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Vital Source Exclusive: Interview with Mike Watt

Spielung with the Thud Meister

By Jeremy M. Rottgen

DIY (do it yourself) musicians are the roots of art and culture. They support nearly every fabric of music in our society. Pioneering the form, and living life reinforcing the idea of making music for the sheer love, is Mike Watt, former member of the seminal Minutemen, spiel-meister and thud staff virtuoso.

Watt's new album, *The Second Man's Middlestand*, documents a period in his life that was rocky, to say the least. Near death, Watt realized what he had to do and that was to make a somewhat biographical record of his experience.

Vital Source: What do you think about Milwaukee?

Mike Watt: Been playing there since the Minutemen days. It's my 53rd tour. I always get asked what my favorite town is. Well, people are people. I just hope I meet interesting ones.

VS: I've heard you really like playing to younger audiences.

MW: I'm not only playing for younger people, I'm playing with younger people. Just recently, with the Stooges, now I'm the youngest guy in the band. Being middle-aged is a trippy place because you're not feeble, but you have wisdom. The whole idea of a middle-aged punk rocker is pretty bizarre. Punk got so accepted. It's something I'd never guess. I can't really think it's a style of music; it's a state of mind.

VS: Tell me about the name of the current tour, "El Mar Cura Todo."

MW: The Sea Cures All. I dig the water. There's something about it. My father was a sailor. There's something about the kayak and being out there all alone and being connected with something that's not all plastic. Things don't have to be so contrived and fucking stiff.

VS: I hear you like to play Coltrane covers in your sets.

MW: John Coltrane was an amazing cat. He was once asked what he was trying to do with his music. He said, "Uplift people." Direct connect, you know? I try to put myself in challenging situations to hopefully grow. Bass is a weird instrument. Most people look at the tile in the bathroom. I look at the grout. I'm telling a story. That's where I come from.

Playing with D. Boon, he was a very open person. Like listening to Coltrane. Pettibone introduced me to that. Just like a good painting or an article. Not cookie cutter or Xerox.

Jeremy M. Rottgen -

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