

## IN CONCERT : Laying Low No More — Headless Household celebrates 25 years (ok 26)

By Brett Leigh Dicks, NEWS-PRESS CORRESPONDENT

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### HEADLESS HOUSEHOLD

**When:** 8 p.m. Friday, March 19

**Where:** Lobero Theatre, 33 E. Canon Perdido St.

**Cost:** \$15 general, \$12 seniors and students

**Information:** 963-0761, [lobero.com](http://lobero.com)



Courtesy photo

It seems only fitting that, next Friday night, Headless Household will finally unleash its grandiose sense of melodic eclecticism upon the equally grandiose surrounds of the Lobero Theatre. Having wielded a liberal musical spirit around Santa Barbara for 26 years, the band's four cornerstones — Dick Dunlap, Tom Lackner, Chris Symer and Joe Woodard — have by now occupied just about every stage in town. But, despite their musical endurance and unashamed dexterity, they have yet to grace Santa Barbara's oldest.

"We were thrilled to be invited to play the Lobero," said Woodard in a recent interview. "There is the majesty and mythic quality of the place itself, where we have all heard many great shows, but also the fact that the band has been through this weirdly amorphous period in the last few years, and it just seemed right to do something with a bigger splash. All in all, it seemed like a wonderful kind of synchronicity, of project and timing and venue. It really forced us to crystallize and finish the project. Deadlines are a beautiful thing."

The project and deadline to which Woodard (full disclosure: Woodard adheres to other deadlines as a correspondent for Scene magazine) alludes is the latest addition to Headless Household's already-impressive discography, "Basemento." The recording is the collective's eighth studio venture and as such, an extravagant launch might suggest the album itself occupies an equal statue. "Basemento" is a diverse and poetic celebration of 25 years of musical synchronicity, lusciously spread across two discs.

While the double album certainly exerts a hefty presence, it might very well never have been. An hour after Julie Christensen wrapped up a vocal session for the album in November 2008, the

Tea Fire ravaged Santa Barbara. And with Lackner's recording studio residing deep within the burn zone, the project was forced into a yearlong hiatus. Miraculously, the studio was spared and, when the community returned to something akin to normalcy, so too did the album, with an even greater vigor.

"The 'double standard' came about quite organically, as a function of the fact that we spent so long working on and also contemplating what to make of this album," Woodard explained. "Once back in action, Tom came up with the brilliant idea of making a double album, which would accommodate the idea of separating our 'inside' and 'outside' music instincts on two separate discs. So now, those who like our 'songs' will likely take more to one disc, and others, the 'other.' We think it's a shrewd, consumer-oriented tactic. But we could be wrong."

The collective's "outside" musical instincts incorporate the talents of a diverse array of collaborators. Santa Barbara's favorite troubadour, Glen Phillips, and resident chanteuse, Julie Christensen, lend their considerable presence to the project. Longtime k.d. lang collaborator and, more recently, Joe Henry sideman David Piltch brings in his acoustic bass, and folk-rock icon Kenny Edwards offers his mandolin.

"As an obsessive songwriter, I tend to go down many roads in the interest of satisfying my curiosities," explained Woodard. "And then to have great musicians like the people you mentioned agree to play along is the greatest creative thrill in my life. I definitely am thinking of a musician-specific situation, given the spin of a song. Usually, so far — and knock on wood — things go well. I feel like a lucky dog to have these people involved in our band."

Among the honorary householders is Piltch. Having been a peripheral member of the collective since first moving to Santa Barbara in the early '90s, Piltch's talents might be routinely employed by the caliber of k.d. lang, Madeleine Peyroux and Bill Frisell. When not playing to the world, Piltch enjoys dissolving into the local musical community. Not only has he been a regular collaborator with Headless Household and other local artists, his recent solo album, "Minister of the Interior," was released on Woodard's Household Ink label.

"My philosophy with that record was to take the path of least resistance," laughed Piltch. "I just wanted to work with someone who liked it, and Joe was very enthusiastic. ... The community aspect is important to whatever I do. Because so little of the work I do has to do with the immediate community that I live in, I'm always happy to do something that I feel I can contribute something to.

"Headless Household are very ambitious with what they do and they are very appreciative of anybody who can contribute anything to that, which always makes working with them so much fun."

While a sense of community is natural for Headless Household, perhaps more defining is that it is this community, Santa Barbara, in particular.

"I do think that the fact of our being oddballs in the glitzy backwater of Santa Barbara helped our sense of self and has kept us from dissipating into other projects and oblivion," mused Woodard.

"But that said, there is so much rich creative energy in this community to tap into, and the unreasonable beauty of the place tends to both keep us here and give us reason to carry forth."