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Latest Releases from Dutch Courage, Hands and Feet Prove the Cassingle Is Cool Again

By Christian Schaeffer

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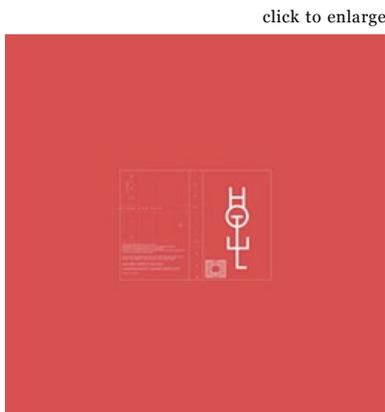
Dutch Courage

For all the musical portmanteaux from the '80s and '90s that have come back to haunt us — "keytar" and "Jazzercise" among them — the word "cassingle" is an unlikely candidate to have reemerged. As the poor man's version of the 45 single, with one song per side housed in a flimsy cardboard sleeve, the format was an easy way to bilk consumers out of \$1.99 but never held much cachet.

But now two local one-man bands seek to validate the form with recent releases. Stephen Favazza's electro-ambient project Hands and Feet presents the songs "Hotel" and "Cascadia" as two songs in conversation with one another, and relatively recent transplant Andy Puechner introduces his act Dutch Courage with the gentle waves of "Louisa" and "Samba."

"I was gonna release it myself as a 7-inch, but the price was crazy," says Favazza. "But I always loved cassettes growing up — I feel like those songs were the strongest songs. And that's how I felt about these two songs."

While Favazza normally records on his own (as he did for his most recent EP, *Sour Times*), for these songs he turned to Sunyatta and Kevin McDermott of CaveofwordS for collaboration in recording as well as composition. Sunyatta takes the lead on "Cascadia," having written lyrics for an instrumental by Favazza.



Hands and Feet's latest, "Hotel"

"I love doing that kind of thing," Favazza says of working alone, "but I felt like getting other ideas in there too. You kinda lose that whole outside influence, so recording with someone else was another good reason to do it."

Of the McDermotts, he adds, "We've done stuff together before, and I've done a handful of remixes for them. I love mixing her voice; I think her voice and lyrics are extremely moving. This one is really personal to her, the lyrical content. For her to open up like that was really incredible for me."

It's a personal record for Favazza as well, written as he was coming out of a break-up and re-orienting himself to the world. On "Hotel," he lets the music marinate with sinewy guitar figures, a sluggish hi-hat/bass drum beat and the dubby interplay of long organ chords and his signature melodica lines. It's a moody, low-lit introduction to his sparse lyrics, which Favazza says are about "never having a solid place."

"When I add my own vocals, it's just another layer," he says. "It's thicker and bigger — there is a message there, even if it's only five words. There's still a story. It leaves the song open to interpretation."



Like Favazza, Andy Puechner (pronounced PEEK-ner) of Dutch Courage turned to the cassette format because of thrift. "It seems like the most reasonably priced physical format that is not a thumb drive," he says. "The place that duplicated them is in Springfield, Missouri, so it's quasi-local."

click to enlarge In keeping with the local spirit, Puechner enlisted local graphic artist Michelle



Volansky and her Creature Type studio to create the colorful design and playful line drawings for the cover art, making a package as breezy and summery as the music on the blue-plastic cassette tape inside. The title of the B-Side, "Samba," gives a generous hint as to Puechner's approach with this release; both it and "Louisa" use what Puechner calls "a Latin feel" in composition. Both recordings, too, are largely acoustic, riding on his finger-picked classical guitar and light

percussion.

Puechner, who calls himself a "converted bass player," has been making music as Dutch Courage for years, much of it self-recorded. For this single, he enlisted Glenn Burleigh to capture the initial tracks and added overdubs later. Both songs retain an airy, hand-made feel, with enough smart touches (the steel drum sound on "Louisa" or the pizzicato strings on "Samba") to show attention to detail.

While Dutch Courage has a few CDs and a slew of Soundcloud recordings to demonstrate Puechner's proficiency, this cassingle is as good of an introduction as you could hope for an artist trying to get a foothold in the local music community. A Milwaukee native, Puechner moved to St. Louis with his wife about three years ago after a stint in New Mexico.

"I blind-solicited Jason Potter about doing a show at the Heavy Anchor," he says of his first local shows. "I said I would open for anyone, I don't care. For the first year of playing here, I would just take anything that comes along, just for the hell of it."

The cassette release show, which took place at Foam in late May, featured an ad-hoc version of Dutch Courage in its live incarnation, with Whoa Thunder's Brian McClelland on bass and Traveling Sound Machine's Stephen Lickenbrock on drums. Though he had performed around Milwaukee in the past, Puechner credits his relatively new surroundings for providing a blank slate for his music.

"I kind of spun my wheels for a long time and never accomplished much," Puechner says. "It was good, actually, to get out of there and have a fresh start."

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by Dutch Courage

1. Louisa 00:00 / 03:45

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