



Submitted photo by Linn Hykkerud

Western Haunts is, from left, Michel DeBauge, Jake Witt, Sam Tyner and Nathan Witt.

Five Minutes With ... WESTERN HAUNTS

Q&A by RYAN HUME

Spend some time loitering with Western Haunts. Coast Weekend asked Jake Witt, of the Seattle-based band, about the group's trajectory and what to expect from their two live shows at the Adrift Hotel, in Long Beach, Washington, on March 20 and 21. Find more Western Haunts at westernhaunts.bandcamp.com for streaming and purchase.

Over the course of five releases, Western Haunts have been progressively moving from its twangy, alt-country roots toward a richer, more atmospheric sound. In what ways has this layered expansion changed the way you approach a live performance?

We've always had a lush sound really. On the first records there were a lot of multi-part vocal harmonies with a lot of hall reverb. Our challenge was to try and recreate that live without monitors feeding back or pissing off our sound

man when we wanted the mix to be a little spacier. Our shoegaze and psyche influences are definitely more present on our later records. We've really fine-tuned our live show dynamics and blend effects in a way now where we all feel pretty comfortable and free to just play.

At Adrift we usually play two sets. The earlier set features more songs off our earlier records, which seem to suit folks having dinner better, and the later set is mostly new stuff. We love playing Adrift, but it's definitely more of an intimate

live experience than when we play around Seattle.

Your 2012 music video for "A Zealot Sun," directed by your frequent collaborator, artist Harold Hollingsworth, reads like a love letter to your home base. How has Seattle's music, culture and landscape informed the direction of Western Haunts?

I had grown up listening to and loving artists like CSNY, The Band, a lot of Laurel Canyon artists, like Joni Mitchell, and classic artists like The Mamas and The Papas. When Western Haunts started, originally called siOHs, there was kind of a common zeitgeist in the music scene in Seattle where a lot of those influences were being embraced again.

Everyone in the band is a transplant. My brother and I are from Ohio, Sam is a Hoosier and Mike is from the Bay area. We all love the Pacific Northwest, but the video was really Harold's vision. He was really into experimenting with tilt-shift video and thought that the song would be a nice backdrop for some of the beautiful footage he was taking around the city.

Which artists haunt you? What influences are you chasing?

Lately it's been a lot of New Wave '80s artists for me, like Peter Dinklage and Kate Bush, Psychedelic Furs, Echo and the Bunnymen and "Boy"-era U2. Some of which may make it into some of the songwriting on the upcoming EP. Bands like My Bloody Valentine, Ride, Slowdive, have always been a constant, though, as well as some vintage and classic artists like Neil Young and Pink Floyd.

Considering the liner notes on "The Amba-

sador" and "Utøya" EPs, your songwriting in part seems motivated by current events and attitudes. How does what's happening in the world influence the shape of your work?

I'm not very good at writing party songs. Usually, I feel, like lyrically, I'm at my best when it's heavier themes or lyrical imagery that has a message or voices a concern that I have. Songwriting is always a good outlet for me to get that stuff out, especially considering the rest of the time I'm usually telling dirty jokes or talking about Cincinnati sports or the Cavs' Big Three.

You are in the process of recording a new EP for a late spring/summer release date. What forces are motivating this new cycle of songs?

A lot of the influences I mentioned above musically. Lyrically, this one is kind of a mix of themes — some personal, some more politically driven. A lot of imagery about belief or faith in fallen institutions. Culture clash and the income gap. Overcoming adversity and trying to take risks and stay inspired. You know, real heady Dad Rock stuff.

word nerd

By RYAN HUME

Lingcod [lɪŋ•kəd]

noun

1. *Ophiodon elongates*: Neither a true ling or cod, this slender, tasty fish is caught off the coast of the Pacific Northwest of the U.S. and Canada, often by hook and line, and is, taxonomically, a member of the greenling family

Origin:

Ling: Middle English, *lenge*, *lienge*, later, *ling*, possibly related to *long* through the Germanic as an adjective. Also associated with "organ," as in *organ ling* (first published in 1499). *Cod*: Of unknown origin, but this word is often linked with the Old English, *codd*, meaning, "bag," and has been used to describe anything from the husk of a vegetable seed-pod to the mammalian skin sheathing a male's testicles (see *codpiece*) to the human larynx and stomach. It is generally understood, without conclusive evidence, that the codfish, of the North Atlantic, received its name from the same reference, resembling a "bag-fish." According to the Oxford English Dictionary, *lingcod* is especially American and first referenced in publication in 1955 by Dawson in *Ahoy There!* in the line from P. 205, "Besides salmon, we catch cod...ling-cod." Merriam-Webster places the first known use at 1940.

"The forgetful public was enlightened for a day last Summer by statements in the papers about fish and prices at Yaquina. A fisherman held our attention a moment to ask why he only got 1 cent a pound for lingcod and rockfish, which were paying 15 cents for here. Mr. Burke, a wholesaler who handled these fish and did something to reduce the local price, claimed that he paid 1 ½ cents per pound for them on the dock of Yaquina."

—John Gill, "More Not Eaten Because Cheap," *The Morning Oregonian*, Wednesday, Feb. 20, 1918, p. 10

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