

twenty four hour period. "Our publicist was sceptical about whether or not we could pull it off but with some careful logistic planning it went off without a hitch. It was definitely a highlight for us as a band," he enthuses. "You seem to gain a little more respect after playing an event like SXSW. It shows certain level of professionalism and seriousness about your craft when you successfully navigate an event like that. People notice and are more willing to work with you because they know you're not a joke. It's helped us get better gigs and opened up a few doors that we were having a hard time getting through. And in the end that's really what you're shooting for, to keep moving up the ladder with dignity and respect." Seguin explains

All the recordings the band has done as Heavy America have been done in their own studio. The guys decided before the recording of their first EP it would be massively cost beneficial for them to set up their own studio. "We knew we would be recording a lot and we knew how expensive it would get. Having our own studio meant we wouldn't have to rush. So for the cost of recording one album we've been able to record an EP, an album and three singles. Not bad. It allows us to use our money in other places, like promotion," he tells me.

He studied sound engineering when he attended Musicians Institute, so Seguin had a pretty good idea of what he was doing in the beginning. "Our latest Album 'Now' is the best product to come out of our studio yet. I went into the recordings with a full understanding of the equipment having already engineered and produced our debut EP and the two singles that followed," he adds. "I had a real good idea of how to achieve the sound and vibe we were looking for on this album. This made the whole process faster and smoother although it still took us ten months to complete. My confidence has grown enough that I'm considering taking on some outside recording projects."

For the future, the band just wants to keep climbing that rock 'n' roll ladder. "Next step is getting some good management. Someone who can keep our forward momentum going and get us opportunities we can't get ourselves. Although we pride ourselves on being a DIY band, there does come a point where you start to need outside help, and I think we're fast approaching that mark. We do have some exciting stuff going on over the summer," he says.

Most of which has to do with the release of the album. "We've started working with Tinderbox Music in Minneapolis. They have been a huge help with getting us college and FM radio airplay in the states, press and a few sync licenses for the new album. Hopefully all of which will pan out into more forward movement and opportunities. But right now our main focus is getting the new album in front of as many people as possible and pushing the album's first single 'Pray For Me'. The video has done really well on youtube and has been well received by our fans. We'd like to fire out another single by midsummer so we're in the process now of preparing for the next video shoot and single while 'Pray For Me' runs its course. There's always plenty to do and in this business an unforgiving work ethic is a must," concludes Michael, bringing an end to our conversation.

Check Heavy America out at www.heavyamerica.us
www.facebook.com/heavyamerica
www.youtube.com/heavyamerica



From Sacramento, CA, we find soulful Americana/folk based solo artist **BANJO BONES**, who has a new ten track CD out now 'Cowboy Dreams' that is well worth exploring. The album runs in at just over forty minutes long and is his third release. The album is a collection of songs that could best characterised as a soundtrack to the desert. It captures the beauty, treacherousness, mysteries, adventure and humbling experience of a desert trip, whilst it is Americana based some of the songs flow with a lovely summery melodic blues edge. Banjo Bones handles the guitars and lead vocals and he

is joined by Giorgi Khokhobashvili - violin, Ron Smit - bass and drummer Steve Gust.

Banjo Bones was eleven years old he was visiting a friend who had the Kiss 'Alive' album and he was captivated not just by their presence but by the energy of their music and he knew this was something that he wanted to do. He persuaded his parents to buy him a cheap electric guitar and a Kiss songbook, and he never looked back. Banjo Bones got in his first band when he was fourteen, and the other guys in the band were all experienced, adult musicians. He learned a lot from those guys/ "Whilst most musicians who have been at it have plenty of horror stories about bands and the industry, if you are smart, you can really learn from every one of those experiences along the way, that has been one of my strengths. I have always said that most of my accomplishments came from ignorance: nobody told me I couldn't or was not supposed to do it, so I did it," he tells me.

Banjo Bones is deeply inspired by excellent craftsmanship in song writing and he tells me that Tom Waits is a heavy influence in general, as are Elvis Costello, Joe Henry and Chris Whitley. He is constantly writing new material, and writes on average a song a week. "I noticed a trend in some of my songs in the last year that had a more western flavour than usual as far as the aesthetics go. Thematically I cover a lot of ground in this record, but the urgency of making sure it is not too late to fulfil your dreams is a central theme, especially in the title song, where the dream of being a cowboy is a co-relation to my dream of being a musician," he explains.

In his down time away from the band Banjo Bones loves to travel with his wife, especially road trips. They recently drove from Sacramento, CA to Wyoming which he found was an amazing magical trip. "This summer we are taking a two-week vacation to the southern Utah parks," he says. He and his wife also love food and enjoy cooking together and they love to go out to eat. "But we have a rule, if we can make it at home, we don't buy it outside. So when we go to a restaurant, it is always something new or difficult to make," he adds.

The strength of Banjo Bones is also a weakness, it is very hard to categorise their music, which is why he band went with Americana as it combines elements of folk, country, rock, and blues, but in reality is none of those. "This also makes it hard to market and when someone asks us we sound like, it is a particularly difficult question to answer, because we are willing to go just about anywhere with the music. I think the artist I can think of that is as difficult to box in is Wilco, but interestingly, while I admire them, they have not been an influence on me," Banjo Bones explains to me.

The new album 'Cowboy Dreams' covers introspective ideas, political commentary, philosophical conundrums, and general life puzzles to solve. "Hopefully I have accomplished my goal of asking the right questions instead of prescribing a global answer... kind of like a psychologist," he smiles.

Banjo Bones had some brilliant musicians participate in the recording, some have come on board to the band since then. So musically, it is more varied and nuanced because rather than playing basic parts, he worked with musicians that are true virtuosos on their instruments and brought a vocabulary into the sessions that he could never reach on his own. "The other notable difference is that my voice is different. I am following the opposite track of Tom Waits; where as he went from singing to growling as his career progressed, I have gone from growling to singing. Which I think is a result of me reaching out, experimenting and trying to find a new, different voice to fulfil the music vision," he enthuses.

The record was recorded, mixed and mastered at Boneyard Records Studios in Sacramento, CA, an although linearly it took about nine months to produce, in reality it was more like four months when you add the time he actually worked on it because having free range of the studio can be a double-edged sword. "On the one hand, you can work whenever you are inspired to do so, on the other hand, if you are not careful, you can play around with a song so long you never finish, this is especially important to keep in mind for independent artists who don't work with a producer, because it is generally the producer show says when enough is enough," he tells me.

Next up he is playing a couple of festivals this

summer, which he is naturally very excited about, as well as a very busy gig schedule to promote the new record. "Whereas I spent the last few years working as a solo artist, I now have a band, which opens up a whole new set of possibilities and avenues. Not to get too ahead of myself, but I already have the following album written and demoed. So once the aggressive promotion state for Cowboy Dreams settles a bit, I will start working on the next record," Banjo Bones concludes.

Check Banjo Bones out at: www.banjobones.com



From Detroit but based in the UK we find blues rock artist **MARCUS MALONE**, who have an outstanding new twelve track CD out now called 'A Better Man' which runs in at just under fifty minutes long and is Malone's eighth solo record and is well worth checking out. Joining Marcus on the album are: Bill Burke - guitars, Christopher Nugent - drums, Winston Blissett - bass, Moz Gamble - keys and Chantelle Duncan and Eno Williams - bvs. Also joining him for the live shows only are: Sean Nolan - guitar and keyboard player Stevie Watts.

Marcus Malone started singing in church at the age of six, which he found to be the most traumatizing experience. He grew to love it and sang in various talent shows in Detroit and had his own Motown vocal group at school. He was then asked by some older musicians to sing with them at a very popular night club called the 20 Grand Ballroom in Detroit. "There was no going back after that taste of decadence," he adds. Malone started his first rock band with guitarist Gene Black who was also heavily influenced by Hendrix and English rock and metal music. "We used to play seven nights a week in bars in Detroit and Chicago and later expanded down the Eastern coast to Florida," he explains. The guys were later joined by guitarist Randy Strachen also from Detroit and they went about covering guitar orientated rock and metal bands such as Aerosmith, Allman Bros, ZZ Top, Bowie and other rock music that was popular on Detroit radio stations.

The guys then started writing and performing at least two or three original songs in their set a night which were heavily influenced by their mentors and heroes. They blended them in with the covers that played. Eventually they had a whole forty five min show and were getting requests from the audience to perform their own songs. "We started opening up for The Stooges, Bob Seger and headlining shows in Detroit. This music was recorded by our manager and was shopped in LA where the management team of Ike Turner heard it and played it for Ike. He sent his people and A&R from UA to Detroit to hear us play 'live' and a few weeks later we were on our way to LA. We were signed to the same label as Ike and Tina - United Artists Records," Marcus expresses.

Detroit is a melting pot of musical styles, tastes and great artists and Marcus' influences started with Motown and eventually he got into the punk of Iggy Pop and MC5, the funk of James Brown, Sly Stone and the Funkadelics and even the West Coast music of the Beach Boys were all influential in his songwriting and performance growth. The English invasion brought the sound of the Beatles, Stones and he especially admired David Bowie. "Motown was my first love and inspiration. I did later meet and audition for Berry Gordy in LA and I was managed by Suzanne DePasse -mentor of the Jacksons, Supremes and other Motown artists," he adds.

Malone hung out with Iggy Pop and also the MC5 in Ann Arbor Michigan. "They were managed by John Sinclair who also lived in the band house with the band. They used to do shows on the University of Michigan campus and in and around the Detroit area. Afterwards they would have jam sessions. They had a kind of open door policy and I used to just hang out in the house," he

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