

Birth of a supertrio

Salim Nourallah, Billy Harvey and Alex Dezen form NHD

By Jan Sikes

THREE HEAVYWEIGHTS SWAPPING songwriting, vocal and instrumental duties make this new group (NHD—Salim Nourallah, Billy Harvey, Alex Dezen) one of the most exciting and energizing alliances to hit the airwaves.

In the world of music, each of these three seasoned songwriters are well established as stand-alone musicians. But, when they recently came together to record a collaborative album, the scale tipped.

Their debut album, *And the Devil Went up to Portland*, was recorded in Martie Maguire's (Dixie Chicks) HEK studio in Austin and is the first official release to come out of that studio. Bob Schneider, another established Austin musician, designed the album's cool and eclectic artwork.

"This whole thing came together with us goofing off and playing on each other's songs in a round-robin songwriting setting," said Dezen jokingly. "One night we looked up simultaneously and said, 'This is actually pretty cool!' We put some thinking behind the whole thing, booked some studio time, and went to work. It's a beautiful thing to be able to collaborate with your friends, especially when they're such uniquely talented people."

This album is a class act on all fronts. Lyrically, there is nothing to compare it to. The instrumentation is superb and arrangements unusual and exclusive.

Nourallah said, "It's an anomaly that we actually formed a group together because there's usually only enough air in the room for one lead singer at a

time. With us, it's more like a mutual admiration society, so that kind of ego nonsense has never factored in."

The song these three chose to kick off this album, "The Boys Are Back in Town" is a self-proclaiming cover tune. (Not that either of the three of these boys ever left!)

Alex Dezen and Salim Nourallah team up for "Hello, From an Emergency Room in Hollywood." Scenarios from a car wreck to a robbery that would cause someone to end up in an ER are scattered throughout the song and could be a movie soundtrack.

"I Sent a Postcard," written by Nourallah could only be a true story. "I sent a postcard from Southern France/Where I played in a pub and nobody danced/A guy in the back swore at me in French..."

Billy Harvey wrote "Lose Or Take It All" and the message is simple. Either you come out on top or lose everything in the game.

With words and music reminiscent of The Beatles, "Ballad of a Patient Man," tells such a relatable story. Written by Dezen and Nourallah, the arrangement and instrumentation are a rare combination with background chatter that comes to a halt with a cat's meow. This song stands out.

"Devil's Dice," written by Billy Harvey is a dare. "Devil's dice,

devil's dice/I'm gonna roll the devil's dice/Being bad sure feels nice/Gonna roll the devil's dice..."

Nourallah and Dezen team again on "Gimme a Go," with music by Nourallah. It asks an age-old question between a man and woman. "When are you gonna gimme a go?"

Billy Harvey slows it down with "Complicatedness." The words are intimate and made me sit up and listen. "I did all the things to make me feel young/I did all the things to be dead and be done/I did all the things/I did all the things to help me feel good/I did all the things to be bad 'cause I could/I did all the things/And if I say I will see you again/Sometimes again is only pretend..." Things can get complicated, but he goes on to say that he craves her complicatedness. Hmm, I think I've been there.

All three songwriters collaborate on "Somebody Loves Me." It takes on a funky vibe with opening strains from a synthesizer and cool acoustic guitar licks that bounce in and out between the lyrics.

"You're the Light" by Nourallah is about hope, promise and finding the light we seek and the light we need in a troubled world.

The album comes to a reluctant close with "You Thought You'd Be in Heaven" written by Harvey. Smooth sweet Dobro licks kick off the song. The harmonies crafted by Harvey, Dezen, and Nourallah are as close to perfection as possible. But, they have so much intertwined in this song. They talk to each other and

laugh about the song all while Harvey keeps singing. Then there are whistling solos that give it a vibe of three guys just hanging out, throwing back a beer or two and jamming.

NHD is coming to a city near you! Check out their tour schedule at nhdmusic.com And, if you can't catch them at a live show, pick up this album and be ready to be entertained on a spectrum from deep and philosophical to downright funny. ■



Be prepared to be entertained on a spectrum from deep and philosophical to downright funny by this trio: NHD

Terry Rasor wins TxMM Steven Fromholtz Legend Songwriter Award

By Jan Sikes

THE TEXAS MUSICIANS Museum in Irving, recently hosted the Steven Fromholtz Music Festival and Singer/Songwriter awards. They presented The Texas Legend Songwriter award to Fort Worth native, Terry Rasor, on May 25 at the museum.

Terry has been writing songs and performing since the early seventies. When he was only thirteen, he was playing mandolin and singing in an award-winning Bluegrass band, The Sunset Harmony Boys.

In 1988, Terry formed his own band, Over The Edge, and since that time has played honky-tonks, saloons, roadhouses, festivals, and cruises. He produced his own music festival, 'Raz On

The Braz' for the past twenty years and has toured Europe.

More recently, he joined two other renowned singer/songwriters, Amos Staggs and Tommy Alverson, to form The Geezers. When these three get together to perform, it's an incomparable elite song swap.

But, there's always something that sets one songwriter apart from the others. For Terry Rasor, it's a combination of things. The stories he weaves through the lyrics of his songs are real, raw and heartfelt.

The instrumentation is a gritty straight-ahead sound that has become his signature. And, then there is his voice.

A resonating baritone, he has affectionately been nicknamed by fellow Geezer, Amos Staggs,



He is known for his resonating baritone: Terry Rasor

as 'Thunder Lungs.'

Everyone who hears Terry perform walks away with a favorite song or two. I have several, but "Up and Gone" is at the top of my personal list.

A haunting melody that lingers long after the chords die away, the lyrics carries a sad mournful message. "And I am so lonely/Lonesome as a man with no home/And you have forgotten/My life's a nightmare/Every night and day dear/Since the time that you've up and gone. ■



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