

# No hippie-schlock here

by Tricia Romano

An interview with Flowerhead

Loud, swirling guitars. Thundering drums. Hippie-music, this ain't, folks. This is Flowerhead.

They open tonight at the Huntridge for Ned's Atomic Dustbin along with Supreme Love Gods.

Drummer Pete Levine and his bandmates Eric Faust (bass, vox), Eric Schmitz (guitar) and Bud Zoller (guitar), have been to this side of hell once before on their tour with Blind Melon. They enjoyed themselves immensely.

As Faust explained, "Hey, you know, it was pretty much our favorite town. We left with \$100 a piece." (They then went on to Reno where they proceeded to lose it all, and then

some.)

Money, or no money, things are looking up for the guys from Austin, Texas. After landing a deal with Zoo Records, and doing various tours, including this one, the Flowerhead boys now have their video/single receiving airplay on MTV's "120 Minutes." Eventually maybe a Nirvana-like awakening will descend upon them.

But don't compare them to anything Seattle.

"We're starting to hate what we call the 'g' word, as well as the 'p' word," Levine said.

For those of you who have not left the house in the last year, the 'g' Levine is referring to stands for "grunge." Grunge is something every band in Seattle is tagged with, and it



Flowerhead is Buz Zoller, Eric Faust, Eric Schmitz & Pete Levine (from left).

happens that Flowerhead receives quite a few comparisons to that sound. Flowerhead does not take directly from that Sabbath-like stomp. They play their guitars loudly, albeit melodically. It's this melody, that has plagued them with the other thing, the 'p' word, or psychedelia. Think, Hendrix.

"I do hear the 60s in us," Levine said. "Hendrix is a big

influence. Led Zeppelin is also an influence. I think we use a broad-based use of wah-wah.

"I think we have something for everyone- from punk rock to 60s boogie dance to something akin to the Seattle sound. I hate to put one name on all the stuff."

And what of the recent Grammy nominations of "alternative" bands like Soundgarden, Pearl Jam, Red Hot

Chili Peppers and Ministry?

"I think it's bad for the concept of folks growing up in junior high school. The bands, the Red Hot Chili Peppers don't sound like Pearl Jam, the bands don't sound like each other," Levine said.

They can be floodgates that have opened for all the bands that stressed something in their unique way, and right now it's Flowerhead, dammit.

# Hostage Symphony rises above

by Tricia Romano

If there is going to be a band to "make it" out of the Las Vegas Valley, Hostage Symphony will be the one.

Ever since their formation three years ago, critics have frowned upon their open courtship of the pop sound. On their debut EP, Hostage Symphony does more than court the pop sound; they marry it to the alternative sound as well.

Some may cry "sell out." Let them.

Their four-song Ugly EP featuring the single "Ugly Painted Sky," is the most ear-catching of all the Vegas releases. If you want alternative, underground funk with a

twist, buy Hers Tabula Rasa. If calm, upbeat folk tunes are more your style, go with Mark Huff and the Inflatables' CD.

But if you like songs that get your feet moving and have you playing the air guitar, this is the thing to get. Highly energetic songwriting with the kind of melodies that stick in your head for days, that is what Hostage Symphony creates. The combo of dual keyboards, (Tyler Nelson, Jarrod Mendelson) with acoustic drums (Sean Flannery) and guitars (Scott Beare) form a strong blend to back singer

Matt Chernoff.

The bands' sound borders on alternative and pop, making it hard to pinpoint. Labeling the music doesn't matter. Good songs are good songs and all four of them qualify as good here. Unlike many bands, Hostage songs do not replay themselves over and over. Each one has a different feel, a different sound. From the uptempo opener "Ugly Painted Sky" (which is currently receiving airplay on 103.5 the Edge), to the ballad "Another Fallen Angel," it becomes clear that Hostage Symphony will

be able to play the corporate alternative game, albeit, on its terms. It probably won't be found on typical Top 40 stations, because, and get this, the music is considered too hard, too aggressive.

That's right, Hostage Symphony is too hard (read:

heavy guitar effects) to play during the prime-time hours. Long gone are the days of candy apple alternapop. This is not to say that they are a punk band, but their music has definitely picked up an edge. An edge that will hopefully carry them to the top.



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