

The Confusionaires front man muses about taking his own advice

TOM MURRAY ([HTTPS://EDMONTONJOURNAL.COM/AUTHOR/TOMMURRAY](https://edmontonjournal.com/author/tommurray)) Updated: June 16, 2018



The Confusionaires perform at the Aviary on Saturday night. *KARL DOMNING*

When Dave Johnston ponders his continuing career in music, he thinks about his daughter.

“When you’re a realist, you tend to squash your own dreams about what is possible as a musician,” the Confusionaires (<https://confusionaires.com/about/>) front man muses. “But as a parent, you

sort of want to live by example and show that nothing is unattainable, and there are times when I really think I should be taking my own advice.”

He’s being hard on himself. The man known for decades as Fat Dave Johnston (we’re arranging a poll for a new moniker in light of his currently lithe physique — Handsome Dave? Friendly Dave? Well-Coiffed Dave?) has always lived by the premise that hard work will eventually reap rewards.

He’s done it in bands such as Black Market Inc., Fat Dave Crime Wave, The Fuzz Kings, wallowing in equal parts punk noise, growling blues, honky-tonk country, and dragstrip rock ‘n’ roll from the early 2000s until the present. His current band, The Confusionaires, deals in rockabilly, though Johnston is too unrestrained in his guitar playing to allow for a limp, overly respectful version of the genre.

Especially not when the continuing respect of his young daughter is at stake. The Confusionaires, who also number bassist Jayson Aschenmeier and drummer Adam Stark in their ranks, are releasing their debut album this Saturday at The Aviary. We spoke with Johnston about his new band, and his unrelenting need to rock out.

Q: Why the leap to rockabilly? Things were going pretty well in The Fuzz Kings, right?

A: Sure, but we had been slowing down with the Fuzz Kings, and everybody had gotten busy, including myself. By the time I had gotten everything sorted

in my own life, the others were taking their turns. I was chomping at the bit to go, so I hooked up with Adam and Jason, whom I had been talking to for a while.

Q: You're not exactly a by-the-books rockabilly band, though, are you?

A: Not really. I mean, it's rockabilly in the way that The Fuzz Kings could be called rockabilly, or Social Distortion. It's the band that I've always wanted to be in. (Pauses) I probably say that about every band that I'm in.

Q: That's because you're evolving. You still can't quite tame your wilder instincts on guitar, though.

A: Yeah, I like it a little rowdy. We approach things from a traditional angle, but then we kick it in the ass a bit. To be fair, there's a bit of surf in what we do as well.

Q: People tend to follow you from band to band because of your reputation as a hot-shot guitarist. How have they reacted to The Confusionaires?

A: We got a lot of support out the gate, which was nice. You know, one of the nice things about being a musician for so long is that I don't have to do anything to appeal to anybody. I mean, I write songs that are accessible. I'm not Mike Patton (of Faith No More) or anything like that, but I'm also not trying to adhere to the rules. I don't have a marketing team trying to outfit me with a new cowboy hat.

Q: So, you've recorded an excellent new album, surrounded yourself with some skilled players, and established yourself on a scene. You've done this before with other highly talented bands. What are The Confusionaires' future plans?

A: That is the question, the very one we've been discussing. We'd like to tour as far as we can, maybe see Europe, which I've never been to. Neither has Adam. I know that some rockabilly bands have done well in Japan, so maybe that's an option? We're formulating crazy ideas, seeing how feasible they might be. Like I said, it's tough when you're a realist, but maybe it's time to own up to everything I've said to my daughter about following a dream.

The Confusionaires

With: Robin Woywitka and Super 92, and Forbidden Dimension

When: Saturday at 8 p.m.

Where: The Aviary, 9314 11 Ave.

Tickets: \$10 to \$15, available at the door or in advance from [Yeglive](http://yeglive.ca/events/the-confusionaires/jun-16-2018/aviary)
(<http://yeglive.ca/events/the-confusionaires/jun-16-2018/aviary>).

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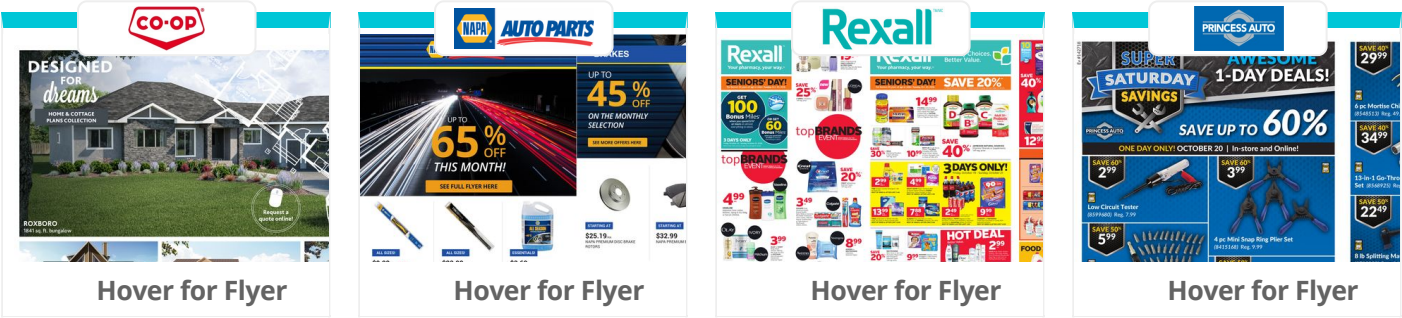
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