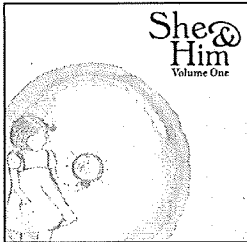




She & Him: exception to the rule?

JUSTIN DRABEK
Press A&E Editor

Actress/singer Zoëy Deschanel (*Elf*, *All the Real Girls*) and Matt Ward (who performs under the name M. Ward) met while recording a song for the Martin Hynes film *The Go-Getters*, upon which Deschanel casually informed Ward that she wrote and recorded her own music in her spare time. After much persuasion, Ward was finally able to hear her demos. Shortly thereafter, *She & Him* was born.



The "She" is Deschanel, who wrote the songs (minus two covers and a collaboration song with actor/Coconut Records' Jason Schwartzman), sings lead vocals and plays piano. M. Ward, the "Him" is the producer and guitar player. And, yes, he sings a little bit as well.

The newfound collaboration between the artists works. Musically, it is a sonic place where the listener wants to dwell and get lost. Although it only clocks in at 37 minutes total for its 12 songs and one bonus track, "Volume One" is a record that will be good for repeat listens.

"My eyes are so bleary/I guess I'm young, but I feel so weary" are the lyrics Deschanel sings on "Black Hole," a song about love. It's a song with a genuine 1950s sound — back when things seemed more innocent and romance was on the airwaves. The record makes you feel like you

have traveled back in time. Each song is a pop replica of days long since past, but nothing feels contrived. This is as authentic as it gets when it comes to music.

Deschanel may be an actress by day, but one could hardly consider her musical career as "moonlighting." Her fresh take to music is not an excuse because she has the money. She is the real deal — all she needed to prove this was the right guide, and she found "Him."

M. Ward, the Portland-based troubadour, pulled out all the stops by bringing in seasoned musical veterans to record the album. Drummer Rachel Blumberg (The Decemberists) adds her familiar beat while Saddle Creek Producer and Bright Eye's Mike Mogis mixed the record, also Paul Brainerd added the perfect amount of Lap Steel. Top off that list with beautiful violin arrangements written by Ward and performed by DeVotchka's Tom Hagerman, creating what could be one of the best backing band line-ups ever.

She & Him work well together as an entity, almost as if the fates had aligned the day when Martin Hynes called in M. Ward to be a part of his film project. "Volume One," hopefully, is just that — the first installment of more pure and influential music by two wonderfully talented individuals.

Devotchka needs its faithful to bear the madness

JOHN PARKER
Press Managing Editor

Best known for their contributions to the "Little Miss Sunshine" soundtrack, Devotchka has returned with "A Mad and Faithful Telling" released March 18. Largely a musical exercise on the band's part, die-hard fans should be on board, while fans of 2004's "How It Ends," where most of the "Little Miss Sunshine" soundtrack originated, might be turned off.

Devotchka has always had a strong Eastern European (read "Bohemian") influence, and on "How It Ends," that influence was successful, adding to their overall genius. The fusion of sounds lets one say, "I am listening to something new." But on "A Mad and Faithful Telling" the Bohemian persuasion is so strong that one comes to expect to see gypsies dancing down the street ahead of a wandering caravan. The elements are forced upon us as if the band were saying, "Look what we can do, over and over and over..."

This is an album that should make people happy

for iTunes—songs you can buy without having to purchase the whole album. Track six, "Transliterator," has already jumped out as the top song from the album, and for good reason: it is the only comprehensive track.

"You better mean what you say/Why don't you say what you mean?/I never get anywhere/I get the space in between," sings front man Nick Urata with his velvety goodness. What is great about this song is the sigh of relief one has that Devotchka has not completely disappeared into its Bohemian trysts.

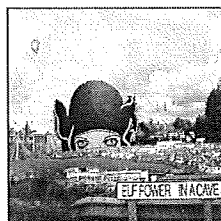
"Undone" is the next buyable track: a romantic ballad reminiscent of a gondola ride in Venice with some added Devotchka pesto at the end.

Fans of Beirut's "The Flying Club Cup" will love track three, "The Clockwise Witness."

Track ten, "A New World," is a fine buy; it's the last track on the album that manages to fuse all the elements together into that sound and message we love: Devotchka.



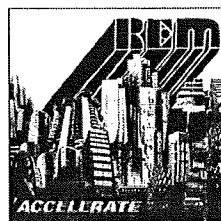
Upcoming Releases



Elf Power
"In a Cave"
March 25



Unwed Sailor
"Little Wars"
April 1



R.E.M.
"Accelerate"
April 1



Moby
"Last Night"
April 1