

# Musikanto @ Hideout

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Friday

May 20 2011

## Musikanto

Where: Hideout

When: May 7th, 2011

Grade: 5 out of 5 meatballs

Reviewed by: Lindsey Shaw

Upon entering the Hideout (which is literally hidden and tucked away beyond the freeway, nestled behind industrial facades and offset by a trusty Home Depot), one might feel like they're in an affable V.F.W. hall or lakeside cabin, replete with plastic bass, carp, and the like hanging nearby. Inadvertently, this provides a prime space for irresistible musical acts, like Musikanto, to perform.

As the black and red checkered linoleum floor filled with various footwear, shades of plaid, and a range of ages, I teetered back and forth on the overused cushion of a spinning stool while we all anticipated a mesmerizing folk show ahead. Will Phalen, embodying and honoring "a man and his guitar" motif, did not disappoint upon commencement of the event. Once Phalen wrapped up his gripping set (complete with the cameo of a banjo), there was a solemn yet charming vibe infused throughout the room. The crowd was soon allowed to sink into an intimate, acoustic-heavy, melodic, soft, story-telling excursion.



Following the introduction of an intense, politic-heavy poem read by a shaky but commanding friend of the artist, Musikanto began alone on stage with heart-exposing lyrics and a powerful instrumental execution. With a perfect touch of rasp and the slightest balance of twang emitting from his throat, he sang, "Starting not to need you no more/I go to bed tell myself goodnight/See you one more time, riding on." Speedily yet precisely on his guitar, the leader of the evening's folk and rock showcase let a piece of his soul fly from his mouth and ricochet off the microphone into our minds, lending a true delivery of art. It didn't matter how many times an amp screeched or a cord came loose; no technical glitch could have hindered the adhesive being laid between listener and singer.

"Try so hard not to say what I mean/Stay in between/So afraid I'm gonna be like this the rest of my life," he shared, with a hint of Johnny Cash in his delivery. He stood before us, emblazing his own piece of legend in a loose knitted cap, wool zip-up, and cowboy boots hidden by ankle-hugging jeans. At one point I noticed something very archaic and profound about his guitar playing, only to watch him change size and acoustic type, and then incorporate a harmonica fastened around his neck — juggling the varying tasks with ease. While Musikanto espoused the idea of a man's heart coming to life on stage in poem form, the show did not lack range, energy or brotherly love.

Joined by band members and best friends, the tattered Oriental rug-covered stage now featured an accordion and a properly represented kick drum. Musikanto removed his cap. With the tempo up

and electric guitar spots included, that soft “play this for your girlfriend to swoon” portion of the evening was rescinded a bit to usher in more ambient, muscle wrenching, high-energy beats. A chipper clip with the “Need to come undone/Shell shock body to find love” got knees bending and full bodies engaged for an all-inclusive heaviness interjected with a banjo, juxtaposed appropriately with an opposing spectrum of percussion. All the boys then sipped Miller High Life bullets coyly in unison, leaving impressions in musical time. After he featured yet another facet of talent on the piano and performed “Byzantine” complimented by heavy cymbal crashes, Musikanto led his mates on a trajectory back to something gentle and guiltless. Revamping again to a heightened exertion, with vocal chords stretching almost to a scream and drums shaking the air, a rowdy jam session ensued. Afterwords, the crowd chanted, “Take your shirt off!” He didn’t. Instead, they played “Just A Shot Away,” rounding out the set with pulse, strength, and intrigue — what the icon holds after playing in the vintage Chicago bar tucked away and hidden on Wabansia road.

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