



Al Larsen of Some Velvet Sidewalk.

## Larsen Evolution

Olympia-based band brings velvet rock to Sam Bond's.

**S**ome Velvet Sidewalk, an Olympia-based outfit on the K Records roster, has Eugene ties going way back. The guitar/drum duo of Al Larsen and Robert Christie (now deceased) rocked the indie world with their primitive playing style and influenced a stripped-down sound that survives and thrives today. The pair debuted with a self-released taped recording in 1998, then swiftly switched to K Records. Larson and company made a deep impression on the music scene. Then what happened? I caught up with Larsen in his Olympia home to find out.

Larsen stopped writing songs and music for about two years, during 1998 and 1999. He explains, "It was really odd. I was at a point where I didn't know what to write about anymore and it didn't make sense to me anymore." With more years upon his head, the teen rebellion he had felt in the past evaporated. "For me it was like, whatever I'm railing against is basically my fault, or my own responsibility. It didn't feel right to me to be blaming the world."

Larsen began writing again when he was at a different place mentally. For the past year Larsen has been performing solo, at local gigs and two short tours down the coast. For this tour, Larsen will be performing with SVS drummer Don Blair, who debuted on the group's 1992 recording *Avalanche*. "We had a pretty good wavelength in Some Velvet Sidewalk, with the whole group really, in terms of everyone staying in the same rhythm," he says.

Blair's drums are noteworthy: Larsen reveals that they lived a past life on a 1930s cruise ship. "They're Chinese, I think. They look like barrels and they have an animal skin tacked on. They have this ancient sort of sound." Larsen promises that rather than playing a standard rock kit, these drums bring an aura to the performance that's almost magical.

Larsen's take on his music is one of invention. He says, "It's a process of feeling like you're inventing rock and roll on your own terms."

Larsen is currently nearing completion on

an album he's recording with producer Steve Fisk, with whom he's worked before. Fisk contributes electric piano on the recording, which should be available by February. This performance will take place Sunday at Sam Bond's, along with local favorites **The Visible Men**.

Local band **Mine 37** ([www.minethirtyseven.com](http://www.minethirtyseven.com)) began one and a half years ago as an almost entirely different band. Benjamin Max (bass) formed the band with his sister and a different drummer and guitarist. Mat Foster joined up in February. Guitarist Ben Hubbard and drummer Jim Ewell complete the new ensemble. The change in lineup was brought about because everyone quit for some reason or another, like graduating from

college and moving away.

Says Max, "It just wasn't going to work anymore. The changes are more than skin deep; all have a shared vision of less pop and more rock. The people in the other band were more into pop and being more weird. I always wanted to play more straight ahead rock and these people are all about that." The group is nearing completion on a five-song EP which they will finish before September, when they embark on a short tour of several Western states. (The band books their own tour and releases their CDs themselves.)

This self-titled release represents the band members' first real recording, a studio effort they're all extremely happy with. Gearing up for tour has cut into their time to work on new material, but the band has several new songs they're itching to record, as well. Future plans for this talented band include more recording, more shows and hopefully more fans. Max does not relish the thought of more band structure changes. "I hope we all stick together for a while and try to make this thing work," he reflects. Mine 37 will perform Friday at WOW Hall with **The Applesseed Cast**, **Mercury Project** and **Chin Up Chin Up**. **EW**

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