

Big Dumb Buildings to unveil multimedia spectacle at Mainsite

Never accuse the minds behind the band Big Dumb Buildings of being unoriginal. The brainchild of Gregg Standridge and Brian Eads, Big Dumb Buildings is the focus of a multimedia spectacle taking place on January 22, at the Mainsite Contemporary Art Gallery on Main Street in Norman.

Together with curator Craig Swan and support from the Norman Arts Council, Standridge and Eads have put great care into creating this showcase. The performance will stand as a lasting testament to the impact of Big Dumb Buildings, a cult-favorite musical act whose songs have withstood the test of time.

The twist? Big Dumb Buildings is an entirely fictitious band — a figment of Standridge and Eads' imaginations. The celebration of their storied career? A joke so good that it doesn't get less funny when you learn the punchline.

It's not entirely fair to refer to Big Dumb Buildings as a joke, hilarious as the concept admittedly is. The exhibition on the 22nd is a collaborative effort between many local artists — the type of event that only happens if everyone involved truly cares about the project. Even if 'joke' is the correct term, it is a lovingly executed one.

Standridge and Eads started playing music together in Norman back in 1985, and they haven't stopped yet. Recently, the duo spent considerable time in the studio, producing and engineering music for other regional artists.

"Being in the studio so much kind of sparked us," Standridge says. "For several years, we have threatened to start writing again. So, we began Big Dumb Buildings with the concept that we would take our raw ideas, and make them work no matter what."

Perhaps the cleverest aspect of the show is that Standridge and Eads aren't playing their own fictitious band's first-ever gig. Instead, sticking with the theme of "The Greatest Legend That Never Was," other musicians will perform covers of songs from the Big Dumb Buildings album "Concrete Cages" — which is a very real CD that will be distributed for free at the exhibition.

The whole endeavor reminds one of carnival shows from days of yore, spun through a sophisticatedly ironic modern lens. Everyone is in on the gag, but that only adds to the fun of being part of it.

"The musical artists will be paying tribute to the band by covering tunes from the

album,” Standridge explains. “The artwork, performances, stage banter, artifacts from old imagined tours, freshly printed concert shirts — these all tie to the history of Big Dumb Buildings.”

Iconic Norman singer/songwriter Mike Hosty headlines the musical performances, which also include SK Love, Michael Bendure and Jeff Richardson. The visual art portion of the show will feature Ellen Moershel and Medeia Starfire.

According to Standridge, Moershel and Starfire will provide “visual works of art based on Big Dumb Buildings songs, and concepts brought to life by [Swan].”

In addition, Brian Dunn will be doing live screen-printing, and attendees are encouraged to bring a shirt or other item for Dunn to print a Big Dumb Buildings logo on. What could possibly be more hip than owning a piece of hand-printed merchandise from a band that never existed?

So what if Big Dumb Buildings isn’t real? Does that make their non-existence any less cause for celebration? Why do we need to have reasons to celebrate in the first place?

Shouldn’t the very fact that we live in a world full of creative, artistic thinkers be reason enough to come together in joyous observance? If this all sounds like something out of an episode of “Portlandia,” is there anything wrong with that?

This line of thought — to the best of my understanding — is the entire point of Big Dumb Buildings. I can’t wait to find out if I’m right, and welcoming with open arms the possibility of being proven wrong.

From time to time, I hear people complain that there’s not enough to do in Norman. In my experience, this is a common sentiment of residents of most mid-sized cities. Not enough unique experiences — no ‘big-city feel,’ whatever that’s supposed to mean.

This is exactly the type of event I point to as proof — at least in Norman — of that argument’s inherent falsehood. Where else can you pay your respects to the most underappreciated non-band to never grace the stage?