

Hitting the road running as a MVP

The Milligan Vaughan Project sizzles
By Jackie Don Loe

THE LEGACY OF TEXAS MUSIC IS ABOUT to add its newest member to the roster; the list is long and limited yet flooded with royalty. Texas is known to have produced some of the greatest musicians in the world. Some bands seem to last forever and some fade away, so it is a special thing when a group of seasoned musicians decide to get together and form a band. From the heart of Texas down in Austin, there is something happening now that will shine on for years to come. It is beginning to get hot, the sizzle has started and you can hear the buzz.

It is fresh, yet familiar, in the same vein as the Arc Angels and Storyville; these guys know how to create a smooth blend of blues, rock, funk and soul that becomes a *Texification* of sound. MVP is a combination of Malford Milligan and Tyrone Vaughan.

"For the record, I wanted to call us the Vaughan-Milligan Band, but Tyrone liked MVP!" declares Malford. You have to admit it is a clever title and has a nice ring to it.

Of course, Tyrone is the son of Jimmie Vaughan and nephew of Stevie Ray Vaughan, so he has some history with Texas music – it's been his life and it is in his blood.

Receiving his first guitar as a child, an old Harmony from his legendary uncle, he knows a few things about the blues and has been playing guitar ever since. Malford is noted for his work with Storyville and David Grissom, his tours and records with Eric Johnson, also working with Alejandro Escobedo, Marcia Ball and Sue Foley.

A singer's singer, winning "Vocalist of The Year" at *Austin Chronicle's* Music Awards and he is in high demand for commercial and studio work.

Managed by Mark Proct, they are putting together a high-energy live show while recording new songs in the studio for a summer release. Not just another blues record, it will showcase all new original material as well as a few rare covers. A few surprise guests will be on it and it will have more of a funky rock edge to it, but don't worry, when you hear Tyrone play guitar, he is definitely a Vaughan!

The road

AFTER TWO YEARS OF TOURING with the Royal Southern Brotherhood, Tyrone has been paying his dues and has honed in on his own individual sound. A natural fit and chance to go on the road, "That was a great op-

portunity, and to get to rub elbows with Cyril Neville was something else!" says Tyrone, "I did two records, six European tours and played in over twenty countries including Australia."

It was definitely an eye opener, "Cyril showed us young guys how to keep going and how to deal with the road." Some things aren't taught in school and Tyrone adds, "You have to go through it, the ups and downs of the road, you have to be level headed because it will get you if you let it."

After coming back to Austin, Tyrone was ready to go out again and it was just the right time to start something new. "Malford was always on the radar of cats to work with and the timing was right, he is singing better than ever and giving everything he's got." The camaraderie is tight and feels like family.

"We had talked about working together a few years ago, but he joined the Brotherhood and went on the road," says Malford. "The pairing of these two Texas musicians should really take off, I'm excited, I love working with Tyrone, he's a real positive cat and a great guitar player, I have been lucky to work with some great people and have always looked for good projects and this is a continuation of what I do."

Artistically, this new project is giving Milligan a platform not just to sing the songs he loves but to connect with the audience, "My job is to take people away from the daily grind, they come to the gig to get away.

The song

IT IS ALL ABOUT THE SONG and if people can really feel it, "You still have to have good songs and a record that is solid." states Tyrone, "That's why Stevie was so good, because he had songs, you can rattle them off right now and Jimmie and the Thunderbirds, they did their work. I'm still trying to make a



They are scheduled to perform June 23 at The Granada Theatre : Malford Milligan and Tyrone Vaughan of the Milligan Vaughan Project

mark, I need to write songs."

Four songs are already in the can and two of the songs were co-written by David Grissom, who is also helping in producing the new record. There is going to be some blues on there and some rocking in-your-face guitar solos but it is the songwriting that will take center stage.

Dedication, time, money, and songwriting is key to making this project a success, "Hopefully we can make a couple of good records and make it all worthwhile," says Tyrone. It's a tough business and it has changed so much but writing a song that sticks is what MVP hopes to accomplish. Malford concludes with, "People will feel the good energy we have with the music, and we are really going to *Texify* it!"

The Austin scene

THE AUSTIN MUSIC SCENE has survived many changes through the decades, with the recent success of Gary Clark Jr.

on the national spotlight, I asked Malford if he thought Austin was making a comeback or not, and he quickly replied, "I don't think it ever left, Austin is still embracing music. I don't know what it looks like from the outside, but the blues has never left!"

We talked about how hard it is to get a gig whether it is in a nice venue or a rundown pool hall with a dart board behind you and TVs on everywhere, we laughed but then Malford seriously replied, "Hey now, but you know what the deal is, it is a privilege to play music and I've done a lot of worse jobs. I've bussed tables, I've chopped cotton, but doing music is a dream job for me!"

When asked if he ever gets tired of singing "It's a Good Day For The Blues", he replied "No, I don't, that song is like an old friend and I'm glad people know me for it."

When you are an artist with something to say, you hope people will take notice and when

your part of the Texas music legacy you hope to create something that will be a part of history. A continuation of success, it is something not only to be remembered by, but something that will move people for years to come. Success is not only measured by money, it is also measured by the art you create or the songs you write.

To connect with someone on that level can be looked at as a way to express a thought or feeling that otherwise would be lost forever. MVP is developing and growing every day and set to be the next big thing out of Texas! It

is just now taking off and we will keep our eyes and ears open for the new record and tour dates.

"It's moving forward at a good pace, noted Tyrone, "We have a great shot, we want to give the blues a good name and we want to let the people know that the party is still rocking. We play it as good as anybody and we are ready to take Texas to the world!"

Upcoming shows for Milligan/Vaughan project include June 15 at Sam's Burger Joint in San Antonio, June 16 at Antone's in Austin, June 23 at The Granada opening for Lucky Peterson – Dallas and August 11 at Guitar Sanctuary in McKinney.

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—MALFORD MILLIGAN