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Catch this big wave

The Madeira pays homage to surf rock's Middle Eastern roots.

By Jessica Halverson

The Madeira ain't your baby's surf music.

Taking some twang from the first definition of the genre, The Madeira plays instrumental, rumbling rock, centered on the Fender guitar and surf beats.

Together for a couple years now, the band recently released a full-length album called "Sandstorm" with Double Crown Records.

The band was to play a release show this weekend, but had to postpone it due to a broken arm on the part of drummer Dane Carter. The band hopes to reschedule the show.

Until then, guitarist Ivan Pongracic talks about why the sun shines on his surf.

Tell me about your new record.

We recorded at Pop Machine studio in July and just kind of (have) been fixing up the loose ends for the next few months.

I had this idea to push the kind of Middle Eastern/North African influence in surf music further than it had been done before. So that was the idea behind the CD, just to see how far we could go with it and still make it listenable.

Surf music has had a long history of these exotic influences. If you think of "Miserlou" (by Dick Dale) -- which is probably the best known surf song; it's in "Pulp Fiction" -- that's an old Greek song.

So there were a lot of these Mediterranean/North African influences from the beginning, but no band has ever taken it to an extreme.

What do you love most about this genre of music?

It's very powerful. When done well it can be incredibly energetic and it's also -- since it's instrumental -- it can be very mysterious, very evocative. I love the overall sound.

There's a particular sound to real surf music -- very reverb heavy -- that's quite unique. It just resonates with me in a special way. Who knows why, but it does in the sense bring certain images to my mind. Images just of the ocean, which clearly is a usual thing you connect with it, but more than that just the particular era, the early '60s era which I just think was great. I love it.



Swell: (From left) Patrick O'Conner, 32, guitar; Todd Fortier, 39, bass; Ivan Pongracic, 36, guitar; Dane Carter, 33, drums. -- Submitted photo

Surf's up

Want to try your ear at a little music for the waves? Here's a recommended listening list from The Madeira's Ivan Pongracic.

- **Dick Dale:** "King of the Surf Guitar -- Best of"
- **The Lively Ones:** "Hang Five"
- **The Astronauts:** "Surfin' With/ Competition Coupe"
- **V/A:** "Wild Surf"
- **Satan's Pilgrims:** "Plymouth Rock -- The Best of"



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By the way, a lot of people think of surf music as the Beach Boys. It's important to point out that real surf music is almost exclusively instrumental.

When Dick Dale started his stuff in '61 or so, it started off being instrumental with this very powerful guitar sound. And the Beach Boys kind of bastardized it by having these Doo-Wop harmonies over surf beats and guitars.

Do you remember what was the first surf record you ever heard?

I got into it a little bit indirectly, because this band The Shadows that we covered in The Troubadours (a Shadows cover band Pongracic was in with his father, who introduced him to that band).

They were instrumental and they started having hits in early 1960. My father played in bands that played Shadows music in the '60s along the Adriatic coast. We're from Croatia. I grew up with that stuff, twangy instrumentals played on Fender guitars.

When we came to the U.S. . . . I saw this record -- four guys in suits with Fender guitars. I was like, "Oh my God, this looks just like The Shadows." It turns out it was a surf band called The Challengers who were one of only surf bands that covered Shadows material.

I picked it up and just started trying to find out more about it . . . It just blew my mind and I thought I've got to do this.

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