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TRIP-LITTLE) MAY ARTIST SPOTLIGHT: ONE TRIP LITTLE



When Tampa Bay punk scene veteran Justin Little (REDLINERS, The Dead Popes) began playing folk music and singing hymns inside smoky biker bars, it took a while for people to catch on.

But according to Little, audiences are finally taking to his latest project, One Trip Little, which was formed in November 2013.

Fusing folk, blues and gospel, Little aims to play for a variety of listeners, whether they're seated on a leather barstool or in a wooden pew.

He wanted to start a band that "could play a hymn in a bar or a bar song in a church," and be equally as palatable in either venue.

Though the opportunity to play a church has not yet arisen, Little said the last few bar shows have been validating. He and bandmate Gary Knaggs opened for The Reverend Peyton's Big Damn Band on May 3, and for those unfamiliar with the Rev., that's a pretty big deal.

One Trip Little's intentional versatility doesn't stop at its genre. For the most part, the band is a two-piece, Little on guitar and vocals and Knaggs on the double bass. But Little's songwriting is flexible, capable of lending itself to a full band or a solo set.



Much like the punk rock he grew up on, Little sees folk as a genre with few rules.

"To me, it's anything you can perform on a street corner or a stage," he said. "It can be political, about Jesus, heartbreak."

Little draws inspiration from two succinct places – old country outlaw songs and traditional church hymns. He describes One Trip Little as "two parts outlaw, one part gospel."

While he loves playing punk music, he says it's polarizing. Not everyone feels comfortable in the punk community. But with this act, Little feels "comfortable inviting everyone to come see it, or at least politely tolerate it."

"It's music for rebels and squares alike," he said.

A One Trip Little show usually starts with a hymn, offers some heartbreak in the middle and ends with a story. Often this story is a song called "Amen," a "somewhat autobiographical" piece about a young man's repeated run-ins with a small town cop. Before playing it, Little tells the crowd something like, "I don't care what kind of atheist or agnostic you are, everyone says a little a prayer when they're in the back of a cop car."



For Little, being a Christian in the punk scene has, if anything, reaffirmed the sense of unity within the culture.

“Punks would like to believe they’re all non-conformist rebels, but they’re all preaching the same thing,” he said. Regardless of personal beliefs, Little knows he’ll have something in common with the guy sporting a Black Flag tattoo. It doesn’t matter that his music is sometimes religiously centered.

Little lives in Seffner with his wife and kids, where, as far as he knows, there’s not much of a music scene. Fortunately, it’s a fairly easy drive to Ybor, or even St. Pete, when it’s time for a show. He says his children are the best sounding board for new music.

“If you can make a little kid dance, you know you’re on to something.”



One Trip Little are currently working on a full-length album called Cheap Bibles, which will be released on 12-inch vinyl. Expect it later this year.

By TYLER KILLETTE

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