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Making music, miles apart

John Sievers 15 hrs ago



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Spring is here, but Minnesota's winter is never far away, so it's the perfect time for Winterstate to give us their album. While the band's name is cold, their music will heat things up at an album release party held at Pure Rock Studios Saturday.

The title of the new album, "The Ride," suggests the geographic contortions Alex Ortberg and Kelvin Killmon went through in order to collaborate. Both the musicians behind Winterstate are originally from Minnesota, but the two met for the first time in Valencia, Spain while learning at the Berklee College of Music. After their musical studies, Ortberg came to Rochester while Killmon moved to

Seattle. Despite being separated by some 1,700 miles, the two still managed to put an entire record together, bouncing ideas back and forth on the internet and recording in their respective cities.

Given technological advances, Killmon thinks creating together across continents will become more prevalent. “This type of long-distance collaboration will become increasingly common,” he says. “Now, you can capture a quick demo of a new part and send it to anywhere in the world instantaneously. You can have jam sessions over Skype.”

Though the barriers of distance might be disintegrating, the songs that Ortberg and Killmon created together over three years by trading tracks back and forth via email and layering instruments require more than two musicians to perform live, so the two put together a band comprised of Rochester musicians. Killmon, the lyricist and melodic composer for Winterstate, will take the role of lead vocalist and rhythm guitarist. Ortberg, responsible for most of the underlying instrumental tracks on the record including his distinctive drumming, will play lead guitar at the show. The pair will be rounded out into a full band with Joseph Rob (guitar), Scott Strauss (bass), Ryan Utterback (drums), and Amanda Jay (keys and backing vocals).

Ortberg describes Winterstate’s sound as “alternative rock music that is indicative of early 2000’s and 90’s punk rock, with a modern polish.” Killmon suggests that fans of bands like The Killers, Incubus, and My Chemical Romance will be in tune with songs from “The Ride.”

One track that stands out for this writer is “Twin Size Bed.” The song has a nostalgic ethos centered on lost youth and young love that is driven by a chorus filled up with driving distorted guitar. It creates tension and release with verses that have a pop sensibility while layering vocals that break suddenly into sparse instrumental segments. At first listen, the song feels cozy like a favorite sweater that will still be worn long after its ragged.

“Hospital Kicks” is another track that might hit home for many in the Med City. The beauty of Killmon’s lyrics describe the antiseptic precision and pain of hospitals perfectly: “Crisp white sheets in the ICU/chemical drip through a plastic tube.”

In addition to the Winterstate debut, the release party will feature performances by Kashmir Graffiti, Twin Lakes, the Pure Rock Teen Class, and Amanda Jay. “We both love how the arts scene in Rochester is so connected,” says Ortberg, “We wanted to celebrate that as much as we could.” Four visual artists will also show works in several mediums during the release party.

For Ortberg and Killmon, music is about bringing people together no matter how far apart they might be. “I think Alex and I share a similar vision of what music can be,” says Killmon. “It’s a tool for building community, and validating the experiences we all share.”

What

Winterstate album release party

When

6-11 p.m. Saturday, May 11

Where

Pure Rock Studios of Rochester, 515 Rocky Creek Dr. NE

Cost

\$10 general admission, children under 5 free.