

By Jason Bugg

Record stores don't stay open for ten years anymore. In this era of bite-sized music bits sold to listeners over their phones for the price of Chiclet gum, the idea of a brick-and-mortar store selling physical media is so antiquated it's almost cute. But a decade after opening its doors, Harvest

Records in West Asheville is celebrating this milestone with a music festival that spans two counties, two cities, two music venues and three outdoor stages.

"Ten years for a record shop is pretty monumental," says Matt Schnable, co-owner of Harvest Records, at 415 Haywood Road. "This festival is a chance for us to keep trying new things. Planning this is pushing us close to insanity, but it's worth doing."

And now that same mixture of planning and ambition is spilling over into Transfigurations II, a series of concerts that culminates in a day-long outdoor festival in downtown Marshall, N.C. It's an ambitious undertaking with a lineup that has made every record store geek salivate.

"These are all bands we've loved for years that we've wanted to work with, and we've done a lot of planning to make this happen," said Schnable.

Ten years is a feat for any small business, let alone one that opened its doors a few years after the industry-changing iPod and just before the iPhone. But much like the story of Harvest Records, the story of the three headlining acts for Transfigurations is one of survival.

SURVIVORS

Harvest Records celebrates a decade with massive three-day Transfigurations Festival in Asheville and Marshall

The Clean, Lee Fields and Mudhoney talk rock



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Gods of the record geeks

As Harvest Records celebrates its expansion from your standard indie-rock-schlepping CD store down the street, the most anticipated band for many attending Transfigurations just happens to be dripping with indie credibility: The Clean.

Hailing from Dunedin, New Zealand, The Clean formed in 1978, and while their name may not be familiar to the casual music fan, the group's output has been cited as influential by some of indie rock's biggest names: Pavement, Yo La Tengo, even Camper Van Beethoven.

"When you start up you think that nobody is going to know who you are. But when other bands say that they like what you do it makes you humble and gracious," said Hamish Kilgour, drummer for The Clean.

Alternating between twee pop and drone-filled songs, The Clean's music has left marks all over the rock n' roll sphere. After 36 years of making music just below the surface, the band is getting some recognition with the re-release of their Anthology on Durham-based Merge Records. But don't call this a victory lap.

"That's never an option for us. Instead, we just pick up where we left off and keep going," said Kilgour.

Perseverance and drive has helped the band last (with a few breaks here and there) longer than many of their late-'70s contemporaries, something that still astounds Kilgour when he's reminded.

"We're survivors. A lot of really talented people from our halcyon days are gone, and so to see that we're still going is a bit strange."

Soul man

Amid the sea of white indie rockers, acoustic guitar-wielding folkies and bearded axe slingers performing at Transfigurations stands Lee Fields, an-honest-to-goodness soul man. His music promises to groove you, soothe you and move you in more ways than one.

"I used to sing dance music, but I did it from a soul man's point of view," said Fields. "I think people can connect with me because I am a soul man. I sing in a way that is true to my spirit. I pray that the music I make is pleasing not only to the listeners, but to God."

Fields' music is dripping with classic soul references, from the down-and-dirty grit of the Stax Records sound to the brassy muscle of Motown, it's the sort of music



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HAMISH KILGOUR

SPECIAL TO SCENE
The Clean plays Blanhasset Island on Aug. 30 as part of Transfigurations.

CAIT FAHEY/SPECIAL TO SCENE
Angel Olsen plays a day-long show in Marshall on Aug. 30 as part of Transfigurations.

SPECIAL TO SCENE
Longtime soul singer Lee Fields plays with his band, The Expressions, on Aug. 30 in Marshall.



"I don't think of myself as a survivor, I endure. I overcome."

LEE FIELDS

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MATT ROSE/SCENE

Harvest Records co-owners Matt Schnable, left, and Mark Capon. For their store's 10th anniversary, the duo has organized a three-day music event, Transfigurations II.

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played and sung by someone who has known sunshine and rain.

Born in 1951, Fields has spent 43 years singing, dancing, performing and hustling for recognition, and now his hard work is paying off. Since 2009 Fields' releases on Truth and Soul Records have garnered critical praise and a growing fan base. This is a welcome success for a singer who sold copies of his first album from the back of his car.

"If this had all happened when I was younger, I would've just said that this was something that was happening and taken it for granted. Now I feel truly thankful and blessed. I know how valuable what's happening to me is," said Fields.

After more than 40 years as a hard-luck singer and finally getting his due, Fields can be called many things, but don't call him a survivor.

"I don't think of myself as a survivor, I endure. I overcome."

Flannel-clad heroes

Over a quarter-century after forming, Mudhoney is still going, and still making that sound.

The power chords start up, the



"We feel lucky that we're still going."

STEVE TURNER

SPECIAL TO SCENE

Mudhoney plays with Axxa/Abraxas at the Grey Eagle Aug. 29 as part of Transfigurations.

drums pound, simultaneously propelling the beat ahead and dragging it down. This isn't fey pop. This is a sound almost as old as rock n' roll itself. The music comes to a halt and a scratchy voice bellows out, in a nasally white-bluesman yelp, "Touch me, I'm sick." Finally, 26 years later, Mudhoney is becoming more known for its sound than its ZIP code.

Seattle's Mudhoney became part of the fuzzbox-powered, wooly-mammoth-stomp that fueled the guitar-and-flannel explosion called grunge rock. But time and consistency has turned the band into something like a smart-assed version of AC/DC — a band cranking out album after album of well-written, powerful and even playful songs.

"We are who we are, I guess. I don't think that we're as extreme as AC/DC or The Ramones," said Mudhoney guitarist Steve Turner.

What: Transfigurations II festival.

When: Aug. 28–30

Where: The Grey Eagle (185 Clingman Ave., Asheville), The Mothlight (701 Haywood Road, West Asheville), Blannahassett Island in Marshall, N.C.

Schedule: The Sadies, Sonny & the Sunsets and EDJ play the Grey Eagle at 7 p.m. Aug. 28.

Pete Swanson, Container, Profligate and Bitchin' Bajas

play the Mothlight at 9:30 p.m. Aug. 28.

Mudhoney and Axxa/Abraxas play the Grey Eagle at 7 p.m. Aug. 29.

Moon Duo, Disappears and Nest Egg play the Mothlight at 9:30 p.m. Aug. 29.

On Aug. 30, the lineup at Blannahassett Island in Marshall includes: The Clean, Lee Fields & The Expressions, Michael Hurley, Reigning Sound, Angel Olsen, Mount Eerie, Endless Boogie, Steve

Gunn, Little Wings, Bassholes, Hiss Golden Messenger, Kevin Morby, Quilt, William Tyler, Sir Richard Bishop, Fountainsun, Wooden Wand and Dylan Golden Aycock.

Tickets: At press time, weekend passes were sold out, but tickets were available to all individual shows. Saturday's show in Marshall is \$50 in advance or \$60 day of show. More ticket prices and details at www.harvest-records.com.

"We feel lucky that we're still going. My favorite thing to say about us is that we keep going. It stopped being our job a long time ago, and now it's just something that we like to do. We're lucky that people care and we get to fly places and play shows when we can do it. We all value it highly. We have to juggle our schedules now to make it happen, but we're lucky. We like to rock out, and we like to hang out with each other. We just don't get to do it as often as we used to."

Future milestones?

Ten years, one expansion and a few festivals later, Schnable is humble about his business. The last time he and Harvest hosted a multi-day music festival was in 2009 for the store's fifth birthday, but that Transfigurations was a scaled-down version of this year's event.

He's looking forward to this year's festival, but that's about as far ahead as he likes to plan.

"This is kind of a culmination of years' worth of investments in the town, venues, booking agents and all sorts of things. Part of the reason why we can put on a festival is that for years we've booked shows. The whole idea is to keep pushing what we do into territory where we don't know what we are doing, but we figure it out. It's all a natural evolution," he said.

But don't ask him about the 15th anniversary just yet.

"You can only focus on things one year, or six months or a week at a time. Having the capacity to have a vision and keep it going, but not just focusing on the milestones is what has to happen."