

Harris Shows Off A Sound All His Own On 57 Records Debut

■ BY CARRIE BORZILLO

LOS ANGELES—David Ryan Harris' name may not ring a familiar bell, but his music probably does. The Atlanta-based singer/songwriter/guitarist was the secret ingredient in Dionne Farris' 1994 Columbia debut, "Wild Seed-Wild Flower." He co-wrote two songs, co-produced six, played guitar, and served as musical director on that set. Or, some may remember Harris from his acclaimed eclectic funk rock band Follow For Now, whose self-titled 1991 Chrysalis album was overshadowed by the success of the similar-sounding Living Colour.

Now, Harris is striking out on his own with his self-titled, self-produced debut album on Brendan O'Brien's Sony imprint, 57 Records, due July 22 via Columbia. He hooked up with 57

Records through his longtime association with O'Brien, who produced the first-demo tapes of "Follow For Now." O'Brien also mixed "David Ryan Harris." The enhanced CD (ECD) features footage from Harris' four-minute electronic press kit, interview clips, and an acoustic version of the album track "Nothing More To Say." The ECD also includes a World Wide Web browser to connect listeners to his site on the Internet, which is at www.davidryanharris.com.

"This album is a logical progression, but then a logical progression gives a connotation of being thought-out, but it's not. It's just where I am



HARRIS

now," says the 29-year-old artist of his debut, which ranges from pure pop to soulful singer/songwriter-type songs to gentle rockers with hints of R&B and jazz. "I wanted to show my range. This record is all about the fact that I needed to put these songs out with these different styles and approaches so that the second record, if it's only one of these styles, will make sense."

The diversity on the album stems from Harris' upbringing—his mother spoon-fed him the blues of John Lee Hooker, while his father got him into bebop and jazz. The result is an artist who cites Bad Brains' "I Against I" and Stevie Wonder's "Songs In The Key Of Life" as two of his favorite albums and '70s popster Gino Vanelli, classic rockers Steely Dan, and ♪ as a few of his favorite artists.

What do these artists have in com-

mon? "The element of surprise within the structure of the songs," says Harris. "That's what I like to do. I don't want people to already know what key I'm going to do the chorus in. Surprise within structure, and certainly surprise from song to song. The only thing that is somewhat central to everything I do is blues. It's all blues-based stuff. Soul and blues, which is where I really come from."

"Not everyone is allowed artistic freedom like Stevie Wonder was," he continues. "He had something that was definitely his sound, but he was still allowed to dress it up in different clothes. He was probably the last artist to be allowed to do that. There aren't a lot of artists that the music critics allow to make those grand shifting artistic statements, and I know that that is something I want to do."

It wasn't exactly Harris' choice to wait so long between projects. "After the breakup of Follow For Now, I couldn't sign a record deal or do any-

thing because of a legal entanglement with my ex-managers, who managed Follow For Now," explains Harris. He is now managed by Pete Angelus of Angelus Entertainment, who also managed the Black Crowes. "It was hard, no one would touch me for fear of being brought in on this suit [by his former managers], so I just sat tight and worked with other people."

Some of the people he has worked with in the past few years are Michelle Malone, Edwin McCain, and Seedy Arkhestra (helmed by former Fishbone member Chris Dowd).

The legal setback may have been a blessing in disguise, since Harris has learned, albeit the hard way, more about the business side of the music industry. "First, I don't know if I was ready to have a record of my own out four years ago," he admits. "I've just learned so much from a producing standpoint finding out who I am and paying my dues. I still have a lot to learn, but I'm not green anymore."

(Continued on next page)

WHISKEYTOWN HAS SONGS TO SPARE

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O'Connor, Los Lobos, and others on the Outpost soundtrack album to Wim Wenders' upcoming film, "The End Of Violence," due Sept. 9.

As for the promotional approach to "Strangers Almanac," Outpost plans to work it primarily at triple-A, college, and roots-music stations. The somewhat wistful "16 Days" will be the first single at triple-A. Outpost also plans to service roots-music stations with a special four-song CD featuring the album's more country-leaning songs, including "Excuse Me While I Break My Own Heart Tonight" (on which Adams duets with Alejandro Escovedo).

"We're not gonna lead with a video, although we will make one at some point," says Williams. "I feel a time will come when we want to make one, most likely for '16 Days' and probably after we have a lot of momentum going with

the track at radio. I think that song encompasses all sides of the band. It's got the country roots vibe, and it also rocks. Plus it's a great song."

While Williams believes that the present-day radio climate should be friendly toward Whiskeytown's emotional roots rock, press and touring will be the biggest keys. The label is sending out promotional postcards to writers titled "The Route To Whiskeytown: An Amazing Cross-Genre Journey." It traces the band's influences, which include the Flying Burrito Brothers, the Replacements, Big Star, George Jones, and Bruce Springsteen.

On the touring side, Whiskeytown will spend most of the summer playing festival-type events before starting an intensive round of touring in the fall, building on its regional following in the Southeast. The band, which is

booked by Nashville-based Progressive Global Agency, already picked up some key exposure this past spring by playing on the first No Depression tour. Sponsored by the Seattle-based magazine of the same name, the tour also featured the Old 97s, Picketts, and Hazeldine.

Whiskeytown is managed by Jenni Sperandio and Chris Roldan for Austin, Texas-based Jacknife Enterprises. The band originally came to Outpost's attention through Chris Stamey, co-founder of the dB's, who lives in Chapel Hill, near the band's Raleigh home base. Stamey passed along a copy of Whiskeytown's 1995 independent-label album "Faithless Street," and it immediately registered with Williams, who calls Adams "the closest thing to a pure songwriter I've ever come across."

"It was just the kind of music I've always loved," says Williams. "If you look at the bands I worked with when I was at Virgin—Camper Van Beethoven, Cracker, Geraldine Fibbers—I have a real affinity for dark, country-inspired rock music."

At the time, Outpost hadn't been in business long. The label started in January 1996 as a partnership between Williams (who also signed the Smashing Pumpkins during his tenure as VP of A&R at Virgin), producer Scott Litt, and artist manager Andy Gershon. Outpost was just one of the labels pursuing Whiskeytown, and it made the band its third signing after Veruca Salt and Hayden. The band recorded "Strangers Almanac" in Nashville this spring with producer Jim Scott.

"Jim Scott was a big part of the sound of this record," says Williams. "We thought about a lot of different people and came up with him because I've always loved Tom Petty's 'Wildflowers.' I sent Jim a tape, and he immediately reacted to the songwriting and to Ryan's voice. His catch phrase was, 'I believe him.'"

Indeed, Adams is never less than believable throughout "Strangers Almanac." "I do put my ass on the line," he says. "I think, because of my age, some people will think it's a smart kid just making stuff up. But it's not that at all. Some people will like this record and get it—at least I hope they will. It will talk to people, I think."

Advertisement

U.K. Scottish Label Rekindling Career for Rosie Gaines.

Rosie long time member of Princes new power generation has signed a five album deal with the Scottish Label bigbang Records, that is reviving her career. After negotiating with Motown for the title track of her last album they re-recorded and re-mixed the track which will feature as part of her first album with Big Bang records. "Closer than Close" stormed into the U.K. charts at No.4. and remains one of the most played records on radio. Now released throughout the rest of Europe where Ms. Gaines has a huge fan base. It looks set to clock up sales well in excess of a million across the continent.



After three consecutive appearances on Top of the Pops she remains a big hit with the British and European public. Label boss BOBO describes the album that we are making as primarily a pop dance soul album which will feature mainly up-tempo tracks with a number of ballads. This will be produced by Hippe Torrales and Mark Mendoza of Mentor Productions, and will be very radio friendly. BOBO when he found that Rosie was out

of a deal signed her because he felt she is a great songwriter and is the Chaka Khan of the nineties. When I heard "Closer than Close" I knew it was a great song, and also what we had to do to make it a hit in the U.K. and Europe. It wasn't until we had done all the work that every major label wanted to licence it from us, offering big bucks, but the money did not matter as we wanted to stay in control, which was very important to Rosie. Having got it right in the U.K. after selling over 250,000 singles in the first 3 weeks and is set to continue selling right through to the end of the summer the biggest market looks to be France and G.A.S. where the single is set to be huge Big Bang are negotiating with a number of labels in the U.S. to see the release of the single and the forth coming album in North America. Anyone wishing to contact bigbang records should phone/fax.

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amusement		business		BOXSCORE	
				TOP 10 CONCERT GROSSES	
ARTIST(S)	Venue	Date(s)	Gross Ticket Price(s)	Attendance Capacity	Promoter
U2 FUN LOVIN' CRIMINALS LONGPICS	Giants Stadium East Rutherford, N.J.	May 31- June 1, 3	\$6,409,131 \$52.50/\$37.50	129,644 140,000 three shows	TNA International Ltd Delsener/Slater Enterprises
U2 FUN LOVIN' CRIMINALS	Franklin Field University of Pennsylvania Philadelphia	June 8	\$2,549,519 \$52.50/\$37.50	49,944 sellout	TNA International Ltd New Park Entertainment
U2 FUN LOVIN' CRIMINALS	Ohio Stadium Ohio State University Columbus, Ohio	May 24	\$2,246,977 \$52.50/\$37.50	49,873 90,000	TNA International Ltd in-house
U2 FUN LOVIN' CRIMINALS	Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium Washington, D.C.	May 26	\$2,148,432 \$52.50/\$37.50	42,295 44,000	TNA International Ltd Cellar Door
U2 RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE	Liberty Bowl Memphis	May 14	\$1,131,570 \$52.50/\$37.50	22,734 35,000	TNA International Ltd Mid-South Concerts
U2 RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE	Frank Howard Memorial Stadium Clemson University Clemson, S.C.	May 16	\$1,043,349 \$52.50/\$37.50	20,251 36,500	TNA International Ltd C&C Concerts
DAVE MATTHEWS BAND BELA FLECK & THE FLECKTONES	Jones Beach Theatre Wantagh, N.Y.	June 10-11	\$729,795 \$33	22,116 two sellouts	Delsener/Slater Enterprises
OZZFEST '97: OZZY OSBOURNE, BLACK SABBATH, PAN- TERA, TYPE O NEGATIVE, FEAR FACTORY AND OTHERS	Pine Knob Music Theatre Clarkston, Mich.	June 12	\$535,838 \$45/\$27.50	14,998 sellout	Cellar Door Belkin Prods
OZZFEST '97: OZZY OSBOURNE, BLACK SABBATH, PAN- TERA, TYPE O NEGATIVE, FEAR FACTORY AND MACHINE HEAD	Blossom Music Center Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio	June 3	\$506,951 \$45/\$38.50/\$25	15,940 18,445	Universal Concerts
Y-100 SUMMER FESTIVAL: MATTHEW SWEET, LUSCIOUS JACKSON, THAT DOG, KULA SHAKER, JAMES TOWN THE WET SPROCKET, CHEAP TRICK, BECK, PAULA COLE, AND OTHERS	Blockbuster-Sony Music Entertainment Center Camden, N.J.	June 1	\$505,978 \$27/\$20	23,201 sellout	Electric Factory Concerts

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