by singing well on Martina McBride's "Anyway." If she wants all the mean people like me to stop calling her a state fair singer, she might want to dial down the sparkles a bit.

Simon was spot-on about Brooke White — it was pleasant, but not that exciting. I think we all know by now that Brooke wants to be Carole King, so she doesn't need to hammer that home by singing something quite as predictable as "You've Got a Friend."

Barring a singing miracle, Carly Smithson is probably going home soon. She has a great voice, but I'm just not sure who's going to buy her album. Oh, wait — she already made an album and nobody bought it. Hmmm. Maybe she needs to start a band.

Apparently, Syesha thought the best way to counter everyone's comments about her not



FRANK MICELOTTA/FOX

David Cook performs on "American Idol" on Tuesday night.

being very original was to sing Fantasia's "I Believe." Basically, she's just boring everyone, and now the Michael Johns fans will blame her, so she's probably going home soon, too.

performance by Oklahoma's Carrie Underwood on "Idol Gives Back" night simply proved why she's sold so many albums — it was the highlight of the show.

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