



MIKE DIVORAK

King says, "is when I have a feeling they will be inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Then they'd have to play together!"

April 21, *The Silent Barn*, 915 Wyckoff Ave. (at Hancock St.), Qns/B'klyn, no phone; 8, \$8. (April 22 at *The Knitting Factory*).

BACK TO BASICS

Richard Swift doesn't let anyone down

by Dominic Umile

AFTER LIVING IN Southern California for a number of years, Richard Swift has moved to Oregon, where wide-open spaces and pastures, far from urban life, lend well to songwriting and peace of mind. It's a plan that doesn't easily fit the conventional rock 'n' roll lifestyle, but Swift traverses a non-traditional musical landscape—with insights and craftsmanship that spring from no well-trod path. On *Dressed Up for the Letdown*, Swift's songs—carnavalesque, ragtimey and wonderful—stick out like a sore thumb in discussions of contemporary indie rock buzz bands.

Although the Minnesota farm native would rather look *around* than be looked *at* (he sings, "I made my way into the spotlight just to realize it's not what I want" on "Songs of National Freedom"), he has spent a lot of time as a focal point while compelled by an urge to move away from it all with his wife and three daughters.

"I live in a town of 9,010 people," says Swift. "That's just how I like it. I want to hopefully be building a house outside of town at some point, but yeah, there's not really too many people around, and I kinda like that. I lived in California for a number of years, and it started to do my head in."

Dressed Up is hardly the cry of a man who needs to clear his head; it's dramatically stylish pop, rife with saloon piano romps and tasteful guitar solos that mimic Swift's lifting vocal melodies. Occasional playful psychedelia on the album calls for a vocoder effect or a programmed beat, but an organic structure overshadows everything else. "Buildings in America" ripples with memorable one-liners ("I played your heart,

but I broke two strings") and sporadic plinks that linger in corners not fleshed out by acoustic guitar before the whole damn thing shifts into a full-band showstopper of harps, muddied bass lines and swirling background noise. It's a burst of color that seems extraordinarily out of place on this number, but it fits snugly into the magical aesthetic of *Dressed Up*, a work from someone who sounds like he's seen the whole world 10 times over but would rather retreat to the modest rewards of near-isolation.

"Dylan moved out to the country after he got sick of the New York City life and wanted to raise a family," Swift explains. "I think it's a natural thing for people to do. It seems pretty natural to me. I just want a little bit more of tranquility in my life. Southern California is really tough; you find yourself wondering if you can compromise a bit just so you can pay your incredibly high rent that month, so it's a lot easier to keep my overhead low and be able to create 24/7 and have a family and all that stuff. That's more important than rock 'n' roll to me, really."

April 21, *Luna Lounge*, 361 Metropolitan Ave. (at Havemeyer St.), B'klyn, 866-468-7619; 8, \$10/\$12. (also April 22 at *Pianos*).

HIP CHECK

The biggest band in Canada is not from Montreal

by Jon Langston

CANADA'S FAVORITE BAND doesn't garner four-star reviews in *Rolling Stone*. They get no fawning fluff jobs in indie rags, no name checks at cooler-than-thou music websites. No, the biggest band in Canada is not some quirky-cute hipster collective from Montreal (neither is it an aging power trio that admirably churns out albums year after year). It's a quintet called The Tragically Hip, and they've just released their 11th album, *World Container*, which was produced by veteran twiddler (and fellow Canadian) Bob Rock and is a welcome return to form.

The Tragically Hip's early sound, bluesy and tinged with twang, was an immediate hit up north. By the early '90s, the band had matured sonically into a more polished rock that maintained its wry lyrical hues, and The Hip endured a groundswell of popularity, cementing their status as Canada's favorite sons. To date, they've sold more than six million albums worldwide, have won more Juno awards (Canada's Grammys) than anyone *ever* and have been inducted into the Canadian Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. They routinely sell out arenas from Vancouver to Halifax. But The Hip, which still boasts its five original members—vocalist Gordon Downie, guitarists Rob Baker and Paul Langlois, bassist Gord Sinclair and drummer Johnny Fay—have never ventured past cult status in the U.S. And after 25 years together, they're just fine with that.



PAUL HEARTFIELD

Richard Swift left the city for the country.

, I needed to pick up a career path. I ed to cook and went into the kitchen. ears traveling around with Hüsker— to Europe—primed my palate." meeting King at a Bad Plus gig in 2003 ed Norton's reentry and TGF's forma- "I saw Dave listed Hüsker as an influ- and that was cool," he says. "They have tremendous piano power trio, and I ed to introduce myself." However, Nor- ad nothing to plug into to jam. "We said ould try playing," King says. "But he have an amp. He had to buy an amp!" ontrasting Hüsker's aesthetic, TGF's ded out by guitarist Erik Fratzke ekeyboardist Craig Taborn) instrumen- but eschews simplistic rhythms for tricate, experimental fusion of self- aimed "PunkProgFreeFunkMath- l"—usually within the same song. cites an eclectic spectrum drawing Henry Threadgill, Ronald Shannon on, Yes and Captain Beefheart. "We like improvisers play," he explains. cording to King, Norton is the man. t Greg plays makes the record," he s. "The idea was because he's never d avant-garde music or weird time tures was to approach him like an Or- Coleman-type where he'd do his own Greg's parts have an odd, rhythmic armonic value that's beautiful." Nor- roots would ultimately emerge—even ears 50. "Greg's an old-school punk," says King. "It wasn't long before he umping around and kicking stuff." e question is whether Hüsker will he spate of reunions that have in- l Dinosaur Jr and the Pixies. Norton game, but the perpetual feuding be- Mould and Hart poses a problem. nly time we've talked about Hüsker,"