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THAT 1 GUY

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THAT 1 GUY

by Andrew Frey

The world of one man bands is an eclectic and beguiling one indeed. In the past, they have been a whirlwind of instruments strapped to a person's body with arms and legs quivering and flailing to produce rhythms and sounds that forged into music. That 1 Guy (aka Mike Silverman) is a one man band for the cyber age. His hands, arms and feet are strumming, plucking, smacking and caressing his unique instrument dubbed, "The Magic Pipe" while inserting in clever sound snippets and samples. It is a sight to behold!

I caught That 1 Guy's last tour through Madison at the Annex and had a blast. It is a unique, absurd and elegant performance.

Recently I managed to squeeze in an e-mail interview with the man behind the GUY. He's a busy guy. In fact due to an unexplained delay with the e-mail interview, I thought I had lost my interview possibility. He begins by recanting, "So sorry to be M.I.A. I jumped out of my last tour into a very intense recording project that finished yesterday."

Since his music is created via his own concocted instruments, I decided to start off by having him describe the focal point

of his stage show and musical production, The Magic Pipe.

"It's made of stainless steel pipes, orchestra strings, magnetic pickups, trigger sensors, wires, and duct tape," Silverman beams. "It's all run through my self-designed routing matrix of sound-shaping gadgets. An elegant beast bowed, plucked, strummed, and slapped, it's played with my hands, feet, and teeth. All with maximum intensity."

Obviously an enormous amount of planning and testing had to go into producing this musical behemoth. How long did the evolution of The Magic Pipe take?

"I spent a good three plus years brainstorming and scheming," Silverman recalls. "Once the concept was finished, it came together very quick. The prototype was completed ten years ago and I've been constantly fine tuning it ever since."

As it is rather particular, I was curious if there were alternate names for The Magic Pipe?

"That One Thing" but it didn't have enough zing," That 1 Guy bemuses. "I'm a big Captain Beefheart fan, so I sort of named it after "the magic band." I've always liked the way the word "magic" sounds when placed before everyday

object names. Magic Pipe, magic boot, magic saw. You get the idea."

Speaking of which, That 1 Guy has two other "accessory" electrified instruments that he plays. "The Magic Saw" and "The Magic Boot" make for nice sonic diversionary elements during shows. I asked him about their beginnings.

"The saw is something I've been playing since high-school," he recalls. "I had this strange Spanish teacher that played it. I went to the hardware store and bought me a Sanvick crosscut. It took a few years to learn how to really make it sing."

"Years latter," Silverman continues, "once I completed the magic pipe, I began experimenting with the concept of "electrifying" the saw. This is something that I've never seen done. It's very psychedelic and broadens the sonic possibilities. The Magic Boot came much later. My original goal was to play all the music on The Magic Pipe. It was to be my main tool. Along the way, I discovered that I was looking for a few more sounds. Also, I had a few techniques that I wanted to explore; techniques that I found impossible on The Magic Pipe. This is where The Magic Boot and The Magic Saw enter the picture. The Saw plays in a range and timbre that I can't get with the pipe. The Boot is very much an electric hand drum that I like to play delicate finger and hand rhythms on. It's a very sensitive mechanism that picks up very subtle things. Quite the opposite of The Magic Pipe. I need to beat the hell out of that thing just to get any sound!"

I was curious to know how he himself described his music.

"I've named my genre "Rhythm n' Sound," Silverman replies wistfully. "It's vague enough not to pigeon hole me to a specific scene, yet roughly describes the two main fundamental elements of my music. It's highly rhythmic and sonically dense!"

The latest release "The Moon Is Disgusting" jovially pokes at a couple specific things. Silverman notes, "The moon and cheese. Those are the big ones. It's also very much about struggle, and discovery..."

But there's more to it than that. I read how That 1 Guy intended the latest release to accompany a movie/video of some kind...



"Yes, the original plan for the CD was to accompany this movie idea," That 1 Guy admits. "I have this great little folktale about the moon that I've been working on for a while now. About half of the songs on the album are inspired by this. The rest of the songs were finished tunes that I wanted to include. So it is sort of a "greatest hits" of my new unrecorded stuff. Yes, I plan to make this movie someday. I'm hoping soon - before I come up with another bright idea and lose interest. It's been finishing itself in my head for many years, and I think I'm almost ready."

That 1 Guy is also ready to tour with the ever enticing Buckethead this summer. Any collaborative projects other than touring in the works?

"There are plans, but they are highly classified," Silverman smirks. "All will be revealed as the cosmos dictates..."

To see exactly what the cosmos dictates, and witness The Magic Pipe in action, be there May 24 at the Bella Sol Festival at Harmony Park in Minnesota (www.bellamusicfest.com), May 30 at River Splash in Milwaukee (www.riversplash.com) or June 1 at the Barrymore Theatre in Madison (www.barrymorelive.com).

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