



NEW MUSIC

By Jim Gellatly

STOP THE RAIN

WHO: Blair Davie (vocals/guitar), Sam Steele (vocals/guitar), Sam Flood (bass / vocals), Kyle Fummey (drums)

WHERE: Perth

FOR FANS OF: Travis, Father-son, The Xcerts

JIM SAYS: The Perth teenagers have come up with a cracker with their debut single Home Is Where My Heart Is.

A glorious blast of melodic indie rock, it follows an impressive EP and suggests great things ahead.

Singers and guitarists Blair, 16 and 17-year-old Sam go to my old school, Strathallan in Perthshire. Blair said: "I met Sam when I moved to Strathallan."

"Our music tastes just clicked and we decided to start writing some songs together."

They are joined by Perth High student Kyle Fummey, 16, who Blair knew from primary school. Bassist Sam Flood, 17, attends St John's Academy and completes the line-up.

Blair added: "I had known him from playing in previous bands and once he joined we got to work on rehearsing and writing more music."

"We originally had a saxophone player and wrote this blues pop music."

"After the EP release our sax player left and we had to quickly adapt our style."

Going for more of an alternative rock sound now, they caught the attention of former Runrig keyboard player Pete Wishart earlier this year.

Pete is their local MP and put them forward for Rock The House, Westminster's annual unsigned band competition.

The boys went to London in May to compete in the Under 19s final at The Bedford.

The renowned music pub hosted early gigs from acts like The Clash and U2 and more recently Ed Sheeran and James Bay.

Pete said: "I was simply knocked out when I first heard Stop The Rain in a battle of the bands contest in Perth with their mature and well-crafted songs."

"I had no hesitation in nominating them for the Rock The House competition."

"They came second only to a band from the Prime Minister's constituency!"

Blair added: "Rock The House was a great experience and one that definitely brought us together as a band and as best friends. Before, it was never really spent that much time together outside of the band."

Getting to go down to London, getting to explore and hang out together and then finally getting to gig in The Bedford was really cool. Coming second in a national competition was the realisation that we were doing something right and that we should really start pushing it."

The hard work is starting to pay off. Last Saturday they signed their first record deal with new Aberdeen label Eighty-Eight Records.

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Watch video of band at thescottishsun.co.uk

From front cover great American song tradition."

Permanent secretary of the Swedish Academy Sara Danius added: "We're really giving it to Bob Dylan as a great poet."

Though literary purists may raise an eyebrow or two, there are compelling arguments to justify the decision.

Even at last weekend's Desert Trip festival where 75-year-old Dylan appeared on the same bill as the Rolling Stones and Paul McCartney, the words of his 1963 protest song Masters Of War chimed with current events.

The song, menacing as ever, was his parting shot and found him channelling all the old fire in his belly.

Come you masters of war You that build the big guns You that build the death planes You that build all the bombs You that hide behind walls You that hide behind desks I just want you to know I can see through your masks

When Dylan started out in New York, rock and roll was THE prime expression of youthful exuberance and Elvis Presley was The King.

After masterful interpretive work on the Great American Songbook by Frank Sinatra and his ilk, simple boy-girl rock songs made the scene "all shook up".

But Dylan was on a mission to change the course of popular songwriting.

He'd begun by performing covers - old standards by Mississippi delta singers like Leadbelly and songs associated with his hero Woody Guthrie.

He was soon clattering out his own efforts on one of those clunky old black typewriters, making numerous typos along the way.

One of Dylan's first and most enduring compositions was 'Blowin' In The Wind' which summoned the uncertainty of a world on the brink of nuclear war.

As the United States and the Soviet Union ratcheted up a terrifying arms race, he also wrote the bleak and unflinching A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall.

The poetic nature of his writing was plain to see in lines like "Where hunger is ugly, where souls are forgotten/Where black is the colour, where none is the number."

It's clear Dylan avidly consumed the news, responding with outrage at race-motivated killings and social injustice.

The Lonesome Death Of Hattie Carroll was a classic tale of a rich white man getting a mere six months in prison for slaying his black maid "with a cane that he twirled around his diamond ring finger."

Then there was the great anthem The Times They Are A-Changin' which challenged his parents' prudish post-war generation and emboldened young people everywhere to pursue free expression. It was a starting gun for the Swinging Sixties.

"Come mothers and fathers throughout the land and don't criticise what you don't understand," he cried.

"Your sons and your daughters are beyond your command. Your old road is rapidly agin."

At one of the most potent forums for his songs, 1963's Newport Folk Festival, Dylan's ascendancy was cemented by an ensemble finale of Blowin' In The Wind with, among others, Joan Baez and Peter Paul and Mary.

Yet Dylan wasn't standing still and neither was his songcraft. He suddenly halted the intense narratives and his lyrics became more opaque and more profound.

Mr. Tambourine Man, a huge hit for The Byrds, was filled with gorgeous imagery and demonstrated a marked advance in his writing.

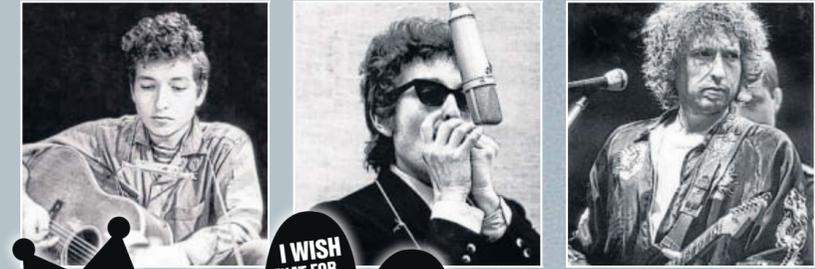
Picture the windswept scene he evokes: "Yes, Eighty-Eight Records."

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"I'm a poet, and I know it. Hope I don't blow it"

From: I SHALL BE FREE NO.10

by the circus sands/With all memory and fate driven deep beneath the waves/Let me forget about today until tomorrow."

That song appeared on 1965's Bringing It All Back Home album which kicks off with arguably the first rap song, the breathtaking Subterranean Homesick Blues.

The song is nimble, confident, funny and incisive and includes memorable lines like "you don't need a weatherman to tell which way the wind blows" and "don't follow leaders, watch the parkin' meters."

There was room for one more political jibe on It's Alright Ma (I'm Only Bleeding) that still serves listeners well during 2016's Trump/Clinton battle. "Even the President of the United States must sometimes have to stand naked."

That line drew loud cheers on Dylan's 1974 American tour when Richard Nixon's Watergate scandal was still fresh in the minds.

I could argue that all

his ground-breaking advances in lyricism were leading in one direction...to the song by which Dylan is defined above all others, Like A Rolling Stone.

Originally an unfocused sprawl, Dylan looked upon it like this: "I found myself writing this song, this story, this long piece of vomit about 20 pages long, and out of it I took Like a Rolling Stone."

The chorus of "How does it feel to be without a home, like a complete stone?" hit the lyrical bulls-eye by capturing the mood of his twenty-something peers.

It coincided with a highly dramatic musical statement: To decipher and probably the subject of whole books by itself.

You don't exactly know what "the ghost of 'lectricity howls in the bones of her face" means but in context, it really doesn't seem to matter.

The understated 1967 album John Wesley Harding put the focus firmly on the words with the evocative All Along The Watchtower, its most famous track. And

but it was endearing all the same.) And not every Dylan lyric is worthy of high esteem.

"Wiggle wiggle wiggle like a bowl of soup," he growled on 1990's Under The Red Sky album as the critics howled in derision. "Whatever happened to the spokesman of a generation?" they fumed.

Or how about "If dogs run free, then why can't we?" from 1970's patchy New Morning album.

Even when Dylan's creative stock was at a low ebb through much of the Eighties, he provided glimpses of the great force he could be.

In 1980, while emerging from his gospel obsession, he scribed the sublime and heartfelt Every Grain of Sand.

Even much-derided 1985 LP Empire Burlesque with its painfully thin production yielded a becalmed and beautiful finale in Dark Eyes.

First imagine what it's like being a rock star looking out from a vast unknowable

audience. "A million faces at my feet and all I see are dark eyes," he sings.

A couple of commendable but slight folk covers albums in the early Nineties led to assertions of writer's block.

Therefore nothing could prepare Bob watchers for his late career renaissance beginning with 1997's Time Out Of Mind.

It was released just as a respiratory infection led to fears for his life, making the line "it's not dark yet but it's getting there" all the more pertinent.

Since the turn of the millennium, the juices continued to flow so maybe Dylan's astonishing stamina also impressed the Nobel judges.

Over the years, Dylan has been given countless awards including an Oscar for Things Have Changed from the Wonder Boys soundtrack.

I'm guessing the secretive singer doesn't pay much attention to trinkets, instead preferring to "keep on keepin' on like a bird that flew."

But even he might raise a glass to being the latest Nobel laureate.

He's a poet and he knows it... and he didn't blow it.

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'BOB'S GOT ALL GIFTS A POET COULD EVER WANT'

By Professor DANIEL KARLIN

BOB DYLAN is a great, perhaps the greatest, exponent of a new art form - the art of recorded song.

The words on the page are only part of this new form and the question of whether his lyrics are "poetry" is a red herring. But even calling his work "songs" doesn't quite cover it. The element of recording is crucial.

His songs are performances, but ones that no longer vanish the moment they come into being - they're preserved on the tracks of a vinyl disc, or on a CD, or in digital form.

So you can live with them, revisit them and they change as you change through time. And what's preserved is not words alone, or music alone, but words in music, a vocal text.

We just haven't taken the measure of this new form - what can be done with it, what Dylan has done with it.

Part of the problem is the confusion between Dylan as concert artist and Dylan as recording artist. Dylan "live" is one thing, but he lives in the recordings that he releases.

Going strong Of course, it's not enough simply to practise this new art, you have to have something to say. Dylan has created his own vision of America, "from the Grand Coulee Dam to the Capitol", as he says in Idiot Wind, or, put another way, "all the way from New Orleans to Jerusalem" in Blind Willie McTell.

His way of seeing America is constantly surprising, disturbing, exhilarating. He's got every verbal gift a poet could ask for. He's done all this for more than 50 years and he's still going strong.

I nominated Dylan for the Nobel Prize more than a decade ago and I never thought the committee would actually have the gumption to do it. I take my hat off to them!

Professor Karlin is Winterstoke Professor of English Literature at Bristol University.



Q & A THE CHAINSMOKERS

'Lots to thank Selfie for'

By JACQUI SWIFT

THE CHAINSMOKERS are the the New York DJ duo responsible for the annoying hit, Selfie. Since then they've proved they are no novelty act - and the hits have continued.

Closer cemented them as the superstar DJs at the forefront of the US EDM scene. Lumbered with the "frat-bro" label due to their good looks and party lifestyle, they are at pains to point out there is more to them than that.

Here, the band's Drew Taggart tells SFTW why he's stepped out from behind the decks to take on the role of frontman.

You hit No1 on both sides of the Atlantic with Closer. How did that feel?

Pretty amazing. We work hard on our music and care about it so to see people enjoying it is the most gratifying thing.

How did you hook up with guest vocalist Halsey? It was a mutual choice. We were huge fans before this and she was a perfect fit for the song. She made it a conversation and less of a confession which created new depth.

What prompted you to sing on Closer? How do you feel being a frontman?

Well, the song is about me and my experiences so it only felt right to sing it. Being a frontman feels great and new.

The first time I sang live was Coachella so that was pretty nerve-wracking but it went over well.

Obviously I have a long way to go and a lot to learn but it's wonderful to sing and fulfil that connection to produce, write and sing. It gives our music a completeness.

Do you have a wish list of people you'd like to collaborate with?

Bon Iver, Blink 182, Sigur Ros, Imogen Heap, Dua Lipa, and on and on...

You once said dance albums suck - do you have any plans to release one?

Hahaha, they do usually suck. It's something we are thinking about but it's really up to our fans. If they demand an album and we feel like it's time, we will be right there with an album.

Were there any negatives to having a huge novelty debut hit like Selfie?

Without a doubt, but we don't look back at it like this. All of those moments and experiences got us to where we are today and we are super grateful. It's important to learn from everything.

What about your list of likes, such as "hot chicks in yoga pants, and burgers"?

Hahaha, you see? It's funny. We wrote that bio years ago because DJ bios were so lame.

We are self-deprecating guys and we thought, "Let's just write something ridiculous because who cares? These things are so lame."

Now here we are, four years later, answering questions about it... but yes we do like burgers and yoga pants, we also love dogs, New York, cooking, playing sports and hanging with our friends.

You're playing some live shows soon. What can we expect? We want to do something that embodies the energy of a DJ show but also gives the live music fans more to grasp on to.

What's the biggest buzz you've had playing live? That would probably be Lollapalooza 2015. It was just a huge crowd and we played our song Roses at a time when we weren't really aware of how big it had gotten. It's a moment we will never forget.

What are your thoughts on the US presidential race? Personally we feel embarrassed for our country and the s\*\*t that's going on at the moment. We are patriotic, proud Americans but Trump, and how far he has gone... it's not OK.

If the hits dried up tomorrow, what would you do? Wow, that's such a dark thought. Maybe run for president?

The Chainsmokers play Electric Brixton in London on October 19 and 20.