



November 18, 2015

Band of the Week: The Clifton Beat

Concert Preview

By [Eric Sandy](#)

Meet the Band: Bill Rouse (guitars, vocals), Mark Bluhm (bass, guitars, vocals), Paul Nickels (percussion, guitars, vocals)

New Course: After Inner Ring Conspiracy split a few years back, the remaining members recognized that they had something special on their hands -- a real sense of musical connection. "The challenge for us was: Do we go out and try to recruit a new lead singer?" Nickels says. "What we did was, for instance, Bill committed himself to figuring out how to sing his own stuff. I liked that, because to me that's a great indie sort of thing." With The Clifton Beat, there's an even greater emphasis on songwriting and ideas. The band's debut, *Pushing Back the End of Time*, blends the three guys' creative personalities into a stirring collection of power pop arrangements. "Collaboration is really what the record was all about," Nickels says. Guitarist Jim Butterfield wrote some of the stuff on this album, too.

Secret Garden: "That song is sort of a classic microcosm of this band," Nickels says of "The Garden," one of the more psychedelic tunes on the album. "It started with a lyric that Mark wrote." Rouse wrote the rest, and Butterfield stopped in to push the guys on the vocal arrangements. From there, Nickels supplied the guitar solo - - digitally recorded backwards.

House Music: Every note of the album was recorded at Nickels' Lakewood house, where his production skills have really taken off. The bathroom down the hallway was used as an isolation room for the guitar cabinet. The gabled roof in the main room supplied a sort of proscenium atmosphere, perfect for percussion. "Paul's as passionate about recording as he is about the music," Rouse says.

Why You Should Hear Them: The band's brand of power pop is timeless stuff. A lot of the tunes on this first album take on the idea that aging and growing up are two totally different concepts -- something very central to rock 'n' roll itself. "As you go through life, you make these choices and you commit to a path -- one thing you learn as time goes on is how incredibly fast this goes by," Nickels says. "The acceleration is unbelievable. [Music] is something you can tap into for energy and perspective."

Where You Can Hear Them: [facebook.com/thecliftonbeat](https://www.facebook.com/thecliftonbeat)

Where You Can See Them: The Clifton Beat performs with Brian Lisik and the Unfortunates at 8:45 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 21, at the Bevy in Birdtown