

Trippin' On Down The Mountainside

Rugged as ever, **The Brothers Comatose** are hitting just about every town on the West Coast this tour and playing a multitude of small venues and bars along the way. Honestly, though, they'd probably feel happiest posted up outside, stomping their feet against the drying wood of a porch as spring rolls in.

Comatose is a blatant misnomer, by the way. Don't be fooled. In fact, Alex and Ben Morrison do everything they can to make sure the group is leading the audience away from drowse and dullitude, and toward something more akin to a drunken hillbilly shit-storm or that dance party in *The Matrix: Reloaded*. The point is, these dudes aren't docile, and they want their crowds to follow suit.

An energetic sense of oneness with the music – keeping the audience absolutely rooted to the edge of their seats (or the balls of their feet) – is what a live show should evoke. The Brothers Comatose has rocked out on the same floorboards as The Devil Makes Three, Greensky Bluegrass and Or, The Whale, and considering the festivals they're signed on for this year, that list of well-known headliners is sure to increase.

The bros are still rocking along with the tunes on their 2011 release, *Songs from the Stoop*, but these songs don't get old. That's a definite plus of the string-band genre – the tradition and antiquity found on studio recordings usually pales in comparison to the actual hootin' and hollerin' that takes place on stage. Perfectionists: Eat your hearts out. This is about having fun.

The Brothers Comatose play 9 pm Tuesday, April 10, at Cozmic; \$5 adv., \$7 door. – *Andy Valentine*

Song Rockets in Flight

It starts slow, sometimes painfully slow – oftentimes it can take the entire length of a mainstream pop song for the thing to rev up – then there's this explosion (forgive me) of driving beats cut by clashing guitars, and it's so aurally epic it sounds like the instrumental-only version of the entire *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. And that's just one song.

Each **Explosions in the Sky** (pictured below) song plays out like a story; most even seem to follow that triangular plot diagram you learned about in middle school, complete with climax and falling action. But Explosions sticks exclusively to notes instead of words to weave a narrative and evoke emotion.

Guitarists Munaf Rayani, Mark Smith and Michael James (who sometimes sports a bass), along with drummer Chris Hrasky, formed Explosions in the Sky in Texas. But don't expect them to sound like some stereotypical Lone Star quartet – practitioners of mariachi and country pop they are not. Their songs have been described as "cathartic mini-symphonies," and structurally they're similar, though it would be a mistake to take that description too seriously. It's probably best you don't show up Wednesday at McDonald Theatre in your Sunday best. Or do, and be the coolest hipster there, though suits and ball gowns might prove a tad constricting for this plugged-in rock "symphony."

Explosions' first album, *How Strange, Innocence*, was released in 2000, and in 2004 the band scored the soundtrack for the film *Friday Night Lights*. Since then, its music has been featured in a number of movies and TV shows, including *One Tree Hill* and Michael Moore's *Capitalism: A Love Story*.

Despite the complete absence of lyrics, Explosions' enthusiastic live show has gained notoriety for its emotive qualities. Rayani, Smith, James and Hrasky deftly sidestep any void left by the lack of lyrics and open their music to an infinite number of personalized interpretations.

Explosions in the Sky play 8 pm Wednesday, April 11, at the McDonald Theatre; \$20 adv., \$25 door. – *Natalie Horner*



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