

## **Alberta Avenue: the album**

**Sandra Sperounes, The Edmonton Journal**

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EDMONTON - Alberta Avenue is one of the poorest -- yet most artistically promising -- neighbourhoods in Edmonton.

You can feel the crackle of creativity in the air as you walk along 118th Avenue. The Avenue Theatre, a former indoor skate park, was recently renovated with the hopes of turning it into a full-time music venue. An old furniture store is being converted into a dance studio. And construction workers are erecting the frame of the Arts Hub, a \$6-million building that will house the Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts.

"Like any other area, it does have its criminal elements, but it's pretty vibrant and it's going to look a lot better soon," says Scott Peters, an Alberta Avenue resident and one of the frontmen of Captain Tractor.

He's also the force behind Songs From The Ave, a collection of tunes written by musicians who live in the neighbourhood, including Terry Morrison, Barry Westerlund, Paul Bellows and Captain Tractor.

The songs range from jazz to Celtic rock, from historical (It Takes a Hockey Town, The Rat Creek Rebellion) to snapshots of the seedier side of Alberta Avenue (Bumtown, Soar).

Singer-songwriter James Murdoch also contributes a track, Letters From Home, inspired by a cache of 60-year-old letters he found in the credenza of his Norwood home.

He thinks documenting the neighbourhood's history on disc only makes the community stronger.

"I don't think we'll get rid of crime by making a record, but it is kind of a statement of the fact that there is a community within the community that does care about where we live, and we're proud of all the dirt and grit," he says.

"Plus, it's pretty neat to see how many artists live there -- it's the only place we can afford."

Murdoch and the rest of the Songs From The Ave musicians will perform their tunes at Avenue Theatre as part of the Kaleido! Festival, a three-day extravaganza of arts in the area. There are two performances today, at 3 p.m. and 10:30 p.m. Tickets are \$8 at the venue, 9030 118th Ave.

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