



YOU KNOW THESE PEOPLE

4 LOCAL BANDS MAKING NOISE

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INTERVIEW



Four bands that we're pretty sure you'll end up hearing with or without us

Ludwig

We Barbarians

MUSIC

◉ MATT DUPREE

Although only recently come down from the skyscraper ranges of Los Angeles, We Barbarians are right at home here in Long Beach. Three refugees from tragically overlooked act The Colour, We Barbarians lost their singer to Ventura and marriage and found themselves beachside and in need of a re-evaluation. "It seemed like an opportunity to get away from a lot of what people had pinned on us and just go in a different direction," says Dave Quon, We Barbarians' singer and guitarist. And so they did. Whereas The Colour found themselves thrown in with the same one-note nostalgia that had proved short success for throwback acts like Wolfmother, We Barbarians wedged themselves deep into a dark post-punk groove and came back with an EP of emotional depth and immense sonic pleasure.

Dave, Derek, and Nathan are still wary of where they've been, and relishing the ability to live a semi-normal existence. "Sometimes making music full-time can drive you crazy." Of course, it's sometimes hard to remain beneath the radar when you're as resonant and talented as We Barbarians are, as proven by their SXSW performance and their recent offer to tour with Tokyo Police Club. "We were going to do the whole thing," Dave remarks, noting that they chose to do only four dates of the tour. "but we decided financially we just couldn't do it."

Dave sits relaxed as he answers my questions in Portfolio coffeehouse, a shining symbol of their acclimation to Long Beach. It's like the shining jewel of cred in Long Beach, and Dave is already comfortable enough to walk behind the counter and exchange handshakes with his friends working there. I will likely never be this well-accepted, and I've been here for years (Dear Portfolio: please accept me, I'm thirsty). We discuss the strengths and weaknesses of Long Beach as an artist community. There

really needs to be a cool music venue for indie bands, we are in agreement. But thankfully, Long Beach is a supportive place to devote yourself to art. "In Los Angeles, it's cutthroat. It's so great to be able to have such a reciprocal and supportive place with such good feedback."

We Barbarians' debut EP, *In The Doldrums*, mines a fine tradition of punk sensibilities with a surprisingly eerie tinge of broken-down blues. The rhythms are heavy; they seem to slam back and forth like an angry drunk trapped in a hallway. The bass, even in its bombastic glee, never seems to exert anything beyond a strolling ease. As Dave explains "All 3 parts have to be distinct." This is the punk aspect. I ask about what they attempt to accomplish when writing a song, "We're still sort of finding ourselves I guess. I don't think I can really answer that yet." And so each song takes a half-lullaby approach, with an ambient atmosphere surrounding a salvo of volatile elements that can—and do—destroy that peaceful bubble: be it with a crash, a bang, or just pure force of emotion. On the title track, which "Just came out right," the bassline punches out an anxious lead, with an unresolving drum beat keeping everything just left off-center. And then, just when the tension becomes unbearable, they leap into a roaring chorus to bring it all back again. The songs have a sentient quality, only more apparent when played live, that takes over the performers with an inspired possession. Despite the ease with which their music seems to cut so deeply into its audience, We Barbarians are not interested in getting swept up in themselves. Nathan & Dave have dominated their internet presence with their art, and gigs are chosen on a somewhat selective basis (catch them May 12th at the Spaceland). "We know that relentless touring is not the best tool. I guess there's no right formula for exposure. It just happens."

"In Los Angeles, it's cutthroat."

The Parson Redheads

◉ SEAN BOULGER

By now, everybody knows that the '60s and '70s were cool. It's been done to death; every band channels something their parents listened to in one way or another, and it's easy to get jaded. This, of course, leads me to be immediately prejudiced against any band that looks or sounds like they have any sort of influence from anything that might be remotely associated with those decades. The Parson Redheads, however, have managed to take some fairly well-worn territory and make it exciting again. Never performing with less than five members onstage at a time, and always clad in matching white-with-red-trim outfits, the Parsons might, on first glance, elicit the cult vibe that The Polyphonic Spree put out for such a long time. But the Parsons are simply too awesome for that. Playing with an unassuming and earnest enthusiasm that is so sorely missing from live music, the Parsons are instantaneously disarming as performers.

Born of high school friendships and college acquaintances, the Parson Redheads formed in Eugene, Oregon, eventually moving down to Los Angeles. Parson Parson (also known as Evan Way) heads the band, assuming the duties of guitar/vocals/meriment, and is joined by a core band membership of his wife Clicker Parson (drums/vocals/entertainment), his sister Combat Parson (keyboards/shakers/tambourine/vocals/attitude), and friend that include (but are not limited to) Pony Boy Parson (guitar/vocals/peace). The rest of the group seems to come and go at random, rarely ever featuring the same members on more than one occasion. Thus, the Parson Redheads have effectively executed the most exciting form a band can take—the collective. With the most notable example being Broken Social Scene, the collective isn't a very commonly-found practice in popular music, mostly due to the fact that it's not very easily accomplished, at least not with any kind of effective outcome. The idea behind the Parson Redheads (and any collective, at that) is essentially that there isn't always a set roster of performers. Aside from the few core members that were mentioned earlier, the band's live performances feature a rotating roster of musicians. This is normally based on availability. Members come and go, play on some nights and not on others, and as a follower and sometimes friend of the band (depending on who's playing that night), I can personally attest to the fact that this makes every show more exciting. Will there be pedal steel? Possibly. Acoustic guitar? Maybe not tonight, but definitely next week.

The Parson Redheads follow a strict code of love thy neighbor, playing cheerful classic rock that incites nodding of the head and smiling at strangers. On albums, the band comes across as heavily Beatles-influenced, playing songs that are strongly reminiscent of 1960s guitar pop. Live, the band's multiple guitars, strong rhythm section, and three-part harmonies create intricate pop jams that are sure to delight.

The Parson Red Heads play at the Prospector on Thursday, April 24th.



MUSIC

The Long Beach music scene is an attractive one; we've been known to produce more than a few good musicians in the past and Cal State Long Beach is educating more than a few of them now—specifically Wesley Chung and Abigail Davidson of Boris Smile. Boris Smile has been a campus buzz band since its formation in 2004 and chances are you've only heard of them. If this is the case, then it would be in your best interest to test-run some of their laid-back, optimistic indie-pop songs on MySpace. They have all the appeal of a traveling band, picking up and dropping members as they go and you're likely never to see the same show twice. Instruments may include, but are not limited to trumpets, glockenspiel, lapsteel, oboe, and accordian. Davidson, who has been in Smile since its birth, said, "Anybody that plays an instrument, if Wesley enjoys them, he wants to recruit them. If they're able to play shows, then they join us. That's something Wes and I talk about, whether or not we're a collective or a band." But this is a characteristic of Smile that makes them unique and exciting. "It's more like a community of people that are musicians." Despite this community, Davidson claims that Chung is the "visionary." He may be in music for the long run, but Davidson has admitted that the Long Beach music scene is fickle and she's working towards becoming a teacher and their drummer, Jon Palsgrove, is a PE coach. Promoting a small band is difficult, and Smile depends mostly on MySpace and Internet resources to get their name out to the public. "We play bars and houses and stuff. We play Long Beach places... we played above the Roxy one time." In the face of this struggle, Smile has extraordinary talent aimed at the college-aged demographic. They're success is essentially in your hands, whether you decide to act as a fan or even a guest musician. You can contact them at www.myspace.com/borissmile or watch them play at DiPiazza's on May 8th, at 7pm.



Boris Smile

○ RACHEL RUFRANO

Satisfaction

○ SEAN BOULGER



Rock bands break up. It's a fact; it's just something that happens. No matter what happens, a band stops playing together at one point, and in several cases, it's long before what some might consider a band's due time. In some of these instances, members of the previous band will forge on, forming a new band that will be equally as great, if not better than the band that spawned it. There are several examples: Joy Division gave us New Order. The Yardbirds broke up and shot off in a million different directions, contributing Clapton to Cream and Page to Zeppelin. Hell, At the Drive-In turned into two bands when they broke up, even though they didn't quite follow the rules as much as my other examples (both Sparta and The Mars Volta put out one stellar long player that was followed by what can be described as fairly "shitty music"). This phenomenon has been occurring for as long as rock music has been rocking, and it even happens on a smaller level, right in your very own backyard!

Several years ago, a band called Smile was taking the local music scene by storm. Of course, the local music scene at the time was nothing compared to what the Internet has made it into now, but Smile were doing their thing and doing it well. Soon after they signed to Capitol, however, they broke up. Singer/songwriter/guitarist Michael Rosas, keyboardist Matthew Fletcher, and his younger brother James started to jam and write songs, eventually forming what is now known as Satisfaction (with the addition of bassist Aaron Wahlman) in order to play a residency they had booked at Costa Mesa's scenester Mecca, the Detroit Bar.

Now, Satisfaction rampages all over Orange County, Los Angeles, and occasionally San Diego, tearing shit up with their classic rock-infused power pop. Having released *Cougars*, *Sharks*, and *Flying Sparks*, the second of two demo EPs (the first of which is entitled *For Men and For Women*) in late 2007, Satisfaction are still—surprisingly enough—without a label. One would have thought that their clean, accessible sound would have attracted the attention of scores of A&R fellows by this time, and apparently, it has. Rosas and the rest of the band, however, believe that they're not quite ready to sign to a label yet, fearing the swan dive they've seen other bands take as a result of signing to a label far too early. And as music production becomes more and more about the musician, with the advent of technology like Garage Band, Rosas finds himself wondering what record labels even do anymore, beyond loaning bands the money with which they might record albums. His point, of course, is valid, as his band has cranked out two professional-sounding demos of exceptional quality on what one would assume is a fairly modest budget. All things considered, I've never been more excited to hear music made by four guys with day jobs.

Satisfaction play at the Prospector on Tuesday, April 29th.