

# On the blues frontier

Auburn rockers Shotgun Sawyer get raw and experimental on *Bury the Hatchet*



PHOTO COURTESY OF KAT JARMAN

This season's yield consists of three fully grown rock musicians: David Lee (left), Dylan Jarman (center) and Brett Sanders (right).

BY TYLER HEBERLE

"That sort of scenery was pivotal, I think, in all of our childhoods," Sanders says.

Auburn is a hill town that hasn't changed much since the Gold Rush, Jarman says. It's not far from Grass Valley, where all three members attended Bear River High School. In January 2015, they started attempting Led Zeppelin covers at open-mic nights.

The band's turning point was a performance in Reno about two years ago. "Ever since then, we've just been like, 'We need to play every show with that

much intensity and energy,'" Lee says. "And we have, I think."

Fast forward to 2019, and Shotgun Sawyer has toured the West Coast in support of *Bury the Hatchet*, played shows in Europe and has been crowned the "loudest band ever" by *Insight* host Beth Ruyak on Capital Public Radio.

Later this year, the trio will do their best ZZ Top impression at a Halloween show with local metal band Chrome Ghost and indie-rockers Vinnie Guidera & the Dead Birds. Jarman says the band has also shot two music videos that will release at the end of 2019, and will return to Europe next summer.

Jarman values the "raw, nervous live energy" of playing to a crowd, and wants to make a live album in the vein of Muddy Waters' record *Fathers and Sons*.

Shotgun Sawyer has played around 200 shows, he says. Around 15 to 20 were closer to home in Nevada City, where the band will return on July 26 to play at Cooper's with Bay Area bands Older Sun and War Cloud.

Shotgun Sawyer fans can expect to hear new material, Jarman says.

"We have some stuff that hasn't been recorded, a couple of them that we have been playing for awhile, and a couple of things that ... don't even have lyrics yet," he says. □

**On the surface, there aren't many similarities** between progressive rock and the blues.

Progressive bands often become renowned for technical proficiency, while traditional blues uses repetition for emotionally raw, musical catharsis.

But listen to Shotgun Sawyer, an Auburn-based rock trio, and those seemingly dissonant styles can still work in tandem. They find genuine chemistry in their musical contradictions. Bassist Brett Sanders finds inspiration in the bass-forward band Yes and Geddy Lee of Rush, while drummer David Lee cites Tool's Danny Carey and Primus' Tim Alexander.

And for Dylan Jarman—the trio's guitarist, vocalist and primary lyricist—it all goes back to the blues.

"Ever since I was 16 or 17, I've listened a lot more to John Lee Hooker and Muddy Waters than I do anybody else," Jarman says.

Hear it all come together in "(Let Me) Take You Home," the second track off Shotgun Sawyer's recently released sophomore record *Bury the Hatchet*. What starts with a memorably fuzzy guitar riff and a slow-burn groove ends with a frenetic instrumental rush toward its final riff.

The record's next track introduces another important aspect of the band. They're Auburn through and through, and "Backwoods Bear" proves it with lyrics such as: "With ginger ale and some kerosene / You better wake up in the morning under evergreens."

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**Dylan Jarman**  
frontman, Shotgun Sawyer

*Bury the Hatchet* is available on CD, vinyl and digital streaming services. Check out Shotgun Sawyer 9 p.m. Friday, July 26 at Cooper's with War Cloud and Older Sun. Tickets are \$10; 235 Commercial St. in Nevada City.

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