

I'm Not A Pilot, Band

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CONCERT REVIEW

The headliner of the night was I'm Not a Pilot, another Milwaukee band, who has garnered quite a large following. Part rock, part pop, part classical, I'm Not a Pilot has a unique sound that's become wildly popular within Milwaukee's local music scene. Winner of 88.9 Radio Milwaukee's band of the year award, I'm Not a Pilot consists of lead singer & pianist Mark Glatzel, cellist Peter Thomas, bass player Adrian Esguerra and drummer Steven Vorass, Jr.

Their eclectic and unparalleled brand of music creates something special during every show. Mark is the unassuming front man with an impressive vocal range and dramatic dexterity on the keyboard. He displays none of the "rock star" antics or ego that many musicians over use, in fact, he seems almost surprised when everyone cheers at the end of a song. The lyrics to their original music are nearly all written by Glatzel alone and you can feel the emotions coming through his voice, drawing you in. And while you stand, caught up in the story Mark sings, you hear Peter's electric cello come in.

The instrument lends a haunting, almost gypsy-like quality to some songs and a heavy, orchestral sound to others. A classically trained cellist with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, Thomas fills the space that a guitar would normally occupy, alternating between fierce bow strokes and beautiful, symphonic melodies. The rarity of having a cellist in a rock band, let alone someone of Peter's caliber, is unheard of. Mark and Peter play well off of each other and keep the audience transfixed. And making this group a true "band", Adrian Esguerra maintains the rhythm on bass guitar and Steve Vorass keeps the beat going on drums.

They may be in the background but they are an important part too and do their jobs with the utmost accuracy. Adrian and Steve provide the rock end of the spectrum while Peter and Mark are the classical twist that sets I'm Not a Pilot apart. Their blend of upbeat pop-rock and slower, heartfelt ballads provides a much needed breath of fresh air to Milwaukee's live music circuit. Most of their songs are original but they do throw in a few covers here and there. When they do, I'm Not a Pilot reinvents the original song and puts their own stamp on it. A crowd favorite is "Where Is My Mind" by the Pixies, made famous when it was featured in "Fight Club".

However, the standout for me is their recent re-do of Arcade Fire's "Tunnels (Neighborhood #1)". I'm a big fan of Arcade Fire but I prefer I'm Not a Pilot's version. I personally think Mark's voice suits the soaring notes better and Peter's cello provides a stronger backbone to the song. Singing the female part (and playing the tambourine) was Rae Cassidy, a local artist who is featured on I'm Not a Pilot's full length album, "Need Money For Rocket Fuel". A classic beauty with the voice of an angel (I'm not exaggerating), Rae has joined the band for their last few performances, including Summerfest and Bastille Days. She usually sings three songs, just enough to shake up the formula a bit, complimenting Mark's voice without overpowering him.

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