



PHOTO BY TODD COOPER

### Yelowolf with No Walls

Any shlub or shlomo with earholes at the Wiz Kalifa gig last October at WOW Hall – no, fuck that, anyone with red blood cells and a head screwed on proper had they shit totally torn down and reorganized by a righteous piece of skinny white trash who stomped and stormed the boards with the good-to-go charisma and genius chops of a deep South rapper on the cusp of superstardom. Man's name is Michael Wayne Atha – **Yelowolf** to you and me – and he is a pure product of Alabama, a lupine-eyed intensity of Caucasian and Cherokee descent who grew up rough in Faulkner country with those eyes open, sucking through the gills the thick, swampy air of his culture – Lynyrd Skynyrd, dented truck doors, chicks, pills, poverty, meth, violence – he feels called to represent that American South in all its authenticity. He discovered old school hip hop, NWA blasting straight out of Compton, let it into his DNA, mastered it, and transformed hometown Gadsden into his 8 Mile. Recorded a slew of badass songs. Yela signed to Interscope recently. Any fucker at WOW that night – me included, photographer Todd Cooper included – felt the sheer power and truth of Yelowolf. That dude, only a matter of time, people. That time is now.

I had the very good fortune of spending post-show with Yelowolf at WOW. Guy scared the shit out of me – he exuded the kind of amped energy and outa-my-way drive that peels all falsity from the room. But we talked and talked. I told him I hadn't had my skull popped like that since the first Nirvana show, and he was genuinely touched and humbled. It was one of the most intense and rewarding interviews I've ever done; I left that room vibrating with excitement. Yela is real, in the realest sense of real: Focused, crazy talented, principled, on a mission to bring it, stay true, keep moving, take it as far as it will go. So fuck you, fuck you, fuck you and fuck you, like the song says. Feel the love. Yelowolf loves you true, for real. He ain't no savior, but he wants the music to save you, tell you that no matter what shit you ate all your life you gotta own that shit and then rise above it.

Stoked like hell for *Radioactive*, Yelowolf's first studio album for Interscope, due to drop sometime this summer. For now, you got the man himself arriving in this land of bud, toejam and jam bands for one night. That's not enough, but we'll take it. Yelowolf plays with some other fuckers at 5 pm Sunday, May 29, at Cuthbert Amphitheater; \$41. – *Rick Levin*



### These Aren't LeRoy Bell's Only Friends

For a guy who doesn't look that old, **LeRoy Bell** has been around the music business for a long time, and he has the resume to prove it. As a young staff writer for his uncle Thom Bell in the late '70s, Bell wrote songs that would go on to be recorded by such big names as the Spinners, The O'Jays, Rita Marley, The Temptations and Elton John. In fact, Elton John earned a Grammy nod in 1979 for his performance of Bell's song "Mama Can't Buy Me Love."

You might expect that someone in the industry this long would've put out a solo record by now, but it wasn't until last year that Bell finally checked that off his to-do list. *Traces* is an acoustic journey into deeply personal area – life and death, love and loss.

The year 2010 marked another momentous achievement for Bell when he participated in the re-recording of the historic 1985 classic "We are the World" with artists like Michael Franti, Youssou N'dour, Angelique Kidjo and Lila Downs. Bell also contributed his track "A Change is Coming" to the digital compilation *We Are The World/United in Song*.

Musically, Bell treads the same easygoing folk/soul/pop territory as relative newcomers like Jason Mraz, Ben Harper or John Mayer. But with his longevity and credentials, Bell definitely shows those whippersnappers how it's done.

LeRoy Bell and His Only Friends play Friday, May 27, at the WOW Hall; \$12 adv., \$15 door. – *William Kennedy*

### Kill the Shamrock, Pass the Pipes

What happens when you combine Irish pride with roaring metal, in-your-face lyrics and biting vocals so magical delicious you want to light Guinness on fire then chug it? You get **Flogging Molly**.

The cult band of Irish punksters began in the mid-'80s, when Dave King decided to bail on the band Fastway in order to form a new band. He was actually bailing on the future members of UFO and Motörhead, but whatever. His new label said he was crazy for wanting to play hard rock with classical Irish instruments, but he knew it was genius. Freaking leprechaun-choking madness.

The band went nowhere for a few years, eventually emigrating to America. Playing regularly at the Los Angeles bar Molly Malone's, gathering a fan base of rowdy patrons. After landing a record deal, they took a name in honor of Molly Malone's – after all, the audience must've been sick of them by then.

As much as Flogging Molly's been sliding into metal the last couple of years, you can't help but love them because they're not fully metal. They're Irish metal, a completely different beast. They still use mandolins and uilleann pipes in addition to their craggy vocals. Their new album, *Speed of Darkness*, will be released May 31st, and is likely going to be a calmer kickback from last year's *Live at the Greek Theatre*. But just wait; one second Flogging Molly's got the pub-goers singing, the next everyone's head-banging. Flogging Molly play 7:30 pm Wednesday, June 1, at the McDonald Theatre; \$25 adv., \$30 door. – *Brit McGinnis*

