

# Blending genres, The Confusionaires claim to 'make a believer out of anyone' once they start playing

The Confusionaires at The Aviary on Saturday, Feb. 9

**TOM MURRAY**

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The Confusionaires, playing at The Aviary on Saturday. NOQUESTIONWHO  
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The Confusionaires liked the studio they recorded in so much that they bought the company!

Well, that's not exactly accurate; the trio (Fat Dave Johnston, guitars and vocals; Adam Stark, drums; Jayson Aschenmeier, bass and vocals) did indeed record their first album, Make A Little Mess, at Edmontone Studio back in 2018, but it was only drummer Stark who paired up with fellow musician Trevor Rockwell and his wife Jennifer Jenkins to buy the business a couple of years ago.

They returned in January 2019 to record their follow-up, From the Headache to the Heartache, laying down tracks in dribs and drabs based on availability of the space. Recorded live off the floor with minimal overdubs, Stark handling engineering duties in addition to keeping time, the new album is a tight, jet-fuelled gallop of cheeky, post-Sun Session rockabilly frayed at the edges by blues-punk propulsion and general genre-leakage.

Sounds appealing? Well it is, and as misleadingly named frontman and songwriter Fat Dave Johnston observes, that might be because there's something for everyone in The Confusionaires sound.

**Q:** With The Confusionaires, rockabilly is the starting point but not the end goal, right?

**A:** Rockabilly is the elevator pitch, but compared to a band like (Calgary's) Peter and the Wolves, who are really authentic, we're not so much a rockabilly band as a rock band. Jayson is a metal guy, Adam is kind of a well-rounded indie rocker, and I came out of the punk scene, so this is where we found common ground as a band. And when you're a three-piece with a hollow body guitar and an upright bass, you go with that.

**Q:** It found you an immediate community to be part of, though.

**A:** It allowed us to connect for sure, because the rockabilly community was already there, dancing and having a good time. I mean, this is music that I've maybe touched on in the past in other bands, but maybe not in such a meaningful way.

**Q:** You've progressed through punk, blues, country, straight up rock and so on in your bands through the years; do you think that there are expectations laid on you as a performer and songwriter?

**A:** I guess maybe a particular style of songwriting? Hopefully they expect a certain quality of musicianship at this point (laughs). At one point I was in a lot of different bands, and I decided that I just needed to concentrate on The Confusionaires. That meant not playing a lot of music that I really like, so I just ended up bringing those styles into the band.

**Q:** I've personally heard you dabble in everything from Ennio Morricone-style spaghetti western guitars to lounge jazz to exotica. Are there any points on From the Headache to the Heartache where you felt you may have confounded your listeners with stylistic variations?

**A:** There are a few spots, some stuff that I always wanted to do but maybe got talked out of, or was uncertain about. Like, this album has way more feedback than any album I've ever made, and in the best possible way. There's also an instrumental tune that's a nod to our friends (beatnik-horror-punk three-piece) Forbidden Dimension called Graveyard Shift at the Rumour Mill. It's easily one of the greasiest things I've ever written, and totally inspired by Forbidden Dimension. Except that we're not as heavy as they are, so it's kind of a lounge-jazz response.

**Q:** The Confusionaires aren't road dogs in the way that any of the member's previous bands might have been. What's the game plan with the new album as far as touring goes?

**A:** Actually, 2020 will be our busiest year yet. We're shooting for weekend shows through Western Canada, and returning as much as possible to towns and cities anywhere between Winnipeg and Vancouver. We're definitely on the road but we're doing it in a smart, sustainable way, and we're building an audience. I feel like we can make a believer out of anyone in the room once we start playing. The challenge is getting people there, so that's what this year is about: getting people in the room.