Silver to gold

Chicago folk band’s new album has been, quite literally, an investment

BY STEVE JOHNSON | Tribune reporter

Recording their new record, “We Have Everything/We Have Nothing,” was only the beginning for the Chicago band Stolen Silver. Since the CD came out in May, there’s been a flurry of work, hustle and exposure to try to get it heard, everything from singing the national anthem at Wrigley Field to regular opening gigs for Gary Sinise’s Lt. Dan Band to Friday’s big event, a vinyl release party and gig at Schubas.

Even selling the CDs at shows isn’t as easy as it used to be, thanks to a technological change, said Dan Myers, one of the two frontmen and songwriters in Stolen Silver.

“Once they started touring, people wanted autographs on the CDs,” said Myers, 37. “Now people want selfies.”

Photos snapped on a fan’s cell phone, going without saying, don’t pay the bills in the same way.

At the Botanic Garden, all the pathways are yours

BY STEVE JOHNSON | Tribune reporter

It isn’t easy to find all of the serene nooks and calming corners at the Chicago Botanic Garden. Some of the paths at the park seem perfectly content to go only one way. And at least a couple of the themed gardens are best reached by wading through another garden.

But I had made my way up a one-way path to a popular rock garden and, on this mild, sunny August Friday, was teeming with visitors in some of the more central spots.

“I wish that all these people would go away,” one visitor said.

MUSEUMS

Chicago Botanic Garden

An occasional series with a big picture look at Chicago area’s top museums, zoos and nature parks

is both inspiring and daunting to the average backyard spooky wielder.

I needed to rest my legs and lower back from a spell — you can literally walk all day here — and think about the place and my own gardening sins, which mostly involve omission and an eager passover, weeds.

But in one of those coincidences that would seem contrived if you saw it in a soap opera or a thriller, we were stopped by a virtual Connecticut artist with a camera and a sense of humor.

In the rarefied atmosphere of one of the world’s most famous art museums, a video was shot of our visit, and it was replayed to a crowd of people sitting down at the nearby cafe. We all seemed a little embarrassed by it, but it was a nice change from the usual museum routine.
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"When I started touring, people wanted autographs on the CDs," said Myers. "Now people want selfies!"

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At the Botanic Garden, all the pathways are yours

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It isn't easy to find all of the serene nooks and calming crannies at the Chicago Botanic Garden. Some of the paths at the park seem perfectly content to go one way. At least a couple of the themed gardens are best reached by walking through another garden.

But I had made my way up a one-way path to a hilltop garden, the highest natural point on Evening Island and as quiet a spot as you might find in the north suburban nature preserve. The Chicago Botanic Garden has been growing in popularity and, on this mild, sunny August Friday, was teeming with visitors in some of its more central spots.

"I wish that all these people would go away," one visitor had said earlier, perhaps not recognizing that she was, in fact, one of the people crowding things up.

I was about to sit on one of the hilltop garden's big rock chunks and reflect on my day at the 365-acre Botanic Garden, situated 24 miles north of downtown Chicago, in Glencoe, at one of the Chicago region's priciest properties.

The day had included bicycling and craft beer (as, by definition, a good day), what has to be earth's most surreal model railroad and so much meticulously landscaped acreage that it is both inspiring and daunting to the average backyard grade wailer.

I needed to rest my legs and lower back for a spell, you can literally walk all day here — and think about the place and the own gardening sins, which mostly involve omission and its eager sidekick, weeds.

But in one of those coincidences that would seem contrived if you saw it in a movie, in between the time my knees bent to sit and my backside hit the rock, a clatter of deeply resonant bells seemed to peel out.

MUSEUMS (10)

Chicago Botanic Garden
An occasional series with a big-picture look at Chicago area's top museums, zoos and nature parks

Ed Zwick, left, is executive producer for his son Jesse's low-budget ensemble drama "About Alex."

Following in his father's footsteps?
Jesse Zwick's 'About Alex' has a lot in common with his dad's TV series 'Thirtysomething'

By Amy Kaufman

Jesse Zwick is a tall kid in an orange T-shirt. When he smiles, he looks like his father, the veteran film and TV producer/director Edward Zwick.

But Jesse Zwick's debut as a writer/producer/director, "About Alex," is a contemporary indie film about an underachieving 20-something, played by Justin Bartha, that couldn't be more different from his dad's "Thirtysomething.

"They're two different animals," Jesse Zwick says, referring to the earlier show, which focused on the personal and professional lives of three married couples in their late 30s.

"My father and I grew up with a different perspective. He's always been interested in business and the world. I was interested in what it's like to grow up in the present day."

Jesse Zwick, 26, latching out at his dad when it comes to business, seems to respect him so much. On a recent Friday, they met at a cafe at Bergamont Station in Santa Monica, Calif., a spot where all the kids from Jesse's high school, Crossroads, used to hang after the bell rang. It was the first time the father and son had sat down together to discuss "About Alex," which opened this month to mixed reviews. They were trying to figure out how to relate to each other as fellow filmmakers.

"Ed, a warm presence with a patchy beard, was deferential to Jesse, allowing him to do most of the talking. The father and son don't look much alike — Jesse is of fairer complexion and has light eyes — but they speak with the same deliberate cadence.

Growing up in the famous '80s show, Jesse never imagined he'd follow in his father's footsteps. "I've come famous in the '90s when, along with Marshall Herskovitz, I created the setplicity."

"It's difficult to imagine J

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MUSEUMS

Cernan Earth and Space Center
 Triton College, 2000 W. River Grove, 708-546-0300, triton.edu/cernan
 Ongoing: Apollo/Lunar Landscape Diorama: A two-part exhibit that combines Apollo missions to the moon and looks at future explorations of Mars.

Des Plaines History Caravan
 781 Pearson St., Des Plaines; 847-397-5396, desplaineshistory.org
 Through December: “Greetings From Des Plaines”: Find out what there is to do when traveling to and from Des Plaines.

DuSable Museum of African American History
 740 E. 35th Place; 773-444-6660, dusablemuseum.org
 Ongoing: “A Slow Walk to Greatness: The Harold Washington Story”: The multimedia exhibition takes a look at the life and legacy of the former mayor.

Francis Willard House
 1730 Chicago Ave., Evanston; 847-328-7650, franciswillardhouse.org
 Ongoing: “Lifting as We Climb”: The exhibit is part of the Evanston Women’s History Project, an effort to document and preserve the accomplishments of notable Evanston women.

Garfield Park Conservatory
 300 N. Central Park Ave.; 773-537-6220, garfieldparkconservatory.org
 Ongoing: The 5-acre “Urb in Horto” (City in a Garden) was designed to celebrate Chicago’s ecosystem. It is a model how to transform a thriving green city. Special events and tours take place throughout the year to enhance the scenic stroll through nature.

Museum of Contemporary Photography
 Columbia College, 600 S. Michigan Ave.; 312-663-4554, mpca.org
 Through Oct.: “Phantoms in the Dirt”: Artists explore the cryptic marks left in nature by human activity, and the tangible and intangible significance.

Pullman State Historic Site
 111 E. 111th St., 773-237-2041, pullmanmuseum.org
 Thru Nov.: “At the Root of It All”: A glimpse of the Pullman factory site the first and third Sunday, 11:30 a.m., meet at the visitor’s center. (Wear comfortable shoes and weather-appropriate clothing)

Get your path

Botanic, from Rage!

from the very trees all around me. Ick on paper cannot do the noise justice. “Clang! CLANG! CLANG–CLANG–CLANG!” Like that, but more load, more capital.

Though partly hidden by leaves and branches, the island’s carousel is right next door to the building, and the time, wouldn’t you know it was exactly 4 o’clock. The carillon wanted to let everyone in the garden know this chronological fact, but it seemed to want to let me in particular know. (A carillon, for the unfamiliar, it essentially a tower full of bells selected for quality, including volume.)

I jumped a little. I laughed a little, because the timing really was absurd. And of course, as I gathered my breath afterward, the only phone call I received all day came in.

But interrupted peacefulness is persisted by the Chicago Botan- ics Garden. Usually, you’ll have to pinch yourself once or twice in the course of a visit to keep from blushing out entirely. This is one pretty, pretty place, boasting what my notes from the day refer to as an “in-one-face serenity.”

My scribbles also included the phrase “preternaturally pretty” and I think it’s fair. One beyond nature, this is a botany as an upmarket class- room, done up with all of the polish of the American art and gnoming that goes on. Money and make can create. Here, even the parking lots are lovely.

To be sure, at the Chicago Botanic Garden you can just walk in the woods or ponds in the northeast section of the property. That’s nice, cooling and calming, a welcome respite from the urban or suburban environments most of us inhabit. But the showpieces are the almost three-fourths of the grounds that are cultivated, and each garden you visit is more interesting, more different.

Museums

Visitors walk through the Chicago Botanic Garden’s Japanese Garden, where the landscaping has a formal and artistic feel.

Traffic from an adjacent highway (Interstate Highway 94), like at the Morton Arboretum (with 130-500) to the west of Chicago.

But these are goblins with a place that is entrance in the big picture and in most of the small ones. It defines you to take a bad picture or, really, to look in your pocket. It shares its bounty with you. You can often buy plants to take home, or vegetables at the farm- ers markets (first and third Sundays, through Oct.). And for all of its size and scope, small, human touch abounds. One of the best in the series of little chalkboard signs mounted in gardens throughout the facility.

Other institutions these days try to make their sign dynamic and easily changeable by using Pads. These mini chalkboards were more effective and for more personalization (although perhaps less appealing to small children, but their parents, you can write plenty to them).

A trip through, I began to feel like I was in conversation with the sign’s author, who was serving as the best kind of tour guide when I wanted her, but entirely willing to be ignored when I didn’t.

Those signs, I learned, are the work of one person, Karen Za- worski, whose title at the garden is interpretive writer. From her I learned about victory gardens, the “hard pruning” of the snap- horn sumac, the wisdom of planting hostas in your shady areas, an upcoming bed & breakfast, and tomato weekend (Saturday and Sunday) and how many miles the Model Railroad Garden trains travel in a year ($24,000).

If a surprise carillon bell is one kind of stimulus, Zaworski’s modest but informative mes- sage were exactly the other.

Do n’t miss: The Trolley Bridge, setting you walk on Evanston Island from the east, near the Science Center, is a beautiful, softly curving structure. And the big restored prairie and meadow on the south end of the park are among the least-visted areas and, therefore, perhaps the most worthy of a long, contemplative walk.

Chicago Botanic Garden

When: 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. through Sept. 1
Where: 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe
Tickets: $25 per car; 847-835-5440 or chicago.botanic.org
Pick your path

Botanic, from Page 1

From the very trees all around me, Iron paper cannot do the job. Nothing could be more natural than "CLANG!" "CLANG-CLANG!" Like that, but more loud, more energetic. Though partly hidden by leaves and branches, the land's carousel tower is right next door to the hills, and the ambient noise wouldn't you know, was exactly 4 o'clock. The carousel wanted to let me know in no uncertain terms how this chronic fact, but seems occasionally to let me in particular know. (A carousel, for the unfamiliar, is essentially a tower full of bells selected for qualities, including volume.) I was glad a bell had a little bit of time, because the timing really was absurd. And, of course, as I gathered my bearings, the only phone call I received all day was from a stopped, jampacked street. But interrupted peacefulness is atypical at the Chicago Botanic Garden. Usually, your only chance to pitch yourself once or twice in the midst of a visit is by being blown out from being listened to. This is one part of what's pretty, what being natural at this site. People refer to as an "in-your-face" experience. My scribbles also included the phrase "in-your-face pretentious," and I think it's a fair one. Beyond mere nature, this botanic garden's also less about the pretentious, done out with all of the pretentiousness. Fairly simple admission and grooming and that taste and time and care can create. Here nature and art are lovingly. It's the weather. At the Chicago Botanic Garden you can just walk in the woods on paths in the not-so-natural but very-special world of American landmarks (especially Frank Lloyd Wright homes). It's bizarre and effective, surprisingly extensive and well suited for a separate admission charge ($6 for adults).

The Rose Gardens contain an expansive lawn with scores of varieties of the superlative flower. That's right next to the English Walled Garden, which contains the traditional styles of walled horticulture from the old country. The English hold big homages to Renaissance-era gardens in which the main visitor center is often to be found, or at least approached. There's a Waterfall Garden, featuring what you'd expect, plus ducks that visit sometimes, trained, unintentionally, to hang around and help feed the birds. The Enabling Garden shows off the myriad designs that can work for people with disabilities, while, just behind it, the Sensory Garden displays plants that speak especially to people with visual impairments. None of those gardens - there are 28 - is a Stoickian stamp, by the way. They all went breadth and ambition and moments of absolute charm. But my favorite was the Landscape Garden, intended to show what can be achieved at home (with the signage doesn't bother you). You can look at a section of a top-tier landscape architect and a team of weed-pulling misfits who stop by three or four times a week. It is a pipe dream of place for a person of my budget priorities, but what a beautiful dream.

But then my favorite became a much more modest one, looking despite being a show case for New American Garden Style of landscape design. It's 5 acres, and it's south of the main gardens, easy to find, room and to think (and have a warm place in your beige in the weather).

That, of course, was soon supplanted by Japanese Garden, two islands to the east, and then the larger, more ornate and formal on the property. There are pleasant water features, but not as well connected as you might think. I walked intimately, as well as pebbled-covered, which can get a little bit boring for looking. The sign there explains that the original design style presents an "abstract and idealized" vision of natural elements, and that's true of the Chicago Botanic Garden as a whole.

The garden is a monument to pathways. Whether of brick, gravel, stone or mud, they snake everywhere on the grounds. In a day you can get lost, but the signs explain how the meandering paths are the "hard pruning" of the garden's designers, not a grand project in plant development. There are too few of them are from a joint graduate program in plant biology and landscape architecture with Northwestern University. Much of the research has been in the Plant Conservation Science Center, opened in 2009 and accessible to visitors. Also, the institute is open to the public. Their research is aimed at answering garden questions from the public, separating seeds in the sciences' budding and, to say the annual garden.

This is not a campus at rest. Construction starts in the fall on ambitious new project, the north and Learning Campus, which will include kids gardens and classroom space. A more current bit of construction news involves the addition of a new plant buildings. Whenever I ride, I try to ride time depending, for at least 10 of the 17 miles leading to it on the Cook County Forest Preserve's first-rate North Branch Trail. A new connector on garden property, opening up that trail with the Green Bay Trail to the north, will open in September. Given the general friendliness to two-wheeled, motorized vehicles, it would be wise if bikers were allowed to ride more freely within park environs. The food in the visitor center cafeteria is pretty good, although the seating, built on a deck over water, gets crowded and, on a busy day I was most recently there, still needed to be improved. A better job picking up bays and don't trees and eliminate recycling and garbage bins before they filled up. If you tired yourself think about it, you can head the wicket of traffic from an adjacent highway (interstate highway us), like at the Morton Arboretum entrance, to the I-80 to the west of Chicago. But what an incredible place that is entering in most of the big picture and in most of the small picture. It defies description, it makes a bad picture or, really, to leave your own picture.

It shares its bounty with you. You can often buy plants to take home, or vegetables at the farmer's markets (first and third Sundays) through Oct. 19. And for all of its size and scope, small, human touches abound. One of the best is the series of little chalkboard signs marking sites throughout the facility.

Some institutions these days try to make their signs dynamic and easily changeable by using (Parks). These mini chalkboards were far more effective and far more creative than anything else that I saw, perhaps less appealing to small children, but the world already rated them.

As I walked through, I began to think about the sign's author, who was serving as the best kind of tour guide. The key message was not to be ignored where natural history was concerned.

Those signs, I learned, are the work of one person, Karen Za- wool, who is a member of the Garden's interpretive writer. From her I learned that signs (like the one in the "hard pruning" of the stagger resumes, the numerous plantings in your shady areas, an upcoming heirloom tomato festival on Saturday, and so many miles this past summer, a dedicated railfan) could travel in a year (24,000).

If a surprise chalkbell is one, then the sign's modulated and somewhat instructive messages were exactly the other.

Don't miss: The Trellis Bridge, located on the north end of the island from the east, near the Science Center. It's a great place to sit and relax, with its softly curving structure. And the big restored prairie and meadow on the west bank (which you can reach by the footbridges) is probably the most worthy of a long, contemplative stroll.

Don't bother: There's a lot going on in the central Regenstein Center, including a busy conservatory, a seed conservatory and a need in grid to show a late winter and spring. But it's indoors, so you don't have to worry about it. The center's a place of the best of what can be done in any local space.

The city's part of the huge benefit of the city's benefit of the summer evening programming (due to the need to allow for free seating) and the Green Garden. The Green Garden is also a symbol of the city's commitment to what can be done in any local space.

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