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CHICAGOLAND'S MUSIC MONTHLY

MARCH 2019

FREE

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PETE BERWICK * BOB MOULD * WILLIE BUCK
MICHAEL McDERMOTT * RIVERS OF NIHIL

Hello, My name is **SUZI QUATRO**



The Way Down Wanderers

Organic Combination

1400 SHOWS
2000 BANDS
IE MUSIC
CALENDAR

22

on the cover

COVER STORY: THE WAY DOWN WANDERERS

Peoria natives **The Way Down Wanderers** may be new to many, but since dropping a self-titled debut in 2016, as well as a pair of EPs and a live recording, the quintet has steadily swelled their grassroots fan base with an alluring, frequently unexpected hybrid of heartland sounds. Comprised of guitarist/vocalist Austin Krause-Thompson, mandolin player/violinist/guitarist/vocalist Collin Krause, upright bassist/guitarist/vocalist John Williams, drummer/percussionist John Merikoski and banjo player/guitarist Travis Kowalsky, the guys' relentless tour schedule has taken them all across America and overseas, both headlining and supporting The Infamous Stringdusters while making the rounds at several of Chicago's most coveted rooms. **Andy Argyrakis** has the Q&A.



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HELLO MY NAME IS SUZI QUATTRO

Veteran glam rocker **Suzi Quatro** was clearing away the dinner dishes from her London dinner table with a clinkety-clack as we skimmed over surfacey introductions before discussing her rough and tumble comeback disc *No Control*, which hits shelves later this month. But suddenly, the conversation turned unusually deep. Before she moved to Britain in 1971 under the tutelage of Starmaker Mickie Most, she hailed from Detroit, the same salt-of-the-Earth stomping grounds as the Illinois Entertainer's readership, she notes, before adding, "But my mother is from Indiana." Weird. This writer — momentarily caught off guard — can't help but counter that his mom hails from the Hoosier state, too. And everything squeals to a halt. Psychic. I used to do things like this all the time — I stopped questioning them a long time ago." **Tom Lanham** talked to the influential and pioneering female rocker.



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The Way Down Wanderers

Organic Combination

By Andy Argyrakis
photo by Genta Tamashiro

Peoria natives The Way Down Wanderers may be new to many, but since dropping a self-titled debut in 2016, as well as a pair of EPs and a live recording, the quintet has steadily swelled their grassroots fan base with an alluring, frequently unexpected hybrid of heartland sounds. Comprised of guitarist/vocalist Austin Krause-Thompson, mandolin/violinist/guitarist/vocalist Collin Krause, upright bassist/guitarist/vocalist John Williams, drummer/percussionist John Merikoski and banjo player/guitarist Travis Kowalsky, the guys' relentless tour schedule has taken them all across America and overseas, both headlining and supporting The Infamous Stringdusters while making the rounds at several of Chicago's most coveted rooms.

Along the way, they've fine-tuned a sound steeped in bluegrass and Americana, but with shades of The Band's classic sensibilities, The Beach Boys' harmonies, The Avett Brothers' rootsy revival, plus slices of classical, jazz and almost anything imaginable. It's no wonder why The Way Down Wanderers caught the ear of Grammy-winner David Schiffman (Johnny Cash, Rage Against The Machine, Haim). He produced, engineered and mixed the group's official sophomore album *illusions*, which finds the fellas even more seasoned than their previous stretch and possesses a high musical proficiency in general well beyond many in their early to mid-20s.

We got the full profile straight from the mouths of primary songwriters Austin Krause-Thompson and Collin Krause (who just so happen to be brothers-in-law and neighbors) in a wide-ranging phone conversation with IE. Here's what the boys had to say as they geared up for a pair of record release shows in Chicago and Champaign, where The Way Down Wanderers will debut all the new tunes

and make a case for the buzz that's been brewing as they continue to blur boundaries between genres and generations.

Illinois Entertainer: What was the Peoria music scene like when you were getting started?

Austin Krause-Thompson: When we first got started, Collin and myself were both in different bands. The scene as we knew it at the time was pretty underground and pretty low key. There weren't a ton of spaces for live music, but lots of small galleries and little bars. Collin and I met at a covers show where there were lots of young bands playing. He and I were both in separate bands, and we kind of came together after that. But it definitely seems like the scene has grown quite a bit since that.

Collin Krause: I think when we first started it was a sense of mainly musicians supporting other musicians. The people that went to the shows were the other bands. That was your audience, which was kind of cool.

IE: How did moving to Chicago give you significant opportunities and visibility?

CK: We moved to Chicago probably about four years ago. A lot of our other bandmates were living up there, so it was really important to be close with them and to leave for tour easily. It definitely helped just getting to know the other people in Chicago, and I definitely don't think we would've had that opportunity living further south.

IE: Have there been any surprises or challenges about being in the city?

CK: A couple of years ago, we had this 36-foot long tour bus, and we were living right in the heart of Chicago at the time, so we had to park the bus on a residential street. I'm pretty sure we annoyed a nice

neighborhood of Chicago residents, but luckily we don't have the bus anymore. That was probably one of the biggest challenges of living in Chicago and making rent every month with a musician's salary, but we definitely scraped by. And just to clarify, we have moved back to Peoria recently. It feels really good to be back in our hometown where things started. Austin and I are actually neighbors now, and we get together a lot. We get to make music together all the time, not just when we're on the road, but when we're back at home too.

IE: I hear some early Mumford & Sons, a bit of The Lumineers, slices of Americana, bluegrass, indie rock and even classical elements in your sound. Does that all align with your influences?

CK: I think you pretty much hit the nail on the head. We grew up listening to folk music and acoustic music, so many different bands ranging from classics like The Beatles and The Band that influence us for sure, to newer artists, like I know Austin really enjoys listening to Trevor Hall. There's really just a broad range of influences, and we hope that all of those come through in the music.

AK-T: Collin and I have always been really focused on just the songwriting aspect and have always taken that folk singer/songwriter traditional approach in a sense. Then when we take things to the band, we try to base the groove off of that, whether it be something really dancy or modern or something really groovy that you would hear in a song by The Band or something like that. But more so lately, we've just been trying to push the envelope a little bit, whether it be the groove or overall shape of a song, so it's definitely a good range, from classical American music to modern stuff.

IE: Harmonies are also a major component in your equation. Any specific strategy or approach to shaping those?

CK: We definitely spend a lot of time working on our harmony parts. I end up usually taking the highest harmony parts just because I have a very high singing voice. Our bass player usually takes the lower harmony part. We know where each other's voices fall best in the chords. We've definitely been experiencing different styles of harmonies where each person is trading off doing the melody part and some songs where we trade off back and forth between harmony and melody. That's been a cool element in some of our newer songs.

IE: What inspired the *illusions* album title?

CK: It's a song that I actually wrote about growing up and how relationships change over the cycle of your life. I think that ties in the whole album almost. The album really is about life and death and experience and *illusions* kind of ties in the whole thing to me.

IE: How do you guys feel about growing up and the passage of time? Positive, negative, bittersweet?

AK-T: I would definitely say overall it's been a very positive thing. I think we all kind of came up in good surroundings, and I want to say it's been even more positive since we've come together. But time has been going by extremely quickly, especially since we've been on the road. We try to remember that nothing is permanent. It's all very in-the-moment, and we just try to take advantage of that as much as we can. I think we try to portray that in some of the songs as well.

IE: Storytelling seems to be a priority.

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TEENAGE FANCLUB
THE LOVE LANGUAGE
WED MAR 06

METRO, JBTV, CHARITY BOMB
AND 101WKQX PRESENT
STRANGE 90'S
A BENEFIT FOR JERRY BRYANT
FT. NAKED RAYGUN, ANDREW W.K.,
LOCAL H + MORE!
FRI MAR 08



VHS COLLECTION
RETROFUTURISM
NORTH AMERICAN TOUR 2019
THU MAR 14

ST. PATRICK'S DAY
CELEBRATION WITH
THE TOSSERS
THE AVONDALE RAMBLERS
HYMEN MOMENTS
SAT MAR 16



101WKQX WELCOMES
THE MAKING FRIENDS TOUR
**JUKEBOX THE GHOST
& THE MOWGLIS**
TWIN XL
WED MAR 20



DAEDELUS PRESENTS
PANOPTES
(LIVE AV SHOW)
DEKU
SAT MAR 23



The Way Down Wanderers

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Where do your ideas generally come from—fact, fiction or a little bit of both?

AK-T: On my songs, I think a lot of them are fact, whether it's a situation that I experienced or someone close to me had experienced.

CK: I guess I don't know if it would be truth to other people, but these ideas that I have in my head that I think are important enough to write down is usually where I'm at with songwriting.

IE: Do you each individually write songs and bring them to the band or are you in the same room co-writing?

AK-T: Usually a little of both. Collin and I typically will write and bring it to the band, but on this album *illusion**, we probably co-wrote at least three songs together, which is much more than our first record. Collin and I are writing together more often, but typically Collin and myself will share songs with one another before the group just to get each other's feedback and impact.

CK: He had really good things to say about working with Johnny Cash, and he said he was one of the nicest guys.

AK-T: He told quite a bit of stories of working with (Grammy-winning producer) Rick Rubin (Johnny Cash, Adele, Red Hot Chili Peppers, The Dixie Chicks). He used to be, I think, his right-hand man for a couple of years and he learned a lot from Rick. It was really cool just to know that.

IE: How does your live sound expand beyond the studio recordings?

AK-T: The thing about our live sound is usually it's just a little more energetic [with] a little more hooting and hollering here and there.

CK: We switch the tempos a bit. I think we play the songs a little faster live.

AK-T: But other than that, we're just extending the live sound with more of the key parts that we have on the record coming out.



IE: In what ways do you feel the group has grown since releasing your self-titled debut a few years back?

CK: Well we've definitely gotten tighter, just playing together five years on stage I think really shows both in the studio and at a live show. We've definitely grown as people, but also as musicians. I think everyone's gotten a lot better. Our harmonies were so much better than they were even six months ago or a year ago, so it's cool to go back and listen to some of those old recordings and see how far we've come.

IE: How did you get hooked up with your producer David Schiffman?

AK-T: I think our drummer John Merikoski had suggested him after hearing just a few records that he put out, one in particular by The Strumbellas. They had a great Americana record, but he also has a ton of work all across the board with tons of different rock bands and country musicians as well. We just hopped on the phone with David, and we just love his approach. He's super easygoing and laid back and just seemed like he was wanting to make it work. He wasn't really trying to push anything that we weren't feeling. It was an organic combination, and it felt right.

CK: I think we are always trying to make the set list as different as possible. We have different transitions where we try to eliminate silence during the show. It's really a continuous part where we connect like four or five songs together without stopping. I think that's something that's kind of different that sets our stage show apart a little bit.

IE: Do you change the show every night or just per tour?

CK: It really depends on the tour. Recently, we got to go on tour with The Infamous Stringdusters, a really big bluegrass band who just won a Grammy for their album. We had a 45-minute set every night, so we played the same set for that tour. But typically when we're on our own tour and we're headlining every show, we'll play a completely different set list every night.

AK-T: We definitely like to switch it up for ourselves as well as the audience, because every now and then, we'll get some fans who will see a few shows in a row and we really like to keep them on the edge and not know what to expect at all times.

IE: What are some of your favorite places to play around town?

AK-T: Evanston Space has been a great venue; plus Park West - we really love that room - and Lincoln Hall.

IE: Did Schiffman share any stories or insights about working with any of his other amazing acts?

SUNDAY MAR 3 / 8PM / 21+
@ THE TOP NOTE THEATRE
312UNES presents: an evening with
TWIN TEMPLE
DJ SCARY LADY SARAH

WEDNESDAY MAR 20 / 9PM / 21+
@ SLEEPING VILLAGE
**BLACK MOTH
SUPER RAINBOW**
STEFAN HAUSCHILDT

TUESDAY MAR 26 / 7PM / 18+
Empire Productions welcomes
The Peace Across The Wasteland Tour with
**UNCLE ACID
& THE DEADBEATS
& GRAVEYARD**
DEMOB HAPPY

FRIDAY MAR 29 / 8PM / ALL AGES
HOMESHAKE
YVES JARVIS

SATURDAY MAR 30 / 9PM / 18+
AMERICAN FOOTBALL

SATURDAY APR 06 / 10PM / 18+
Roxwell Curates + 2XS present
URBANITE XXII
CHICAGO DANCE SHOWCASE

WEDNESDAY APR 10 / 9PM / 18+
101WKQX welcomes
BROODS

SATURDAY APR 13 / 5:45PM / ALL AGES
VEIL OF MAYA & INTERVALS
STRAWBERRY GIRLS / CRYPTODIRA

SATURDAY APR 20 / 8PM / 18+
101WKQX welcomes
MISSIO
BLACKILLAC / SWELLS

SUNDAY APR 21 / 9PM / 18+
WILD BELLE

SATURDAY APR 27 / 7PM / 18+
BLACK LIPS / FUCKED UP
WOOING

WEDNESDAY MAY 01 / 8:30PM / 18+
THE DRUMS
TANUKICHAN

05/07 ANDY BLACK
05/11 THE DANDY WARHOLS
05/18 THE TWILIGHT SAT
@ SLEEPING VILLAGE
05/19 MOVEMENTS
05/23 PUP (2ND SHOW ADDED)
05/24 BASEMENT / NOTHING
05/30 EMPIRE OF THE SUN
05/31 EMPIRE OF THE SUN
06/14 KNUCKLE PUCK & CITIZEN
07/28 JAWBOX (2ND SHOW ADDED)
08/17 THE BOUNCING SOULS
11/01 PETER HOOK & THE LIGHT

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