

SWEET MOTHER NATURE

REGGAE BAND USES THE STAGE TO GREEN THE SOUTH



Courtesy Dubconscious

The members of Dubconscious are more than a band. They are crusaders for the environment, using music as a powerful platform to further the green movement in the Southeast and beyond. Their latest album, *NonViolent*, was released on January 20. Adrian Zelski, the group's guitarist and vocalist met up with me for an afternoon chat at The Globe.

Athens Blur: Everyone in the band has really diverse music backgrounds, from jazz to electronica, so why reggae?

Adrian Zelski: It was really timing more than anything. Three members of Dubconscious were playing Bob Marley covers and just learning how to play it, and the other three members, including myself, were doing more of the acoustic, world music thing and we just started playing Bob Marley songs. So we came together and just got into it, and we were just immediately taken. There wasn't anything like it. So that was a big impetus, too. You know,

Athens has a million indie rock bands, pop bands, cover bands, country bands — everything but reggae.

AB: Do you think that helped as far as being different, gaining success by standing out?

AZ: Definitely. Well I mean, it hurt us too. The Southeast is the worst reggae market in the country, notoriously. Most reggae bands just pass up the Southeast. So it really helped to be unique, but it was also an "against all odds" kind of thing.

AB: Dubconscious is pretty outspoken about environmental issues. How does the music go in with the band's environmental standpoint and getting fans to practice what y'all preach?

AZ: [The Southeast] is one of the most habitable places on Earth with more resources than anywhere, and so it's very important for Southeast people to protect their environment, so that became our mantra that we ran with. So it becomes a community based thing, and it's more

DUBCONSCIOUS

WHO'S WHO

Adrian Zelski (vocals, rhythm guitar), James Keane (vocals, guitar), Scott Pridgen (percussion), Solomon Wright (vocals, bass, trumpet), Matt Woolley (vocals, drums), Jerry Hendelberg (vocals, keyboards, melodica)

FORMED

2002 in Athens, GA

LABEL

Tree Sound

LATEST RELEASE

Nonviolent (2009)

ON THE WEB

www.dubconscious.com

based, full album that we've done since 2005's *American Dream*. It's much more evolved song writing wise. It has horns and female vocals and guests that give it a more full feel. You know, we worked hard on it and we basically put it together through a producer that said, "Hey that song's too long. That song's too short. That song doesn't sound quite right." So, it's more filtered than our past experiences. It's also more purposed. *NonViolent*, the name, we came up with that. And so we kind of went with the theme that this album should be about that. It should be about learning to communicate nonviolently in our interpersonal relationships with ourselves and with our environment as well.

AB: I know many of the members of Dubconscious started out in Athens at the University of Georgia, but why stay? Why make Athens homebase?

AZ: On a good day, it's because of the music community and because of the ability to live affordably and be part of a great community. I mean, I love Athens, the people here are awesome... we realize that Athens has the potential that it had in the '80s with R.E.M. and the B-52's and Pylon and all the great bands that were here. And also, I would say this too, it's a really weird place. You could try to pigeonhole it, but you'd be wrong, and that's what's cool about it.

AB: When y'all get back to Athens after being on the road, what's the one place you can't wait to visit?

AZ: The Grit. I go to The Grit immediately almost every time. That place makes me feel normal pretty fast.

—Lindsey Lee

than just going to play a show and up from the stage saying, "Hey, we've got CD's at the merch table." I think that's very lame. It's much better to say, "Hey, go to the table and sign up for this organization that's gonna help the environment and help your community." So it became obvious, actually. I don't see why more bands don't do it, really.

AB: How is "NonViolent" different from past albums? Why should someone buy it?

AZ: It's our first song-