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# J.D. Malone reaches for the stars with the release of 'Avalon'

Published: Thursday, September 22, 2011; Last Updated: Thu. Sep 22, 2011, 9:16pm

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By Rob Nagy, For Time Out





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There is nothing phony about singer songwriter J.D. Malone. A self-proclaimed Americana artist, with J.D. what you see is what you get: a seasoned, well-rounded, passionate artist who takes nothing for granted. He is a confident and grounded performer who attributes all of his success to his deep sense of family.

Citing his mother as his greatest influence in his love for music, Malone has meticulously crafted his role as a highly respected wordsmith without boundaries. As far as Malone is concerned, "The sky is the limit."

J.D. is not about chasing a hit record. With a collection of solo and collaborative albums over the past decade, J.D. Malone and his band The Experts, which includes Tom Hampton, Avery Coffee, Jim Miades and Tommy Geddes, have most recently released an independent gem "Avalon," a double CD/ DVD produced by Malone, Dean Sciarra and Phil Nicolo at Studio 4 in Conshohocken.

Malone remains as optimistic as ever over his musical future.

"I felt the band was really good live and I wanted to capture that sound and energy," Malone said. For a year and a half Dean Sciarra, who owns Kimberton based record label [Allaboutmusic.com](http://Allaboutmusic.com), wanted to distribute my earlier albums and EPs around the world, and I had told him for a long time I'm not really interested in that. I didn't want to put my efforts into something that I'd already done. My efforts are in the band that I have and I'm excited about it. Then he saw a show and completely agreed. That was the decision to re-record some of the songs that had already been recorded and add some new ones. I think that helps give us a mature sound. Because it's not all new songs, we're trying to figure it out in the studio. They're songs we've been playing live for a couple of years and they're tried, true and tested."

Malone's efforts did not go to waste. He has put out a solid effort that is sure to please his current allegiance of fans while winning over many new ones along the way. What is equally impressive is the packaging, for which Malone routinely receives a tremendous amount of positive feedback.

"Harking back to the days when you got an album and there were pictures of the band and bios," Malone said. "It's a little bit nostalgic in this day of really slow CD sales. Now here comes a CD that's

kind of nostalgic giving you the whole package. Dean felt it was worthy. He felt the band was worthy, and he felt the music was worthy. As a music lover himself, he yearned for something like this. He felt that this was the project that deserved this kind of attention and packaging. For me the future is bright, and I think that was something the record company was surprised about. I've always said, 'If you're good live you have longevity.' You can make a great album and go on the road and be horrible live and people won't come and see you anymore. I guarantee you if you're good live, you will always have fans."

Born and raised in Bennington, Vt., Malone enlisted in the Navy following high school, spending five years on the missile cruiser The U.S.S. Biddle based out of Norfolk, Va. He went on to become a sonar technician, attaining the rank of Petty Officer First Class.

Following his time in the Navy, he married and relocated to the Philadelphia area where he gained employment, first as a burglar alarm technician, be

fore moving on to making music keyboards for Ensoniq. It wasn't until the early '90s that Malone officially embarked on a career as a musician.

After getting acclimated to the Philly music scene, Malone founded and fronted the band Steamroller Picnic in 1993, ultimately releasing an independent debut album "Grow." One year later the band was featured on MTV's "Advance Warning," a segment that showcases bands on the rise. Over the next few years, Malone performed under the name Malone and McWilliams, releasing "Malone and McWilliams Greatest Hits" (2005) and "Malone and McWilliams, Los Angeles" (2006). Under the moniker J.D. Malone and the Experts, Malone released the album "Mad Cow" in 2007 and "Dia de los Muertos" in 2008.

Over the next couple of years Malone earned some high profile opportunities, including performing at the Bethlehem Musikfest in 2009. The following year, ABC did a feature on Malone on the TV program "Tuned In." He also released his sophomore solo album "Use This Side and Save My Face."

After signing on with local music mogul Dean Sciarra of It's About Music, J.D. Malone and The Experts released their latest effort "Avalon."

"I made a conscious decision many years ago to get rid of things that I considered frivolous," Malone said. "I asked myself, what's important to me? To be with my family, that's a priority.

To be a songwriter, that's a priority. I've whittled music down, for me, as loving to sing and play. If it's in somebody's backyard or if it's in front of 2,000 people and everybody's having a good time it's the same to me. I have people I build relationships with, and that's the most important part to me. I won't even call them fans. They become friends. I don't want to come off as if I'm too good for any situation. I think I've always been this way, but it has just amplified as I've gotten older. I see myself doing this for the rest of my life, and I see myself becoming a better songwriter and having the best gigs of my life still in front of me. The band I have now, I can see us being a band for the rest of our lives. We're all doing it for the right reasons, and the reason is definitely not money. If money comes into it and we can become more comfortable it's gravy, because we're still going to do it anyway."

In keeping with his desire to make a difference beyond his music, Malone has recently created the "Do What You Can Do" project, which is attempting to carry the message to the average person to change their lives by doing what they can do to make a difference in other people's lives and, in so doing, change their own.

"How do we address the fallen spirit of people who just don't feel connected — who don't think their voice can even be heard?" Malone said. "Resolving this problem is what's at the core of the Do What You Can Do Project. Getting people to feel better about themselves in today's economy where people are losing their homes, their jobs, and wondering why America has become a little less than it used to be is a daunting task. The way to change America is to change the mindset of the people — one person at a time. People need to know that they can make a difference by becoming a part of a unified community consciousness that enables them to reconstitute a better America."

J.D Malone & The Experts will start the Do What You Can Do Tour in Nashville on Oct. 13th supporting the organizations, Second Harvest Food Drive and Soles4Souls. Joining them will be artists from Nashville who care enough about this project to donate their time and talent to support this effort - including Craig Bickhardt, Don Henry, Idlewheel featuring Jack Sundrud (of Poco), Trena Barnes (formerly of Cowboy Crush), Madonna Nash (North Carolina's female Country Singer of the Year), Joe Cerisano and others. The tour will continue to Knoxville, Tenn., Norfolk, Va., and Allentown, where JD and friends will perform to help wounded veterans and then on to Philadelphia to help the homeless.

"Our modest goal of \$10,000 is not designed to fund this tour forever," Malone said. "It may only get us through the first two or three shows at best. But please know that the Do What You Can Do Tour will continue to visit as many cities and towns as we can reach for as long as we can continue to sing and play.

*J.D. Malone & The Experts play Chaplin's Music Cafe, 66 N. Main St., Spring City, Friday at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$15 and are available by calling 610-792-4110 or at [www.chaplinsmusiccafe.com](http://www.chaplinsmusiccafe.com)*

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