

People & Places

Music

Dustbowl Revival cheers

Son Little 'enhances' influences on 'aloha'

By Pablo Gorondi

Son Little, "aloha" (ANTI-) Son Little lost them all. He had almost a dozen demos for a new album but he failed to backup the files and the tunes were gone forever when his hard drive suffered a catastrophic failure.

Bewildered but unbroken, he wrote another batch in eight days. Despite the setback or maybe because of it, "aloha," Little's third album, finds him in a more basic setting, with mostly simpler arrangements than on his earlier releases.

Still, Little's excellent vocals and evocative songwriting carry the day, with a clear assist from Renaud Letang, the first time Little has worked with an outside producer. Letang's filters mesh expertly with Little's talents.



Little

Little, born Aaron Earl Livingston and with a career stretching back several years before his 2015 solo debut, made a trademark out of updating traditional R&B, blues and soul sounds with electronic beats and hip-hop sensibilities, with the latter complementing but not upstaging the former. And here, too, he plays nearly every instrument.

Opener "hey rose" - there are no capital letters in the song titles - is passionate and daring, with Little turning the volume of his voice up and down as needed. The rhythm is dance-ready but not furious, sometimes barely more than hand-claps and a grumbling bass line, suggestive instead of overbearing.

"about her, again." could be Jimi Hendrix, singing but not playing, covering the Impressions. The song has a very '60s-like refrain and more of the quiet/not-so-quiet dynamics. "mahalia" includes a cutting guitar tone and seems preoccupied with missed opportunities - "This life's full of promises we'd keep but we never make" - a disclaimer for whatever will end up ruining the relationship.

Other highlights include the reflective "suffer," with some very cool synth sounds, the percussion-driven "3rd eye weeping" and the smooth, layered simplicity of closer "after all (i must be wrong)."

With the merits of "aloha" providing ample comforts, it makes no sense to miss those lost tracks.

Dustbowl Revival, "Is It You, Is It Me" (Thirty Tigers)

Eclectic roots rockers Dustbowl Revival declare what they're up to vividly on "Just One Song," a cut from their new album, "Is It You, Is It Me."

"I can turn it around, I can right a wrong, give me just one song," intones lead singer Z. Lupetin with typically soulful, understated charm.

It's practically a mission statement, a declaration of the purpose that animates the band's fourth album from start to finish: Dustbowl Revival wants to cheer you up.

Over the course of 13 songs, the Los Angeles-based ensemble works in a wide range of musical styles, most of them accentuating the positive.

There's the wistful balladry of "Mirror," a sad but ultimately encouraging song that is probably the album's best cut. There's the horn-infused and pulsating "Enemy," where Liz Beebe sings about a contentious relationship that's built around the desire to let things lie.

And then there are the more upbeat numbers, like "Just One Song" and the closer, "Let It Go." The latter bears only a passing similarity to Idina Menzel's "Frozen" anthem of the same name, and feels personal enough to stand on its own.

All of the songs here feel less rootsy than the band's earlier work, and generally less fun. For all of its positivity, the album doesn't quite capture Dustbowl Revival's spirit. A better place to find that for the uninitiated is an old YouTube clip of the band breaking out in a song called "Ain't My Fault" in the public terminal of the Newark airport.

Compared to that scene, this set sounds subdued. The talent is there, and the positivity is laudable, but it just doesn't match the gusto of their earlier work.

Mac Miller, "Circles" (Warner)

"Why does everybody need me to stay?" Mac Miller asks on the first single from his latest release. He answered his own question with the superb posthumous "Circles."

Miller's 12-track album is heartbreakingly sublime, a portrait of a wry and honest musician acknowledging his demons but looking past them. "I'm here to make it all better with a little music for you," he sings.

Miller died of an accidental drug overdose in 2018 at 26 and was working on "Circles" as a sort of companion album to his Grammy-nominated "Swimming." Producer Jon Brion, who worked on "Swimming" and also produced for Kanye West and Dido, was asked to finish Miller's work.

"Circles" shares the appealing confessional lyrics of "Swimming" but is more airy, more muted and understated. Miller was always an idiosyncratic artist, mixing hip-hop beats and samples with soul and warm funk, even jazz. Here, he is low-key, moody, spacey and anesthetized. He sings more than he raps. There's nothing flashy. Everything's thoughtful.

"Circles" is both spare but somehow full. A tiny hesitating sample serves as the backbone to "Blue World," a lazy drum and piano do the same for "I Can See." A repeated "eh-uh" runs through "Hands" and "Complicated" at first seems too simple but subsequent listens reveals a jewel-like construction.

The first single, "Good News," is addictive and must surely be a defining song for an artist taken far too soon. Delicate guitar plucking accompanies Miller's handgong lyrics. "Runnin' out of gas, hardly anything left," he sings. "So tired of being so tired." Brion is rightly in no rush to end it, and lets Miller go for more than 5 1/2 minutes.

Listeners will naturally focus on the references to death and they are definitely there. "Everybody's gotta live/And everybody's gonna die," he sings on "Everybody." But he's OK, too. "I've been alright" and "I'm feelin' fine." His advice to others? "Do not be afraid" and "take a little time for yourself."

"Woods," which flows on a bed of airy synths, is Miller at his most seductive, funky and mature. It's remarkable to look back and listen to his cluttered and more juvenile stuff of just seven years ago. Miller's evocative voice even tries at a tender falsetto in "Surf," with the optimistic lines: "Until we get old/There's water in the flowers/Let's grow." That he didn't get a chance to grow himself is a tragedy that this album only somewhat alleviates. (AP)



Jennifer Lopez and daughter Emme Maribel Muniz perform during halftime of the NFL Super Bowl 54 football game Feb 2, in Miami Gardens, Fla. (AP)



Actress Daisy Ridley poses for photographers upon arrival at the Bafta Film Awards, in central London, Feb 2. (AP)



Lau



Lai

Variety

SEOUL, South Korea: Concerts and shows are being canceled, not just in China but across much of Asia, as a virus outbreak that has killed more than 300 people and reached more than 20 countries spooks the entertainment industry.

Performances have been called off or postponed in South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong and Macao over concern that people could be infected by the virus that first appeared in the central China city of Wuhan.

The Boston Symphony Orchestra called off its Asia tour, and the Hong Kong Philharmonic canceled five concerts.

Cantopop veteran **Andy Lau** canceled long-awaited concerts in Hong Kong, with the organizer saying it's important to protect the health and safety of the audience. It's unclear whether Lau will proceed with an April concert in Wuhan.

Popular Hong Kong singers **Leon Lai** and **Miriam Yeung** also postponed their February concerts in Macao and Singapore, respectively. Taiwanese singer **John Tsai** postponed her show in China, according to her official account on Weibo, a Chinese social media platform.

South Korean agencies have been canceling K-pop events at home and abroad in response to requests from fans about artists' safety.

Popular K-pop artists such as **Taeyeon** and boybands **WINNER** and **NCT Dream** canceled shows in Singapore and Macao, according to their agency and concert organizer. K-pop boyband **GOT7** postponed concerts in Bangkok and Singapore. A fan showcase by girlband **GFriend** is taking place without an audience due to virus fears. (AP)

LOS ANGELES: Conservative radio host and Republican kingmaker **Rush Limbaugh** said he's been diagnosed with advanced lung cancer.

Addressing listeners on his program Monday, Limbaugh said he will take some days off for further medical tests and to determine treatment.

"I have to tell you something today that I wish I didn't have to tell you," announced Limbaugh, 69. The cancer diagnosis was confirmed by two medical institutions in

Music

World's most popular Latina artist seize the stage

Super Bowl show draws praise, tears

ALBUQUERQUE, NM, Feb 4, (AP): When the Super Bowl halftime show began, Yol-Itzma Aguirre and her relatives watched with anticipation. The El Paso, Texas, family was curious how Colombian-born Shakira and New York-raised Jennifer Lopez, two of the world's most popular Latina artists, would seize the stage.

The performance Sunday was draped in Hollywood tropes of female sexuality. But it also contained subtle political messages about anxieties shared by many Latinos in the US - children in cages, Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria and the urge to be heard.

Aguirre, 39, had to watch the performance again. "My sister was tearing up. We saw more things," Aguirre said. "We stopped caring about the game."

Across the US, Latinos took to social media to praise and dissect the show.

Shakira paid homage to her Colombian roots by performing the mapalé - an Afro-Colombian style of dance from the country's Caribbean coast. She also made a tongue-flicking cry called a zaghrouta, a way to express joy in Arab culture. Her father is of Lebanese descent. During her performance, Lopez brought out a dual Puerto Rican-American flag while her daughter sang the lyrics to Bruce Springsteen's "Born in the U.S.A." Her daughter and other children with American flags on their shirts had emerged from what appeared to be steel cages.

"Let's get loud!" Lopez sang as her daughter sang the Springsteen hook. Shakira hit some drums.

In the background, strobe lights crossed each other to form an image of a cage.

Latinos saw the juxtaposition as a call for them to vote, being mindful that American authorities on the US-Mexico border separated migrant children from their parents and locked them up.

"It was brilliant," said Aguirre, a writer who has toured immigration facilities holding children.

Others pointed out that Lopez held up a Puerto Rican flag - once banned in 1948 - at a time of anger over how President Donald Trump has handled relief efforts after the island was hit by the hurricane and a recent earthquake.

The flag became a symbol of resilience and hope following the hurricane, which struck in September 2017 as a Category 4 storm. It caused more than \$100 billion in damage and killed an estimated 2,975 people in its aftermath. The flag also became a symbol of resistance and justice last summer when massive protests over corruption and other issues led to the resignation of the island's former governor.

Conflicted

Liuivette Resto, a Puerto Rico-born poet who now lives in Los Angeles, said she felt conflicted about the use of the flag because of the island's history.

"Puerto Rico is still a colony of the US," Resto said. "We're treated like property."

But Resto said she was glad the appearance of the flag sparked needed conversations about Puerto Rico's status.

Still, she was disappointed that more Afro-Latinos or Mexicans were not represented in the performance - a critique shared by many on social media. The legendary Mexican band Los Tigres del Norte from San Jose, California, opened the Spanish broadcast for Super Bowl LIV, but the performance was not seen on the English broadcast.

Others said they are satisfied by the overall Latina theme of the performance.

"It was a PERFECT example of how different cultures can exist under the 'Latino' umbrella," comedian Cristela Alonzo tweeted. "We are different from each other and therefore should be allowed to tell DIFFERENT stories. See us as individuals."

Late Monday, Lopez posted an Instagram video of her and her daughter before the performance. Lopez wrote that she wanted the girls on stage with her to know how to use their voices and be proud of everything they are. "Other people can try to build walls, keep us out or put us in cages," Lopez wrote. "We are proud to recognize that all of us together are what makes this beautiful country truly great."

Shakira also posted an Instagram video of her performance and thanked Colombia for giving her "the mapalé, the champeta, the salsa and the Afro-Caribbean rhythms" that have allowed her to create the Super Bowl Halftime Show that she dreamed of more than a decade ago.

The halftime show wasn't the only moment for Latinos on Super Bowl Sunday. The game began with multi-platinum Demi Lovato singing the national anthem. The Albuquerque, New Mexico-born Lovato is a descendant of Francisco Perea, a Hispanic hero for the Union in the Civil War who saw President Abraham Lincoln's assassination.

The rendition by Lovato, who is recovering from drug addiction, sparked an emotional response from the people of New Mexico - a state with the nation's highest percentage of Hispanic residents that has historically had some of the country's highest drug overdose death rates.

For Shakira, this wasn't her first time participating in an event with a political dimension. In 2011, for example, she told The Associated Press that proposed anti-immigrant legislation in some US states went against her foundation's efforts to provide education to poor people around the world. The Grammy Award-winning singer said Latino immigrants in the US who were facing anti-immigrant bills would have "justice" as public awareness about their plight grew.

late January after he experienced his only symptom so far, shortness of breath, on his Jan 12 birthday weekend, he said.

He was reluctant to discuss personal matters and distract from his work, he said, and wasn't seeking to cover up his illness. He realized it was better to be honest and avoid the speculation that would follow when he has to miss being on air

for treatment or as the result of treatment, Limbaugh added.

"But it is what it is. And you know me, I'm the mayor of Realville," he said. "My intention is to come here every day I can. And to do this program as normally" and competently as usual.

He said he considers his listeners to be part of a "family type relationship" with

him, adding that his job has given him the "greatest satisfaction and happiness" he's experienced. Limbaugh's announcement comes at a tumultuous political time, as the conclusion of President Donald Trump's impeachment trial nears.

Trump paid tribute on Twitter, writing: "Many people do not know what a great guy & fantastic political talent the great Rush Limbaugh is. There is nobody like him. Looking for a speedy recovery for our friend!" (AP)



In this Oct 31, 2019 file photo, Andris Nelsons gestures towards the musicians prior to conducting a joint concert of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Germany's visiting Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra at Symphony Hall in Boston. Concerts and shows are being canceled, not just in China but across much of Asia, as a virus outbreak that has killed more than 300 people and reached more than 20 countries spooks the entertainment industry. (AP)

MIAMI: Through his song "Boys of Fall," Kenny Chesney has a direct connection to this Super Bowl.

The song has become something of an anthem for high school football, celebrating the teamwork and dedication it takes to play the sport - really on any level. It was written by Pro Football Hall of Famer **Bobby Beathard's** son **Casey**, who has penned several hits for the country superstar. Beathard's son, **C.J.**, is a backup quarterback for the 49ers.

"Boys of Fall" has special meaning this week. C.J.'s younger brother, **Clayton**, was stabbed to death in Nashville in December.

"I am very close to the Beathard family and I love them deeply," Chesney says. "I can't imagine what they have been going through."

"That song has meant so much to me. It's my life to a T. Casey wrote it for me and is so represents significant parts of my life. Sports always has been a huge part of my life. When you grow up in a smaller town, the high school football team is your team. (AP)