



Southwest Sounds

Nick Luca and company, L.A.'s Dickies in town.

As a musician and audio engineer at Tucson's Wavelab studio, Nick Luca had ample opportunity to befriend some of the area's greatest musicians. Musicians like Giant Sand's Howe Gelb, Joe Burns and John Convertino became friends and frequent collaborators of Luca's. When Giant Sand played Sam Bond's in 2000, Luca was on stage. This time, Luca is taking the stage on Monday, Aug. 16 with his own band, **The Nick Luca Trio**, along with drummer Jim Kober and bassist Chris Giambelluca. He told me more about the band in a recent phone conversation from Tucson, where he is preparing to hit the road on tour.

The musical aesthetic of Giant Sand and Low rubbed off on Luca, who had become frustrated with trying to fit into rock and jazz music's pigeonholes, and he was searching for something more substantial when he wrote the tunes on *Little Town*. In 2001 he gathered musicians and brought them into the studio after only three weeks together, so it has an "off the cuff" vibe to it, very relaxed," Luca says. "We just played the songs as if it was a practice, and kept it mess ups and all." The songs on *Little Town* were written the summer before 9/11,

and reflect a growing sense of dread at the state of the world. "I remember that summer thinking the world is a mess. It seemed like the world was getting more and more materialistic and getting awful. I began writing the songs thinking, man, I got to do something different."

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A friendship with Alan Sparhawk of Low spurred Luca further toward developing a more introspective approach. "I learned a lot from him. That was a definite influence," explains Luca. Drawing inspiration from fantastic bands Low, Giant Sand, Calexico and Friends of Dean Martinez, Luca's *Little Town* is a listening pleasure. Like the music of many bands from the desert, it is imbued with a feeling of open space. "Definitely living in the desert you're constantly bombarded by space. And I think with the slower pace of life, you're willing to just let a note ring for a long time."

Lyrical, *Little Town* gives us glimpses of

life: a deserted street at night, an unexpected phone call, unfulfilled dreams and heartbreak. "To me, *Little Town* is like Tucson at four in the morning," says Luca. It's a dreamy landscape of country, folk and psychedelic pop and yet another strong branch of the Arizona musical family tree. In "Psychedelic Haze" he expresses the despair he felt that pre-9/11 summer: "I see a mountain crumble into sand/evil-lution spread across the land."

While *Little Town* is just reaching our ears for the first time, Luca and bandmates have had three years to think about it. "To us, *Little Town* is pretty old. It was recorded in 2001. We've already recorded three more albums. That's what happens when you work in a recording studio!" he says with a laugh. The next record will be released in September, with another to follow in January, the fourth will come out the following summer. With his work already done, Luca is looking forward to months of touring to support his efforts.

John Henry's welcomes to town punk legends **The Dickies** on Friday, Aug. 13. L.A.'s first punk rock band to score a major label deal have lived the life that only the first wave of punkers know and understand. For more than 20 years they have made instantly recogniza-

as the second in a series of outdoor concerts on downtown's Broadway Plaza. The shows taking place at the intersection of Broadway and Willamette are hosted by the McDonald Theater. A beer garden will be set up, as well as food booths and a video feed. The shows are all ages and are a great opportunity to go discover what downtown has to offer while enjoying the warm days of summer, listening to cool music, and mingling with your neighbors. The Neville Brothers — Aaron, Art, Charles and Cyril — move with the funky, soulful and bluesy beat of their hometown of New Orleans. In the mid-'60s Art formed a group called Art Neville and the Neville Sounds, which would later become the Meters. Silken-voiced Aaron also enjoyed a career outside the brotherly fold. Over two decades the Neville Brothers have built a career on the varied music of folk, blues and funk traditions. Songs like their versions of "Hey Pocky Way," Jimmy Cliff's "Sitting in Limbo," "Brother John/Iko Iko" and "Will the Circle Be Unbroken" still satisfy.

Also on Friday Oregon's traveling troubadour **Brian Cutean**, aka QTN, will hold a CD release party at Cozmic Pizza. His fifth CD, *Heartheartearth* shows Cutean's



pro prowess as a master of wordplay with an unusual and thoughtful approach to enlightening the consciousness of his listeners. A mainstay at folk festivals and fairs across the country, this past year was Cutean's 16th year as a performer at the Oregon Country Fair. Cutean has lived in Austin, Seattle and Chicago and now bases his operations out of both Portland and Eugene. After having returned from his 24th Kerrville Festival, three other CDs were released on which Cutean has songwriting credits: Willy Porter's *High Wire Live* and Steve Gillette and Cindy Mangsen's CD *Sense of Place*. **EW**

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