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The Toadies



Article by: Justin Guinn | Photos courtesy of the Toadies | Posted: 07/27/2012

Venerable Texas rockers the [Toadies](#) could have faded into the [mid '90s abyss](#) after getting dropped from Interscope Records following their debut album *Rubberneck*, and formally breaking up after bassist Lisa Umbarger's sudden departure. But death to the Toadies has not yet arrived.

Rubberneck features their infamous track, "[Possum Kingdom](#)." The tormented song has flooded airwaves since its release over 12 years ago, and it even made it on the Guitar Hero II video game as a playable song. Coincidentally, (or maybe not), the band reformed with new bassist Doni Blair around the time the game was released. They played some sold-out reunion shows, and after lead vocal and guitarist Todd Lewis' side project [Burden Brothers](#) fell out, (featuring [The Reverend Horton Heat](#)'s drummer Taz Bently), the Toadies got back together for good.

In 2010 they dropped *No Deliverance*, the band's third full-length album, with indie label Kirtland Records. The album was well received, making it to #59 on Billboard Top 200 and #4 on the Top Independent Albums chart. That same year, *Feeler* was released. The shelved follow-up to their debut, *Feeler* had been leaked through various channels during its inception in 1997, but as a finished product, it never saw the light of day. This wasn't enough for Lewis, who was quoted saying: "Since there are unfinished versions floating around on the internet, it is important to us that people hear it as we meant it to be."

Now consisting of Lewis on guitar and vocals, Mark Reznicek on drums, Clark Vogeler on guitar and Blair on bass, the Toadies are gearing up for another album to be released at the end of this month.

After being asked what keeps him going, Lewis states, "Fans, period. I'll always do music, because it's in my blood, but it's the fans that keep me motivated to tour and release records."

The new album, *Play.Rock.Music.*, drops July 31 via Kirtland Records. Lewis admits the recording experience for the album differed greatly from others.

"In the past, I would have fully realized demos for the band and producer weeks in advance of going into the studio," he explains. "In this case, I had a couple songs demoed, and a bunch of parts and ideas. The majority of this record was written in the studio. It was a really great experience."

Play.Rock.Music. features the classic Toadies sound that originally made a name for the band. It's in-your-face, distortedly perplex, welcomingly fuzzy, and lyrically aggressive. Human animality, love, and starting anew are but a few of the lyrical subjects enveloped in this new album.

According to Lewis, the most memorable part of the album was realizing two songs were already available on iTunes ("Summer of the Strange" / "Rattles Revival"), even before completing the rest of the record.

"Summer of the Strange," pre-released on iTunes May 8, is a gritty guitar rock anthem that picks up and puts down the listener as it pleases. It's got all the makings of the album's first single: somewhat of a chorus, title repetition throughout the song, and a radio friendly length of 3:40. It also already has a music video -- a very bizarre music video. It's like a '70s porn, circus-inspired nightmare that turns out to be surprisingly enjoyable.

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“Oh holy crap - that was a blast!” Lewis says in reaction to the video. “Nudity, guns, explosions, Leatherface, a zombie -- please! The director and his writing partner made that pitch, and I was laughing my ass off for an hour after reading it.”

Though reenacting the video on stage may be tough, “Summer of the Strange” will certainly be a hit on their current tour, which they’re co-headlining with Helmet. The tour kicked off July 19th and, as of now, runs through Labor Day, climaxing with the 5th annual [Dia De Los Toadies](#) at Whitewater Amphitheater in New Braunfels, Texas. The annual event, featuring the Toadies and other bands of their choosing, was upgraded to a two day fest a few years back.

“On the first night, we have one or two openers and we do a chilled-out set where we basically re-invent the songs,” Lewis explains. “It’s a really great time, and as an artist it forces me to look at the songs in a brand new light. Day two is the whole nine yards -- bands all day starting around noon on two stages.”

After the colossal Toadies fest, their next move is uncertain, but Lewis assures there will be a next move and one after that, and probably one after that as well.

When asked if the Toadies will continue putting out new music, Lewis exclaims, “Hell yeah! I would imagine we’ll be pretty busy touring and promoting this record through the end of the year, then we’ll see what happens next.”



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