

Musician's life, work come alive in movie

By **Steven Uhles** | *Columnist*

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Before this week, I knew little about Tim Buckley. I was vaguely familiar with some of his music and had, like many music fans, heard his name whispered with hushed reverence. I was far more familiar with his son Jeff's music.

Perhaps it's a generational thing, perhaps the perfect illustration is that courageous artists too often go unheralded until it is far too late.

On Wednesday, the Reel Rock film series at the 1102 Back Bar, 1102-B Broad St., will take part in a limited screening of the concert-documentary *Tim Buckley: My Fleeting House*. The film, which uses a chronology of the few film clips that have survived of Mr. Buckley's playing, traces his career from his beginnings as a California folkie armed with earnestness and a 12-string acoustic, through his jazz experimentations and into his latter, more rock-oriented music.

What's amazing about the film, particularly for the uninitiated, is the opportunity to be introduced to the rarest and most admired of musical animals, the true iconoclast. Over the course of his career, which lasted from 1966 until his death in 1975, he invented and reinvented his music, fearlessly confounding fans and critics.

The film allows an exclusive club of Buckley admirers and friends the opportunity to wax poetic about the music produced and the impact, or lack thereof, it had.

What the film fails to do is illuminate the singer's tumultuous life. Narcotics were a constant struggle, and his death was caused by a heroin overdose. His history also included a failed marriage and estrangement from his son, who also died young. These episodes are barely brushed over, perhaps in deference to the artist, perhaps with the mistaken assumption that his personal life and music had little to do with each other.

Still, there's much to embrace in *My Fleeting House*. A portrait of an artist first and a cog in the music machine second, or perhaps third, the film is packed with performance clips that highlight not only his unusual, incredibly emotive voice but also his need to evolve and expand the boundaries of pop music.

Particularly interesting is the section detailing the writing, recording and failure of his Starsailor album. The record drew from free jazz, Afro-Cuban rhythms and his interest in poetry and literature, and remains a confounding and courageous collection of songs.

My Fleeting House should in no way be considered the final word on Tim Buckley. For fans, however, it's a beautiful way to reconnect with an underappreciated artist, and for those of us discovering his work for the first time, it's a lovely introduction.

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Special screening

WHAT: Tim Buckley: My Fleeting House

WHEN: 9 p.m. Wednesday

WHERE: 1102 Back Bar, 1102-B Broad St.

COST: Free

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