

Hawksley Workman coming to Hockley Village Nov. 8 to 9

Written By CONSTANCE SCRAFIELD

Some beginnings happen in unusual places. For Hawksley Workman, his initial album recording took place where he had moved his studio into the basement of a friend's recently deceased grandmother on Hillsdale Avenue, Toronto.

There he recorded For Him and the Girls and (Last Night We Were) The Delicious Wolves. Those, plus other works that came into use years later.

He engineered and produced albums in that basement studio for other musicians, working with many of them over that time and developing his own knowledge and production skills.

Mr. Workman came to Toronto from Huntsville, the town of his birth in 1975, and it seems he came south with a love of words, touring and doing the unexpected, which have garnered him a loyal following. During the second half of this year, he has toured relentlessly back and forth across Canada and to Europe, primarily Norway and France where he has a large fanbase.

Over his career, he has toured nearly a thousand venues, worldwide.

Last March, he released his latest album, Median Age Wasteland and music video of the song "1983". This album and 1983 in particular show a new approach to his music making, for the introspection and the delving into his younger self.

The album has been lauded as "...innovative melodic approach, authentic songwriting, and good old-fashioned, and unedited musicianship" by critics.

"I've always had this constant hunger to innovate, reevaluate what I do, and keep remaking it to confuse myself and maybe confuse my audience," Mr. Workman admitted in an interview. "This time, I'm just committing to writing focused and honest songs, which feels like the most interesting thing I can do right now."

With tours of such energy and scope, we naturally wondered what brings him to a very small venue in Hockley Village. What is the charm of a country Community Hall?

He told the Citizen, by email, "Non-traditional music venues are starting to pop up in many places across Canada, and I've been lucky to play some of them. As it turns out, there are people who want to see and hear live music all over the place, not just in the major cities.

"In fact, sometimes, when you're on tour in a major city, you're one of several interesting choices on any given night, but in these smaller town venues your show could be the only cultural event that night. The audiences are very engaged and the smaller size of these venues is often the thing that establishes the setting for an intimate show you wouldn't get at a larger club or theatre."

His is a career that has spanned 20 years that has included, in 2002, winning the Juno Award for Best New Solo Artist, as well as receiving the Juno Award for Best Video for "Jealous of Your Cigarette."

Ten years ago, he was married and this was a pivotal point in his music life as well. "I [was] married nearly 10 years ago! My career has definitely been interesting over these last 20-plus years, I've been very lucky. In my 40's, I branched out into theatre, composing scores for shows at Stratford and the Citadel Theatre in Edmonton, as well as my own one-man show that toured around the world including the New Zealand Festival and Scotland's Edinburgh Festival.

"Changing lanes from traditional rock and roll, touring and record releases was a welcome change to an old convention. In the last

few years I've been re-engaging more seriously with old fans throughout Europe, which has been a wonderful thing too.

?But I suppose the most interesting thing is that, without the career pressure of being signed to a major label and going completely independent, I can enjoy the career I've built over all of these years for the joyful parts that have emerged. Doing shows like the one we are about to do at Hockley Hall, releasing records, and involving myself in projects that are interesting to me but don't necessarily fan the flames of becoming famous.?

The internet with all its social access to the rest of the world is a big part for any artist ? anyone ? to promote what matters to them, as Mr. Workman does with his singles and videos. He is certainly an interesting element with his unusual view of the world and his space in it. His music has been on television shows such as Scrubs, Falcon Beach and Queer as Folk.

His four-minute-plus videos make statements of their own while tying into his lyrics. In the video he created for his well-known song, Italy, it features Amy Milan, who walks us through a story within the song that stands on its own. Beautiful.

Hawksley Workman is appearing in Hockley Village at the historical Community Hall on Friday, November 8 ? which is sold out ? and November 9. For tickets, go to Ticketscene ? Hawksley Valley Second Show.