



The Mercyfunks rehearse in Noyac for their album release party on Saturday night at Innersleeve Records in Amagansett. SHAYE WEAVER

‘White Album’ Plays The Muse

The Mercyfunks tap Beatles for inspiration

BY SHAYE WEAVER

Artist Kevin Teare is accustomed to filling his Noyac studio with his brightly colored creations. But for the past few months, his artwork has shared the space with a bevy of songwriters and musicians.

By no means less artistic, Mr. Teare is simply switching up his game with his newest project, The Mercyfunks, and the band’s debut, “Don’t Pet the White Dog,” an album paying tribute to The Beatles’ classic “White Album.”

Mr. Teare is far from a neophyte when it comes to the Fab Four: His artwork largely incorporates the ideas and legendary lyrics that The Beatles penned and promoted over their decade-long career. So it wasn’t a huge leap for him to bring his love for the band into the recording studio.

“Beatlemania is ongoing,” he said last week during a telephone interview. “It’s been the subject of my painting. It’s the deification of The Beatles.”

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The longtime fan said the British group's entrance into the American music scene was one of the two most significant historical events of his life, the other being President John F. Kennedy's assassination. He was just 12 years old for both.

"When JFK had been assassinated at the end of November in 1963, within a month, everybody had heard about The Beatles," he said. "People in England were going nuts. For me, they were historically connected."

That moment in time colored his world for the rest of his life. In his senior year of high school, the "White Album" dropped. It was seen as eclectic, apolitical and pastiche by many critics. But today it stands as one of the most influential and well-regarded albums in history.

"I remember the 'White Album' as one of those things that lends itself to artistic interpretation," Mr. Teare recalled, though it can be a struggle to hang onto his edge with such positive and sentimental inspiration, he said. The Rolling Stones would have provided easier fodder, he said.

But considering this year marks the album's 46th anniversary, Mr. Teare stayed on track, writing 31 songs with his band, the Mercyfunks—cheekily abbreviated as MRCYFKS—as an homage to the "White Album." And much like its muse, "Don't Pet the White

Dog" is also open to interpretation.

The songs correlate to the 30 tracks on the "White Album," he explained. "The Walls of Jericho," a song about living on Long Island, is the band's response to "Back in the U.S.S.R." And while the album does not have a song about a raccoon—which would reference "Rocky Raccoon"—incidentally, while recording, a raccoon living in Mr. Teare's backyard befriended him before getting a bit territorial.

"We're not a tribute band doing Beatles songs," Mr. Teare said. "I think this will stand on its own regardless of what people think about The Beatles."

Mr. Teare was a founding member and one of two drummers for the 1970s "No-Wave" band MX-80 SOUND, and released a solo album, "The List of Who Lives," in 1999. To create "Don't Pet the White Dog," which was named after his white border collie, Ezekiel, that bites, he got together with well-known local musicians Jewlee Trudden, Pony Thompson and Keelan James. Other collaborators—including composer Carter Burwell, John Sebastian of The Lovin' Spoonful, Sara Lee of the Gang of Four and the B-52s, Apple recording artist Paul Glanz, and former bandmate Bruce Anderson of MX-80 SOUND—also contributed to the album, which Mr. Teare sees as his newest piece of art. Just as the "White Album"

was made in 1968, "Don't Pet the White Dog" is a double-record album, and its vinyl version is completely analog.

Each record and CD is individually numbered and comes with a full-color poster, much like what was offered with the "White Album," except that the Mercyfunks' poster is an eclectic mix of portraits, drawings, group shots and even receipts from Sag Harbor Pharmacy. The band name is supposed to be tongue-in-cheek but also relevant because it mimics The Merseybeats, another Liverpoolian band that came out of the 1960s alongside The Beatles.

But the group's name originally started out as the MercyF--ks. The lead singer at the time, Pony Thompson, put his foot down and objected before the album was even put together.

"We wanted it to be humorous," Mr. Teare said. "We changed it, but kept the name without the 'n' when abbreviated. MRCYFKS is a little obvious, a little insinuated ... I think it is edgy, the brave thing to do. Somebody can say it's ironic and somebody can say that's sweet. We wanted to make it our own."

A record release party for "Don't Pet the White Dog" by The MRCYFKS will be held on Saturday, November 28, from 5 to 7 p.m. at Innersleeve Records in Amagansett. Seventy percent of the profit will benefit Lyme Nation. To learn more, visit themrcyfks.com.