



Calexico will lay down their Mexican-American stylings on June 11 at the King's Club in Raleigh. Opening is Macha, from Athens, Ga.

Musings on Mexico Fuel Calexico's Intricate Mix

STEWART SIMPSON
Staff Writer

Calexico is a little town sitting directly on the California/Mexico border. Back in the good ol' days, before the border was lined with machine gun-toting guards and drug sniffing dogs, the tiny towns of Calexico and Mexicali actually overlapped one another.

Back then, you could stroll down the main street eating a burrito and drinking a cold cerveza with your foreign neighbors without having to show your passport or getting strip-searched. Fast forward to the year 2000, and cruise your low-rider out into the dry shimmering heat of the Arizona plains to find out what "desert music" is really about.

Hot Rail, the third album from Calexico, explores the drifting sands of multi-instrumental texture and orchestrations.

There is a cinematic beauty to the album. It plays like a lazy, lo-fi David Lynch-esque cowboy movie.

Mariachi trumpets and pedal steel guitars are tied together with sizzling latin rhythms.

Hot Rail, the band's third long player, unfurls dramatically with more colors

and depth and detail than what is typically offered by other bands higher up on the indie-worship food chain.

The Southwest provided a dramatic backdrop for the band's gritty albums *Spoke* (1996) and *Black Light* (1998).

On *Hot Rail*, Calexico's sound has taken a step up into a fuller patchwork of Mexicali brass and spaghetti western arrangements with even more laid-back sentiments, and backed by sumptuous layers of horns and slide guitars.

Hot Rail sounds like a collaboration between the Buena Vista Social Club, Gram Parson, a wide-eyed wunderkind producer and the Flying Burrito Brothers.

The album starts off with "El Picador," an instrumental track that spins the listener around like a tumbleweed caught in a desert sandstorm.

Track two, "Ballad of Cable Hogue," is a 3:28 tale of double-crossing lovers after a gold heist gone bad.

Skip forward to "Fade," a somber track that plays like a young Cormec McCarthy screenplay, lets you drift into the sleepy drum and cymbal ride, which is riddled with softly splattered blasts of muted trumpet.

Wrapping up the album is the minimalist title track, which starts out with a field recording of a welder crying "Hot Rail, Hot Rail."

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Music Encompasses Life in Sevilla

Kit Foss
Staff Writer

After living in Sevilla for more than a week, I have noticed that this is a city controlled by music.

Daily, I wake to radio tunes filtering through our open window. Like the music I hear in the stores in the fashionable shopping district of Sierpes, some songs are in Spanish, but as often as not, I am likely to hear REM or Tom Petty.

Further music originates in the sounds of the city: honking of taxis, clicking of stiletto heels and the steady clip-clop of Sevilla's horse-drawn carriages form a rhythmic euphony punctuated by the voices of the people.

At night in Sevilla, it is common to come across "tunas" in the street. These jubilant musicians wear dark velvet clothing and roam as serenaders at restaurants and homes.

Andalusia is famous for its flamenco music and dancing. With my fellow students, I visited the Carboneria, an old coal merchant warehouse, to experience flamenco first-hand. It's in the heart of Sevilla, the "centro-centro-centro," as my host father likes to say. I discovered a quiet piano bar that leads to a larger flamenco bar with a grand patio. This place housed the real action: four musicians were clapping, singing, fiddling and playing the guitar to encourage spontaneous dancing from the women

in front of them. The emphasis was on clapping rather than the actual melody.

Sevilla is a city famous for the bells of La Giralda and its grand Cathedral, which is the largest Gothic building in the world. I attended service there on Sunday expecting to hear plenty of classical organ pieces. To my surprise, the Cathedral was showcasing its jubilee for the arts, and acoustic guitarists played while a male chorus sang modern hymns. Delicate as the music sounded, the guitar chords still reverberated forcefully through the main chapel.

Religious floats that the locals parade called pasos are a frequent sight.

This week, I heard the music of a band announce the arrival of a paso by

playing a salute on their horns and found a group of boys bearing the paso on their backs. The leader of the paso hushed the band while the boys performed a feat that wowed the crowd: they had been nearly standing up under the paso, but they knelt two feet in order to enter the rent-a-car garage across the street. Once the paso was inside, the horns sounded again and the crowd cheered at the achievement. After the boys knelt again to exit the garage, the parade resumed and marched through the city streets, adding to the inherent music of Sevilla.

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Tragically Hip Shoot for U.S. Fame With CD

MARK THOMAS
Staff Writer

On their 9th studio release, the Tragically Hip do their best to live up to their reputation as Canada's premier rock band.

Long established in their native Canada, where their fame is unparalleled (yes, they are even more popular than Celine Dion), the band received a blink of national exposure in the U.S. with an appearance on Saturday Night Live following the release of their 1994

album *Day for Night*. Unfortunately, the Hip never caught on south of the border following this appearance and have remained one of Canada's best kept secrets, aside from the tasty beer.

Music at Work is a vivid testimony to this fact. From the lead track, "My Music at Work," it is apparent the Hip haven't lost a beat. With the same blend of electric and acoustic riffing that has become the band's trademark and lead singer Gord Downie's voice, still unfettered by age, the band proceeds to reaffirm its spot atop Canadian rock.

Downie, the band's sparkplug and an act worthy of watching even if he didn't have a band, continues in his tradition of lyrical confusion. "I had a bird's eye view of a bird's eye view when I saw you," Downie croons on the album's sixth track, "The Bastard," leaving the listener feeling a tad confused but nonetheless engaged.

The catchier tracks, "Lake Fever," "Toronto #4" and "Putting Down" are all songs that create a mood that is unmistakably Canadian, a characteristic the Hip are bound to perpetuate.

But continuing on with comparisons to past albums may be misleading. Indeed, *Music at Work* is the sign of a band that is evolving.

Departures from their usual six piece rock arrangement appear throughout the course of the album as the band employs for the first time back-up singers and additional musicians. In bringing in help, it appears the Hip are willing to admit, even to themselves, that there are some things they can't do, like play cello.

Despite the title, this album is anything but music you would expect to hear on the job.

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Canadian rockers the Tragically Hip hope to garner more attention in the U.S. when their new album *Music at Work* hits stores June 13.

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