

atthemike

Soul Coughing's Mike Doughty is back with new sound, album

RODNEY WILSON | CIN WEEKLY CONTRIBUTOR

Remember alternative rock, the '90s phenomenon that encompassed everything from Smashing Pumpkins to Blind Melon? While many of the era's performers have gone the way of *Melrose Place*, a handful of rockers who garnered attention before the new millennium have defied the fickle tastes of payola'd radio programmers and continued to do what they love. They make music.

Mike Doughty, former frontman for the jazzy, hip-hop flavored Soul Coughing, has been busy since he bid adieu to both his old band and the era that put his face on MTV. Touring in support of his recent album, *Haughty Melodic*, and backed by some like-minded power players, he's set to forge a musical landscape free of rock clichés, fickle record labels and other, more damaging things.

JUST A TROUBADOR

"I have no marketable skills besides singing, playing guitar and writing songs," Doughty says. "When I quit Soul Coughing, basically, all I could do was tour - get in a rental car, travel the country and play little clubs as an acoustic guy. I printed up copies of *Skittish* and sold them from the front of the stage after shows, and after a couple of years, I slowly built a new audience."

Skittish is Doughty's first solo outing, a sparse album that found Doughty stripping himself bare both musically and emotionally - and turning his label off completely. "Warner Brothers didn't have a lot of faith in me as a singer-songwriter," he says. "I presented *Skittish* to them, and they just weren't interested."

So Doughty climbed into a car and hit the road. "For the first couple years of the century, it was like hardball, going thousands and thousands of miles playing little bars, just being a troubadour. It gave me a lot of time to think," he says. "You spend that much time by yourself driving, all kinds of crazy things are going to start floating through your mind. That's all over *Haughty Melodic*."

HAUGHTY MELODIC

Doughty's first with a full band since Soul Coughing, *Haughty Melodic* features lyrics that are an eloquent, often melancholy reflection on everything from lost love to spiritual longing. And while he can talk about all these themes



Mike Doughty, former frontman for Soul Coughing, is embarking on a new solo career, and is opening for Barenaked Ladies.

JUST THE FACTS

WHAT: Mike Doughty's Band opening for Barenaked Ladies

WHEN: 7:30 p.m. Friday, Nov. 17

WHERE: U.S. Bank Arena, 100 Broadway, downtown

PRICE: \$33.50-\$60

PARKING: Area lots. Try Western-Southern Garage on the corner of Broadway and Third Street.

CONTACT: 513-421-4111, www.usbankarena.com or www.mikedoughty.com

now, Doughty didn't really know the songs laid his life so bare when he was writing them.

"I never really know what the songs are about until years later," Doughty says. "I always think they're about one thing and then they tend to reveal themselves about being something that I didn't expect - something much



BARENAKED LADIES

Headliners Barenaked Ladies have been cranking out tunes that make fans smile since the late '80s. The Canadian rockers have never shied away from a goofy lyric or light-hearted wordplay, with absurd ambitions and self-deprecation providing ample writing material. And though the band's legacy extends far beyond funny lyrics, many fans appreciate the Barenaked Ladies' ability to still induce a chuckle after all these years.

See if you can match the memorable lyric to the song:

LYRICS

1. "When she was 3, her Barbies always did it on the first date."
2. "I'd buy you John Merrick's remains (All them crazy elephant bones)."
3. "You're so 1990, and it's 1994."
4. "Like Harrison Ford, I'm getting Frantic. Like Sting, I'm Tantric."
5. "Oh no, here we go, our life is just one big pun."

SONG TITLES

- A. "Shoe Box"
- B. "Be My Yoko Ono"
- C. "Life, in a Nutshell"
- D. "Seven Days"
- E. "If I Had \$1,000,000"

ANSWERS: 1. C, 2. E, 3. A, 4. D, 5. B

more personal. There's like this process of discovery as you perform these songs night after night."

GOOD FRIENDS

While *Haughty Melodic* is a decidedly contemporary album, Doughty called on fellow '90s upstarts to make the record, beginning with producer Dan Wilson, better known for his band Semisonic's song "Closing Time."

"I just found this really magical empathy between us," Doughty says. "He's not coming from the same place as me at all - my revelation musically was hip-hop in the early '90s, and he's like a Beatles guy ... all those chord changes and sort of intricacies with the way the songs were structured."

When it came time to put out the songs, Doughty

thought twice about selling this CD from the front of the stage. "At some point I thought that *Haughty Melodic* deserves to find a wider audience, so I started looking at labels," he says. "But they're all kind of not interesting at this point - it's a very boring world out there in terms of labels."

Doughty bumped into his old friend Dave Matthews in 2004 and immediately found a home for *Haughty Melodic* at Matthew's ATO Records. "It was great, super organic," says Doughty. "Not like a bunch of managers sending things back and forth and, you know, lawyers' letters and stuff like that."

Armed with a new record, energetic band and fresh lease on life, Doughty's back on the road, and he's making fans one promise: "It's going to be all killer, no filler."