

Tora Tora plays the Cave

by Jonathan Weber

Sitting in on a band's soundcheck can be very educational. Inside The Cave late Tuesday afternoon, southern-born and raised Tora Tora yawned and stretched through the first bars of the title-track "Wild America." A half-hour from our scheduled interview, I decided to listen and learn what I could about this fearsome-foursome from Memphis, Tenn.

"The building is self-destructing," frontman Anthony Corder mused matter-of-factly at the low-end feedback. A dead ringer for Robert Plant, Corder's vocals sizzled over the P.A., the feedback forgotten. Here was the raw band in their raw form. No packed house. No agents or girls to impress. Just Corder, serenading the empty bar with all the soul and feeling of a

veteran.

A few moments later, someone with an arm cast begins directing the drummer through small sections of each song. It almost looks as though the drummer is a roadie, and the arm cast guy should be somebody. What's the deal?

"His name is Russell," bassist Patrick offers in the subsequent interview. "We've had like five rehearsals with him. It's really hell...but man, he's kickin' ass," Corder explained.

"These next few shows are major rehearsals, but it's coming along great—he's a great drummer," Francis declared, regaining his position in the conversation. Apparently, regular drummer John Patterson had injured his right arm in a hunting accident (I could just see Tora Tora infiltrating the Cajun Bayou for a little crocodile/river float expedition between gigs).

"We're just tweekin' the little bass-drummer stuff now," Francis said of temporary stick-man Russell



Tora Tora just released its second album, 'Wild America.'

Caudill. "Yuh see, we've (Francis and Patterson) played together for six y'airs," he twanged.

Their musical influences are important to them.

"My whole family has always jammed around the house, playing piano, guitars, dancing—I've got kind of a crazy family," Corder said.

"Being from the south there's a lot of blues," Francis offered. "But we were just teenagers like everybody else, listening to the same rock-n-roll. We like everything from Otis Red-

ding to Van Halen."

Funny they should mention Van Halen; that's where they got their name. "(Van Halen) was an influence on everyone whether they want to admit it or not," Francis said. "We even took our name off their *Women and Children* album," added Corder.

"Over there in Europe the press really got on us about our name," Corder said. "like why do you have a name that's promoting war, and what's so wild (pronounced wild) about America?"

Francis added, "The name means 'party' to us."

"America is the greatest place in the world," Corder continued. "They'd ask us 'What's this Wild America? Are you patriots or somethin'?"

"Well hell yes we're patriots," Corder's stage scream wailed emphatically. "It's just a different way of livin' over there. Here, if you can dream about it, you can make it happen."

For the last three years, Tora Tora has been making their southern thang happen in clubs and arenas everywhere, never leaving behind the blues sound that is their musical legacy.

"I didn't catch onto it (blues) at first," admitted Corder. "But then it got all over me. It got under my skeean and crawled around inside me."

In an effort to capture this passion for the blues in the studio, Tora Tora's creative resources far outweighed normal expectations.

"We wrote 70 songs for (Wild America) and tried to pick the songs that took the best picture of where we're at now," Corder said. "I'm interested to see what our next album sounds like—Keith (Douglas/guitars) is definitely headed into the heavier crunch sound. I'm still stuck in the Otis Redding sound myself," Corder said.

Tuesday afternoon saw Corder stuck on the slots of Arizona Charlie's, down 40 bucks. "I got on the slot machine and (was) addicted," Corder conceded. "Sucked the money right outta me. You see, we have

see page three

About the cover:

Untitled drawing by Adan. The art is an example of fliers for the Rave scene that has descended upon Las Vegas from L.A.

For a full sceneography on Rave parties, check *Tempest* next week.

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see page three