

presents

On brink

Westbound Departure *[push play]*

[by Christie L. Smith / photo courtesy of Westbound Departure]

The four members of alternative rock band Westbound Departure are going places — and soon. Although not yet signed, this band is definitely on the way up, and if you're smart you'll catch them playing now.

together as a band since 2005, and settled into a final form this last year with new drummer Eric Anderson, Westbound Departure are an Austin-based group of musicians serious about their music and career. "I feel a lot of music today is not as thoughtful, and there are a lot of electro-pop boy bands with gimmicky parts like matching outfits," says lead singer/guitarist Richard Tobin, "we want to create something that we feel would satisfy us as a listener, while also making a statement."

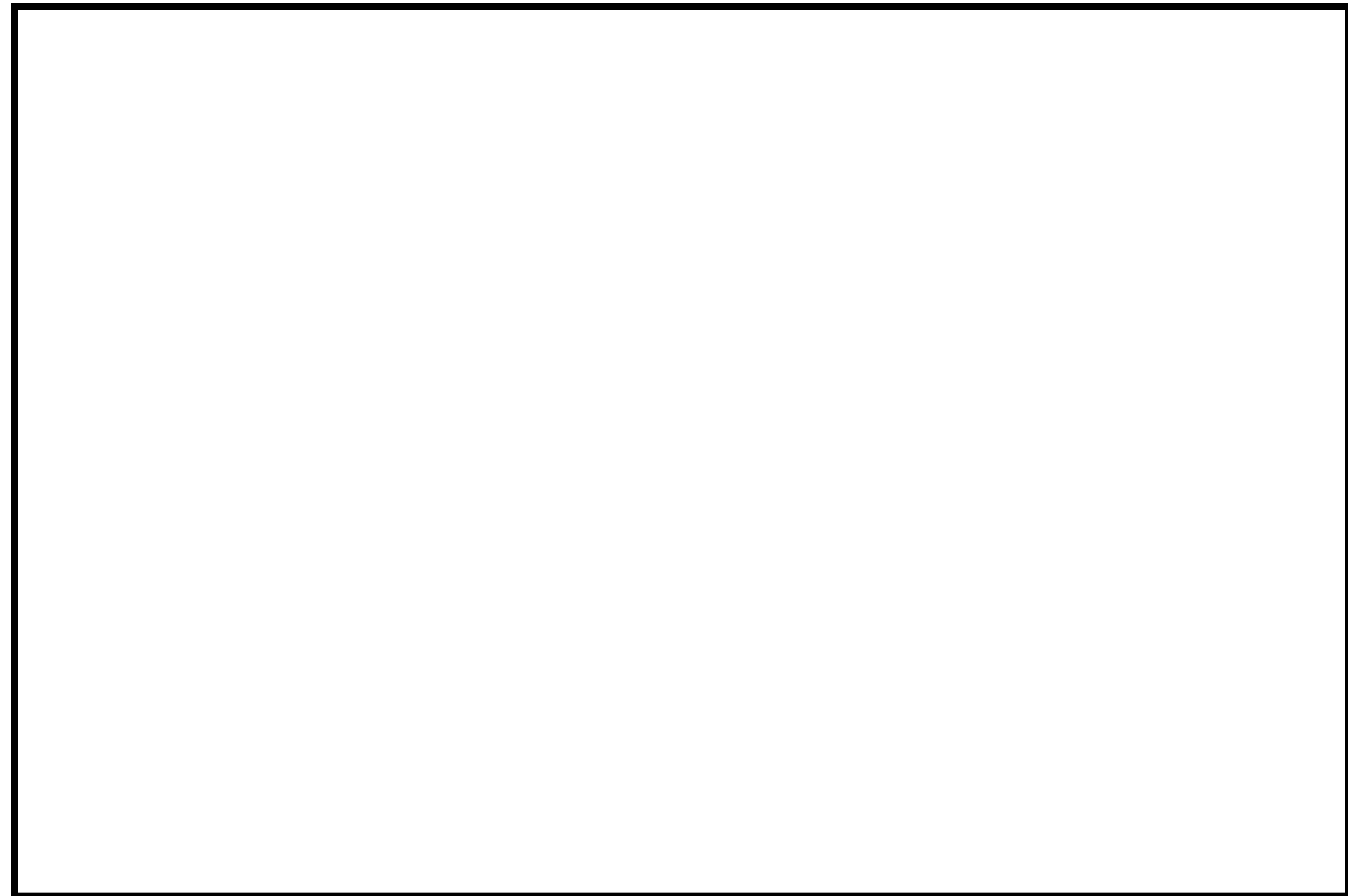
What that means to the band is an increasing move to a "rockier" sound. Their first EP, "Hi", issued last year and available as a free download at www.gethifree.com, features four original songs that showcase influences from Fleetwood Mac. It's alt-rock with some pop hooks, in a pop format that goes down easy.

But don't get too attached to the sound, says Tobin, as it's continuing to evolve with new material. He says that living in Austin pushed the band to incorporate more influences. "Current influences are more alt-rock '90s style like Superdrag, Foo Fighters and Austin band Recover. Our music now has a lot more rock solos and more rock n' roll riffs though it still has pop hooks," he says. The song writing has evolved, too. On the "Hi" EP, Tobin was the chief architect of the songs, with band members adding in their parts.



Now, each band member takes turns contributing ideas. The result of everyone contributing, he says, is a richer product. A lot of ideas don't make it through the band's collaborative creative process. And Tobin likes it that way. The band is not interested in "squeezing out a single," but wants to build a career that lasts. Tobin says they see themselves as a permanent touring band, continually pushing out records and interacting with their fans.

This interaction is already shaping their sound.



So far, the band has 14 songs ready for a full-length album that they hope to record by the end of the year, depending on funding and which producer they end up working with (they're in discussions with a few right now).

"We're playing a lot of new stuff, and the process is awesome," he says, "the songs morph and rework themselves. Playing live is essential, it has made the songs better." The band has an enthusiastic San Antonio following, as the members are originally from there, but their Austin following is growing, and they're adding fans from Dallas and Houston as well. Their largest venue so far was a show they did at the Ft. Worth Ridglea Theater in front of 1,800 kids — many hearing the band for the first time. Tobin says they are eager to keep adding cities to their schedule. "We book a lot of places through people asking us to come," he says, and he encourages fans to visit the band's MySpace page (www.myspace.com/westbounddeparture), and leave messages inviting the band to new venues. "We'll work a tour around online requests."

The hard-working band members, who still have "day jobs" are learning all about the music business. In a delicate balance between commerce and art, they produce their own merchandise, sleep in their van if necessary while touring, and in general "pinch pennies and learn how to make things work," Tobin says. He feels this self-reliance and dedication to their mu-

sic has made them a better band.

Members of Westbound Departure are: Singer/Guitarist Richard Tobin (23), Bassist Seth Bridges (22), Lead Guitarist Octavio Gonzalez (21), and Drummer Eric Andersen (23). Check their MySpace page for upcoming performances. ■

Christie Smith is a freelance writer and designer living in the Austin area. You may contact her via her website, www.quotablequill.com.

hopeful INSPIRATION

Art is everywhere and can be recorded in many ways. Everyone has their own style and point of view. You have to find your own style of executing art and make it under your own rules. It's true, you have to know the rules in order to break them, so give it a try. Learn, study and show. What's your drive? ■

Oscar Valdés - publisher

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Publisher
Oscar Valdés

Creative Consultant
Erin V. Childress
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Contributors in this issue
Christie L. Smith
Rock Park Photography

NÜ info.
numail@krossmedia.net
(512) 968-7004
www.krossmedia.net

Online subscriptions:
news-subscribe@krossmedia.net

NÜ magazine, online issue #13
ISSN = 1932-1546

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