

Earfull: Music, Art and Life After Manson

by Staff Report | Arts, Music, Spotlight



Music, Art and Life After Manson

Marilyn Manson Co-founder showcases his art and music in the 570

Every generation has a few bands that serve as a scapegoat for “music is corrupting the children” media panic. In the early ‘90s, a band deliberately poking fun at media hypocrisy became the new popular target. Marilyn Manson, founded by Scott Mitchell Putesky (who took on the pseudonym Daisy Berkowitz) and Brian Warner (the eponymous Marilyn Manson), made headlines for their signature shock rock aesthetic. Putesky left the band over creative differences in 1996 and by the early 2000s, the music industry was changing and moving on.

After leaving the band, Putesky continued to produce art and original music. Friday, Feb. 6, at 5:30 p.m., AFA Gallery will host an artist talk prior to the opening of an exhibition of work spanning his entire artistic career. Fans will also be able to head to River Street Jazz Cafe for a Daisy Berkowitz show

Saturday, Feb. 7, featuring vintage Marilyn Manson and the Spooky Kids material, some of Putesky’s originals, as well as a few covers. Accompanying Putesky will be Todd Ankiewicz on bass and Sam Brand on the keys. Doors open at 9 p.m. and tickets are \$8.

The show at AFA will be the largest exhibition of Putesky’s work to date. “There are one or two vintage pieces that go back maybe 20 years,” he said. “There’s some stuff I did 10 years ago, about a third of the collection is stuff I’ve done in the past five years and then there are a few pieces I did in 2014. It gives you a very broad picture of my style and how it’s evolved and changed and how I’ve gone in the past couple years from collage to drawing.”

Though Putesky has been creating art his whole life, attending art school in the late ‘80s, it wasn’t until he moved to Pennsylvania from Florida in 2011 that he began to exhibit his material. “I met Richard Reilly and Danielle Charette who run the Metropolis Collective in Mechanicsburg and they gave me the

opportunity to show my work in two of their shows and it kind of went from there,” he said. “After living in Wilkes-Barre for a while, I got to know people from the art scene in the area, so eventually I got around to submitting for the 2015 season at AFA and they accepted.”

On the musical side, Putesky recently released a new album, Millennium Effluvium. The album is a compilation of tracks, which date as far back as 1997 and includes outtakes and material from three albums released since then, including 2005’s Lose Your Mind under the band name Three Ton Gate.

“I’m really proud of Lose Your Mind, I did everything on it,” said Putesky. “I jokingly say I put it out when people stopped buying CDs. In 2003 you had Napster and iTunes, so people just stopped buying music altogether. They could just download music and a lot of people didn’t pay for it. That really cut out the ‘middle class’ so to speak of writers and musicians in the music industry and it really had us take a hard hit.”

Millennium Effluvium covers a lot of musical ground, meandering between driving rock tracks, spacey atmospheric interludes and songs that have a hint of funky groove.

“My main goal, commercially, is to score films,” said Putesky. “My atmospheric side is more instrumentals, then there’s the rock album type of stuff, which may have a heavier edge. I wanted to release [Millennium Effluvium] because I’m working on a brand new album of originals. It’s going to take a while to record, put together and put out. So I wanted the public to have something until then.”

Since moving from Florida, his home since the teen years, Putesky encountered personal turmoil and health issues. In August of 2013, he was diagnosed with stage IV colon cancer. The cancer had metastasized to his liver.

“I’ve been through a lot in the past few years,” he said. “While I was living with my girlfriend and I got my cancer diagnosis. Eventually I moved to New York, which I always wanted to do. She didn’t want to move, so it kind of drove a wedge between us. And I had the extra adversity of not just moving to New York, but having to change my treatment, doctors, insurance.”

To compound matters, there were other personal tragedies along the way. “Since I moved up to PA, I lost some friends down in Florida,” he said. “It’s rough when you have people you care about who die and you’re not even 50 years old. So it’s been a long road. There’s plenty to write about.”

Putesky said he plans to create art addressing his experiences and the first piece will be on display at the AFA exhibition. While he is still undergoing chemotherapy treatment every two weeks, which limits touring opportunities to short distances and one-off shows, Putesky’s outlook is positive.

“Other than needing the chemo and dealing with what’s in my liver, I’m totally healthy and fine,” he said. “I don’t look bad off, I don’t have other health issues, I’m really OK. But I still have to get treatment. I’m really lucky, a lot of people don’t come back from stage IV anything. It has changed my life, it’s given me perspective on things, I’m a little more sensitive. A little more selfish, because I need to be. A lot more appreciative, I enjoy life more. It’s just something that’s part of my life now.”

The experience has given renewed energy to getting back in the studio to work on a new album. “It’s not going to be all sad songs, or laments or dwelling on my life,” he said. “It’ll have fun aspects and be kind of abstract — I’m not going in a folk direction or anything, but I’m not sure how it’s going to sound. I’m just at the writing phase. When I write something, I don’t always have a particular style in mind. I’ll have some of the lyrics, I’ll have the concept, I’ll have the structure, chord progressions and certain sounds I want to use. But I don’t really pick a very specific genre direction. I just write it and I let it stew in my brain for a while and when I’m ready to record, I’ll just start recording and I’ll see where it takes me.”

Making music and art, it seems, is simply where Putesky feels at home. It’s hard not to wonder how it feels to have a career that includes leaving an enormous mark on the music industry and pop culture at large. Putesky helped create the boogeyman — quite literally, in some people’s minds.

“I love hearing stories from fans,” he said. “That they had to hide their cassettes and take the posters down. It’s great to know you had that effect.”

Still, Putesky said he finds it odd to look back and reflect on launching one of the most talked-about bands of the early 1990s.

“I don’t think about it often until something makes me think about it,” he said. “Then I’m forced to look at it objectively and it feels weird. The whole time I was in the band, from 1990 to 1996, was just six years of my life and what I was doing. I didn’t think about the bigger picture until I look back on it — it’s easy to be objective about it now. Even while it was happening I didn’t think about the effect it would have on people. I was happy to, essentially, be a rock star and make music for a living. When we got signed, I couldn’t believe it. It was the best thing ever. When we started I didn’t think we would get signed, I didn’t think anyone would listen to us. I didn’t think we would draw a crowd. It was too weird. But it was so fun, we kept doing it and we drew crowds, had fans, got signed, went on tour and it was crazy. I never planned on, or even hoped for being a professional musician, but that’s what happened. We had the big impact we had.”

This weekend provides fans a glimpse into the full career of Scott Mitchell Putesky, aka Daisy Berkowitz, a guitarist who founded a band that shocked the world. Putesky has made art and music before and after Marilyn Manson and has continued to do so throughout his battle with cancer.

“I’m much more excited and vigorous about working. It not only takes your mind off things, it keeps your attitude positive. I’m not the type to just sit around and wallow in my own adversity. It means a lot to me that I finally made it to New York and I have opportunities in front of me, so I’ll make it happen. I would work hard on my career anyway, but I’ll work a little harder because of my situation.”

— tucker hottes

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