

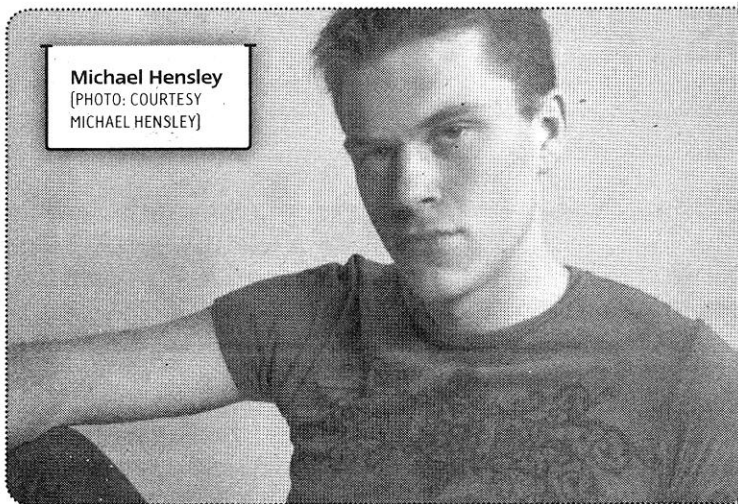
PROFILE MICHAEL HENSLEY



NEW ENGLAND'S PREMIER GAY NEWSPAPER

PROFILE WILLIAM HENDERSON

MICHAEL HENSLEY IS READY FOR HIS CLOSE-UP



Michael Hensley
(PHOTO: COURTESY
MICHAEL HENSLEY)

EMERSON COLLEGE GRAD PLAYS MILKY WAY LOUNGE ON MARCH 22; RELEASING FULL-LENGTH ALBUM IN APRIL

The release of Michael Hensley's first EP, "Everyone Wants to Feel Something," last October was supposed to get him discovered. He launched

a Web site, tracked down a few DJs willing to incorporate the club-ready title track and Postal Service-like "Take Me Away" into their sets and he asked local Web- and print-based magazines and newspapers (including this one) to mention him on their music pages.

Six months later, he's sold enough

EPs to warrant compiling a full-length album and he's booked his first live gig in nearly four years, a slot at an upcoming group show at the Milky Way Lounge in Jamaica Plain. Had you asked him six months ago if he planned to play live, he would have said no. He didn't envision his career in electronica-based songs playing well live.

But the thing about Hensley is that he's always watching and listening to what's breaking musically in the scene around him. Lately, he's gotten the idea.

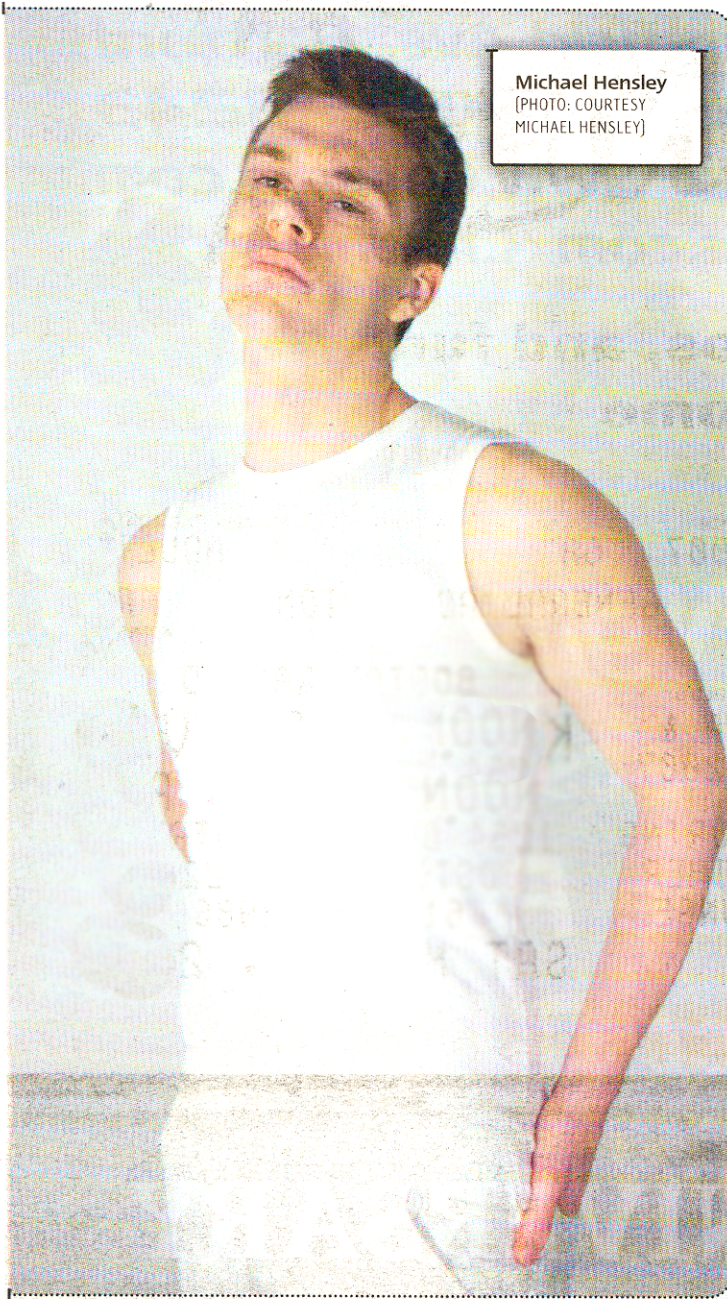
"I just thought I needed a change.

I can't wait until I'm 40 to start a career," said Hensley. "I made the decision that I was going to start that career now."

Jumpstarting his career, he thinks now, means getting his music out there, making himself heard, but an EP does not a full set make. And with only the one album to hawk at shows, would he really be able to generate any kind of rabid fanbase? And so it was that Hensley started laying down the tracks for a new album.

This full-length album, tentatively titled "Fire Behind Me," is a collection of what Hensley thinks are his best songs written during the past five years. Some of them are new and still forming. He still hasn't wrapped his head around the lyrics in one of the songs, but expects that when he does, it will blow away anything he's previously written. He also isn't sure whether or not going the confessional route on the first album makes the most sense, but he's willing to give it a try.

"I draw from my personal life experience that has shaped who I am," said Hensley. He's single. Likes it that way.



Michael Hensley
(PHOTO: COURTESY
MICHAEL HENSLEY)

Enjoying dating himself, however cheesy that may sound. Short of referencing a "rough relationship" that he was in and out of for the better part of a year, ("I sort of maybe fell in love once a couple of years ago," he said), he is mum on the more personal details of his life. "I guess right now I'm just figuring out how I'm going to live."

Most of the last few years has been about him figuring out how to live. He moved to the Boston area from Southern Maine to attend Tufts University. He was undeclared at the time, transferred to Emerson College at the end of his freshman year. At Emerson, he studied music and production. His first day, in a class called simply "Poetry in Song," he was asked to write a complete song in less than 48 hours.

"That's when I realized that I could do this," admitted Hensley.

Musically, he knows he's played it safe lately. His songs sound a lot like his favorite musicians (BT, Depeche Mode, maybe even a little Tori Amos), and he's working to create a more unique sound "that is a little more

sexy and a little less serious."

"My songs aren't necessarily humorless," he said. "They've just been how I've gotten through some of the more difficult stuff in my life. I've been trying to have more fun with it."

After the interview ends, Hensley later admits in an e-mail that he couldn't stop thinking about it. He kept going over what he said about himself, the little he said about his ex and he wondered if he had left something necessary unsaid.

"I realized in retrospect," he wrote, "that I may not have sold myself quite as fervently as I should have."

And you'd think that he would make a last-ditch effort to further sell himself or his music, but he doesn't. Just extends an invitation to his show and accepts that what will come of the story will come of the story. As with his music and his life, whatever happens is what is and was supposed to happen. •

HENSLEY PLAYS THE MILKY WAY LOUNGE AND LANES, 403-405 CENTRE STREET, JAMAICA PLAIN ON THURSDAY, MARCH 22 AND FANEUIL HALL DAY DURING BOSTON PRIDE ON JUNE 2. FOR MORE INFORMATION CONNECT TO WWW.MICHAEL-HENSLEY.COM.