Guitarist Michael Hedges not a typical Windham Hill artist

Musicians often dislike the labels that the public and press put on their work, because stylistic tags tend to be limiting or misleading. Others simply have no idea how to categorize their own music.

Michael Hedges doesn’t have that problem.

LYNNE LUCAS

“I would describe his music as savage myth guitar,” said the Windham Hill guitarist, who will perform Jan. 22 to a sold-out audience at the Pines Line. “I like that because it takes away from any preconception that my music would be tame (a common assumption with Windham Hill artists).”

That’s why I like the word “savage.” It puts a kind of lively connotation to my playing, which I think it is. And “mythic” gives you kind of a mystical and mysterious idea that you wouldn’t normally associate with savage.

The myth part also relates to his current work, titled “Taproot” or “Tap Root” (he’s not sure how to spell it yet), which he said is about 40 percent recorded and should be out this fall. “Taproot” is also the name of a myth he’s penned, on which his forthcoming album is based.

“This one has a definite story that goes along with it, but not exactly concurrently, and not too confusingly, but that’s looking at it,” explained Hedges, in a phone interview from northern California, where he lives. “It’s more or less like a sound movie that has a story track, but it’s not necessarily chronological, I can explain it a little simpler, by just saying that the titles of songs are events and places and characters in the myth.

Although such a concepted album is a departure from Hedges’ previous four recordings, it shouldn’t surprise his fans. Hedges has never been particularly predictable, in fact, during a previous trip to the Upstate, he was a little too unpredictable for the avid members of the audience.

It was an impressive night at Clemson University’s Tillman Hall, maybe three years ago. Hedges was the second of three Windham Hill artists on the program, which was part of a fine arts series commonly attended by folks expecting more orthodox performers than Hedges.

After pianist Liz Story peacefully filled her audience with her pretty pastoral pieces, the lights went down for the next change. His lights came up a few moments later, as a dressed up Hedges, dressed up in a black flowery jacket, ran into his rauschen version of Bob Dylan’s “All Along the Watchtower” on acoustic guitar.

By his second song, a quartet of the audience — mostly the older echelon — filed out, not comprehending the renegade on stage.

Hedges, 26, now had a modified buzz cut (“it’s just a little easier to take care of”), but he’s still good at jumping out of audience, recent performances reviews and his last album, “Live on the Double Planet” indicate that he can quickly alternate between moody, floating instrumentals and attack-style guitar work accompanied by vocals.

Maybe that mix stems from his student days at the Peabody Institute in Baltimore where he’d study classical guitar and composition by day, and pound out pop and rock songs in local bars by night.

Now he comes up with a musical myth. And he says he’s experimenting with drums, percussion instruments and keyboards to add richer textures to his work. A band someday may not be out of the question. But solo, Hedges puts out more energy than many bands.

The show sold out last week, said Punch Line operator Mike Avery. Please with the response for a concert at his Zee-Seat comedy club, Avery said he’s considering booking more musical acts in the future.

Townes Van Zandt

Tickets are still available at the door — but you might want to get them early — for Texas songwriter Townes Van Zandt.

He’ll be at the door. Showtime is 8 p.m.

By the way

Those who were lucky enough to witness Marcia Ball’s engaging show last week at Al’s Vernon House may not need another shot of adrenaline — although many veteran blues lovers — by watching her and her band get down Jan. 27 at “Austin City Limits.”

He is sometimes called the bayou folk band. Those who missed her show may get a glimpse of the abundant energy the Austin pianist and her band put out at their Greenville gig.