

Band rocks Somerville with "One Fine Color" ... and many others

By Chiemi

Style. Rhythm. Sometimes understated...but always rocking...talking...telling stories. Yes—the Ryan Montbleau Band ("RMB") has all that in spades. Last month they whipped out an unstoppable show—headlining at The Somerville Theatre for the release of their new album, "One Fine Color," (cd "made possible" by 7notrecords) which has been breathlessly awaited by their fond fans.

A crowd of over 750 packed the Theatre to experience the soul-soaked grooving of RMB, made up of frontman Ryan Montbleau (acoustic, electric guitar and vocals), Laurence Scudder (viola and fabulous hair), Matt Gianaros (acoustic and electric bass), Jason Cohen (electric piano, organ, clavinet) and James P. Cohen (drums). The crowd was mixed—including teenagers and old-timers alike. According to Montbleau, a Peabody, Mass. native,

this show embodied the "biggest melting pot" of listeners RMB has played to. And they are no newcomers to the scene—in November of 2004, they sold out the 600 capacity Paradise Rock Club in Boston.

Of the release, Montbleau says that at times, it was hard reconciling the different aspects of the audience—playing to some who were sitting quietly and really absorbing the music, while other more raucous fans rushed the stage and danced the night away. "I play for anyone who cares to listen," says the singer/songwriter, with an emphasis on the word "listen."

RMB has been described as "building a bridge between 70's soul, ragtime blues-folk-Americana, and...contemporary singer-songwriter vibe." Indeed, Montbleau began his performing career as a solo artist, playing Boston coffee shops and folk venues. His style is infectious—including talking and singing with a beat that it is impossible not to begin tapping your feet to. "[Musical] Style is not something you try to develop consciously," said Montbleau, "it just comes out of you over time." It is this directness and humility that has caused Montbleau's work to resonate with folks of many walks.

Of songwriting, Montbleau describes his process: "It usually starts with the guitar—some

chords or a certain lick. Then I automatically hear a melody in my head." He then says he plays a bit to pull out more melody, also sometimes "singing gibberish," while he figures out words—and what the song in the works is ultimately about.

The 2006 CD was recorded at Applehead Recording in Woodstock, NY and Hillgrove Recording in W. Roxbury, Mass. RMB tours constantly (over 200 shows in 2005) and their CD can't but help make driving anywhere a pleasure. Particularly catchy to these ears are "Stretch," the title song itself and "Variety" (with its "Intro" that is a separate track, no. 5 as the favorite. "Stretch" opens the album with a fresh breath of air as Montbleau's fingerings and voice, against the steady breadth of the other instrumentation that sustains it like a blanket, seems to express the freedom of participating in the experience of music, including a gently optimistic sentiment that people and maybe even notes, will fall into place as they have a mind to. "One Fine Color" waxes philosophical on "One love is far greater than many." That



Be careful, the Ryan Montbleau Band oozes musical style and rhythm.

theme appears to sound out again, but from a different angle, in the delicate guitar pickings and lyrics of "Variety." Montbleau describes the youthful draw towards seeking to experience as much as possible, which can work against finding a one love and maybe even results in regretfully seeing aspects of that elusive love in all the variety that has been chosen instead—a path that can make a person ironically "far from free...bound by all this variety." The phrase "this time" is touching when artfully sung or left unsung as inverse musical punctuation, to end the refrain.

Especially compelling in the song are Scudder's beautiful, bronze viola tones warmly caressing and accentuating the melody. For more information, check out www.ryanmontbleau.com www.7notrecords.com



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