



Alejandro Escovedo brings unique blend of rock music to Somerville Theater

Photos



Courtesy photo

Alejandro Escovedo will perform at the Somerville Theater April 6.

More Photos



By Debra Filcman GateHouse News Service

Posted Mar 31, 2010 @ 01:37 PM Last update Mar 31, 2010 @ 05:31 PM

Somerville — Alejandro Escovedo is a man of many talents, but you didn't hear it from him.

In the late 1970s, back when he'd crash film classes at San Francisco State for fun, Escovedo set out to make a movie about the worst band in the world. When he couldn't find it, he created it: The Nuns.

That's according to the singer, songwriter and guitarist's own oft-repeated legend, and it's an opinion immortalized in "Nuns Song" from his 2008 album "Real Animal" with lyrics like "We know we're not in tune/We know we'll never be great."

"It was guerilla warfare. It was kind of like punk rock," Escovedo, now 59, said of his foray into filmmaking. "It was about expression. Technicality had nothing to do with it."

His live performances are known for that energy, but Escovedo — who will play the Somerville Theater April 6 — is soft-spoken off stage. His voice is tinged with relics of places he and his family, which emigrated from Mexico to Texas and California, have lived. His speech is peppered with "y'knows."

He talks about his days with The Nuns with what sounds like equal parts nostalgia and disbelief, particularly when he mentions the band's claim to fame — opening for the Sex Pistols' final show.

Escovedo's storied career also included stints in such disparate bands as Rank and File and True Believers before going solo in 1992, despite never formally learning to play guitar.

"You can tell," he joked, saying he didn't pick it up until he was 24.

According to Escovedo, that delay is largely thanks to, not despite, his family tree — which includes brothers Pete and Coke, both former members of Santana; Mario, who fronted The Dragons; Javier, who also played in True Believers; and niece Sheila E., best known as Prince's former percussionist.

"Some of the reason why I started so late was that they were so good," he said, attributing the rest to greater interest in baseball and, later, surfing. "I just never thought I could own up. It was intimidating."

He went through a variety of musical phases once he taught himself the instrument, from punk to roots to garage rock. Pieces of his musical and personal history are recounted on "Real Animal," where in addition to "Nuns Song," he sings of living at the hotel where Sid Vicious was accused of killing girlfriend Nancy Spungen on "Chelsea Hotel '78" and "Chip 'n' Tony," name-checks the brothers Kinman, his former Rank and File bandmates. "Golden Bear" was inspired by his life-threatening bout with hepatitis C that left him unable to tour in the early 2000s.

"My instincts tell me that I'm capable of interpreting the music," Escovedo said. "I never study it to the point that I'm a musicologist, trying to play blues or this or that ... it's like found art. You use them to create something new."

His creations have also included the dramatic work, "By the Hand of the Father," which combined new and previously written songs about his father, with narratives about the Mexican-American father's plight. And

he recently completed a new album, due out June 29, which he describes as yet another musical departure — a rock album, through and through.

Tools

Print

Comment

ShareThis

Save up to \$600 A Year!

"For power-packed deals, go with RCN." Jim Rice, Hall of Famer



“It’s different than ‘Real Animal.’ Better, I think. More accessible,” he said, likening it to a Tom Petty album.

But he didn’t always take his music as seriously. It wasn’t until the early 1990s, after having played with Rank and File, that he realized he’d have to write his own songs to make it in the music business. Paired with the birth of one of his daughters, that realization “sobered” him up and his catalog of solo material became very personal.


“[I wrote] two albums about the passing of someone who was very dear to me,” Escovedo said of his wife, who committed suicide, and his father. “Everything I spoke about in relationships is pretty naked. You can get very self-conscious. You wonder if you haven’t sort of cheapened the event.”

But his ability to write from the heart and transcend genre boundaries has earned Escovedo fans within the industry. He’s had the opportunity to play with some of his heroes, including Iggy Pop, Lenny Kaye and Ian Hunter. In 2008, his luck seemed too good to be true when Bruce Springsteen invited him on stage at a packed Houston arena after a backstage introduction by their mutual manager. Along with the E Street Band, they performed Escovedo’s “Always a Friend,” at Springsteen’s choosing.

“That was like being in a dream. It didn’t seem real,” he said. “I thought I would just meet Bruce and that was enough for me. I was so scared. I wish it would have been better but it was cool. The greatest success for me has been, kind of, like, getting to meet these people I so admired. That’s been the most wonderful experience.”

Tickets are \$28 and are available at www.worldmusic.org.

Copyright 2010 Somerville Journal. Some rights reserved

 Loading commenting interface...

Site Services

- [Subscribe!](#)
- [Submit your news](#)
- [Archives](#)

Market Place

- [Jobs](#)
- [Homes](#)
- [Cars](#)
- [Classifieds](#)
- [Coupons](#)

Community Info

- [Somerville Public Schools](#)
- [Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [Somerville Arts Council](#)
- [Somerville's Resistat Blog](#)

Communities

Sports

Lifestyle

[Contact us](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Service](#) |

Somerville Journal | 20-40 Holland Street, Somerville, Massachusetts 02144 02144

Copyright © 2006–2010 GateHouse Media, Inc. Some Rights Reserved.

Original content available for non-commercial use under a [Creative Commons](#) license, except where noted.

SEO by [eLocalListing](#) | [Advertiser profiles](#) | [Cherrp Local](#) | [Somerville Real estate](#) | [Find your Wicked Local Town](#)