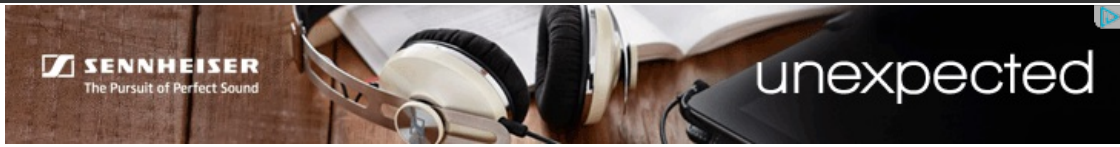


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Twin Cities music notes: Koo Koo for Frank Turner

Article by: CHRIS RIEMENSCHNEIDER, Star Tribune | Updated: October 24, 2013 - 3:25 PM

Minneapolis' fun-loving duo is on a 46-city trek playing with the big kids.



Neil Olstad and Bryan Atchison tried out their new wireless microphones — gifts from tour mate Frank Turner.

Photo: Provided by Koo Koo Kanga Roo, Star Tribune photo galleries » view larger »

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Getting to open for punky British folk-rocker Frank Turner on a 46-city tour would be a big enough deal for any indie music act. But it's huge to [Koo Koo Kanga Roo](#), the chant-leading [Minneapolis](#) electro-pop duo that has been trying for years to outgrow its reputation as a kids-music act.

"We've been selling a lot of adult T-shirts at the merch stand," Koo Koo rah-rah man Bryan Atchison confirmed.

Talking by phone from Vancouver, Atchison and his moustached bandmate Neil Olstad were about to make a 12-hour drive in their "tour van" (a Toyota Camry) to the next gig in Edmonton. They'll roll back into Minneapolis on Monday, opening for Turner at the Varsity Theater on their way to East Coast dates.

Turner handpicked the Koo Koo dudes after catching their playful, audience-participation-filled act four summers ago at the Lowertown Music Fest in [St. Paul](#), the Englishman's coming-out gig locally.

"He told us right then and there that he was going to take us out on

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tour with him," Atchison remembered.

So what's a duo known for [dinosaur-themed dance routines](#) doing opening for a rather serious-sounding, sometimes political songwriter? "Frank has a really fun spirit that transfers onto his audience," Atchison explained, pointing to Turner's whimsical between-song banter and own penchant for audience sing-alongs. "We really do serve the purpose of getting them ready for him."

Among the 1,000-plus-capacity venues on the tour so far, the Fonda Theater in Los Angeles was a pivotal stop, given Atchison's and Olstad's no-duh interest in TV work. They ran into sound trouble while working the crowd with their 50-foot microphone cords, though, which led to a couple of unplugged campfire songs. "People said they were impressed how well we worked on the fly," Atchison said.

Another bonus: "Frank surprised us the next day and bought us wireless microphones. He said they were an early Christmas present."

Speaking of Christmas, the ever-savvy marketers will have a Zumba-like dance-workout DVD for sale in time for the holidays. That's in addition to their new picture book, "Unicorns Are Real," set to a tune of the same name. They're not outgrowing the old fun and games, in other words.

Random mix

The Radio K crew returned from the CMJ Music Fest in New York last weekend with something besides hangovers and hand stamps. The student-run University of Minnesota station won three awards at the college music conference, including Best Champion of the Local Scene and Most Creative Programming. ...

Fresh off her (pre-taped) win in the battle round on NBC's "The Voice," Ashley **DuBose** is temporarily back home and squeezing in a gig with Greg Grease at the U of M's [Whole Music Club](#) (9:30 p.m. Friday, free), an after-party for a Rhymesayers-sponsored lecture/Q&A with Rolling Stone hip-hop scribe Touré and Brother Ali in Coffman Union's Great Hall (6:30 p.m., free). ... Hopkins teen **Holly Henry** also won her battle round on "The Voice" this week, singing the Natalie Imbruglia hit "Torn." ...

Jeremy Messersmith's release party for his Glassnote Records debut has been set for Feb. 22 at First Ave (on sale Friday at noon). The first single "Tourniquet" is available as a download via NPR's ["10 Songs \[We\] Can't Stop Playing"](#) list. ... Road trip alert: The historic [Silver Dome Ballroom](#) in Neillsville, Wis., hosts its annual blues bash Saturday with Lil' Ed & the Blues Imperials and more (5 p.m., \$10). ...

Ever wanted to see 5 a.m. live music or Patty Peterson open for the Totally Gross National Product showcase at Icehouse? You can, thanks to Twin Cities rock/blues vet Mick Sterling's 30-Days Foundation, which is co-hosting 30 straight hours of music-related events at the Nicollet Avenue hangout starting Tuesday at 6 p.m. and ending with the monthly TGNP party late Wednesday, all to benefit Avenues for Homeless Youth. Details at [The30-DaysFoundation.org](#). ...

The musical half of the Sound Unseen fest was announced last week, with Grant Hart and Charlie Parr performing after screenings of new documentaries on them Nov. 13 and Nov. 17, respectively, plus a Ramones tribute Nov. 14, and more, all at the Amsterdam Bar (see [SoundUnseen.com](#)). ... Set to play the Amsterdam on Sunday (8 p.m., \$8), Latin dance party band Malamanya taped a new episode of ["Lowertown Line"](#) for Twin Cities Public Television last week. First, though, comes the series' second episode with Brother Ali, which premieres Thursday (10 p.m., TPT, Ch. 2). Crank it on your TV to scare away those latecomer trick-or-treaters.

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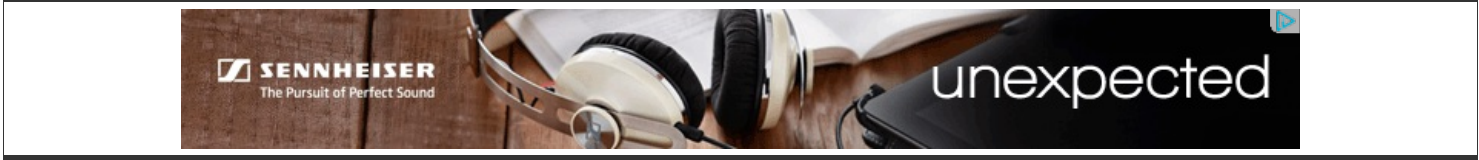
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