



HEY KIDS!!! NOW IT'S TIME FOR...

THE ADVENTURES OF THE SMUGGLERS

by Michael Edwards
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The Smugglers have been a familiar fixture on the Vancouver music scene for quite some time now - during their illustrious career, they have released five albums, countless singles and are apparently quite big in Spain. Their sixth full-length, *Selling The Sizzle*, was released earlier this week, and so they are going away on the inevitable promotional tour. But before they did, I had the opportunity to chat to the voice behind The Smugglers, Grant Lawrence.

And so you are heading off on tour once more - when does that happen?

We are leaving for a five week opus that takes us all over the frozen frontiers of America. But unfortunately the only Canadian date is in Toronto, so we don't get to make it to one of our favourite provinces - in fact, our second favourite province - to play in, New Brunswick. We get the most mail, in Canada, from New Brunswick and B.C., and so we really have a strong bond with New Brunswick.

How long is it since you played here?

It has been a year and a half since we rocked with the kids of New Brunswick. We've played in Saint John a couple of times, and Moncton a few times but never Fredericton unfortunately. But we will definitely be there on the next tour in the Spring to sell the sizzle.

Selling The Sizzle - the new album. Tell me all about it?

We recorded it in Lafayette, Indiana with a guy named Mass Giorgioni. He's an Italian guy who lives in a cornfield in Indiana, and he has a recording studio which has recorded some really great records by punk bands like The Queers and Screeching Weasel. We're more of a rock 'n' roll band, but he was a real fan of the band and brought us down there - we had a wonderful time down there. We recorded all fifteen songs there, and we really love the album. Usually our albums are batches of recordings taken over a couple of years from different studios and stuck together. But of this one, Mass put real care into it making sure that I wasn't singing flat which no-one else had ever done before. And he mastered it, and held the album's hand all the way down the line - he's very proud of it, and we're very proud of it. We're very much looking forward to its release, and it is hopefully the sonic impact that Smugglers' fans have been waiting two years for.

And all this just after your splendid Summer Games EP.

Yeah - that was the teaser. The first single, 'She Ain't No Egyptian', split with The Hi-Fives, who are great friends of ours. In fact, for the longest time,

everywhere we went people would ask us if we knew The Hi-Fives. When we said no, they told us that we sounded just like them. And it turns out that exactly the same thing was happening to The Hi-Fives wherever they went. So finally we met, and we immediately hit it off as the music was very similar and we all got along, and we had the same wardrobe - we really clicked, so we decided to do the split record. Chris, one of the guys from The Hi-Fives was instrumental in getting the Mint/ Lookout Records deal together.

That really is a good deal for a label like Mint isn't it?

That deal is the best of both worlds literally as we are on one of the best - if I do say so myself - Canadian independent labels and we are definitely on one of the top three independent labels in America as well. So we have great distribution in this country from Cargo, and we also have great distribution in the States too now. We are definitely very excited about it. For a band like us, who almost trudge along and doesn't care about what's going to happen, or who's going to show up, or what record label the record is going to come out on, things have really fallen into place - this is amazing. It is a great thing.

So the EP got everybody excited about the forthcoming album?

I think so, as that was the idea behind it. 'She Ain't No Egyptian' was one of the tracks recorded at Mass' Sonic Iguana Studio, and it was a fast, upbeat and in-your-face kind of song so we thought it would work well with The Hi-Fives songs. But it was also an introduction to the more sonic-sounding new album. I think that it's a neat little package, and it has been generating some excitement.



The Smugglers come out of their garage for a photo opportunity

more of what you would call pop/punk bands. People have called us pop/punk before, but we do see ourselves as being rock 'n' roll. We usually play both all-ages shows and bar shows as we love playing to the kids, but we also love to get drunk too. So when I set up the tours, we play about four days a week all-ages, and three days a week bars, I try to keep it 50/50. This tour is 100% all-ages, so it will be very interesting. There will be a lot of drinking in the van. So we're looking forward to it. The only thing that we are not looking forward to is the weather. We're from Vancouver, which is the mildest place in Canada - even if it does snow, then it has gone in a couple of hours. It's wet, but it's mild. So we're really nervous about going into the barren, cold weather.

One of my favourite Smugglers' songs is 'Stop Look Listen' - is there a story behind the song?

That's a cover song, and we like showy songs that are upbeat. I think that you could say that one of those recurring themes in Smugglers' songs is that they are upbeat. Anyway, that song is an Elvis song from, I believe, *Speedway*, which was one of those movies that he was in - he made about ten a year, and cranked out a soundtrack every time. 'Stop Look Listen' was just one of those gems on the soundtracks. We even have choreographed moves for that one where we put our hands out when we say "Stop", hand at our brows for "Look" and then our hands to our ears for "Listen" - it's pretty cool.

Are those the moves that Elvis used?

I really don't know - we came up with them ourselves. They just have to be.

Just thought to ourselves, if the King didn't do it then we have to do it for him. It's a really fun song, and one that always gets people really shaking.

You are good pals with Nardwaur the Human Serviette, are you not?

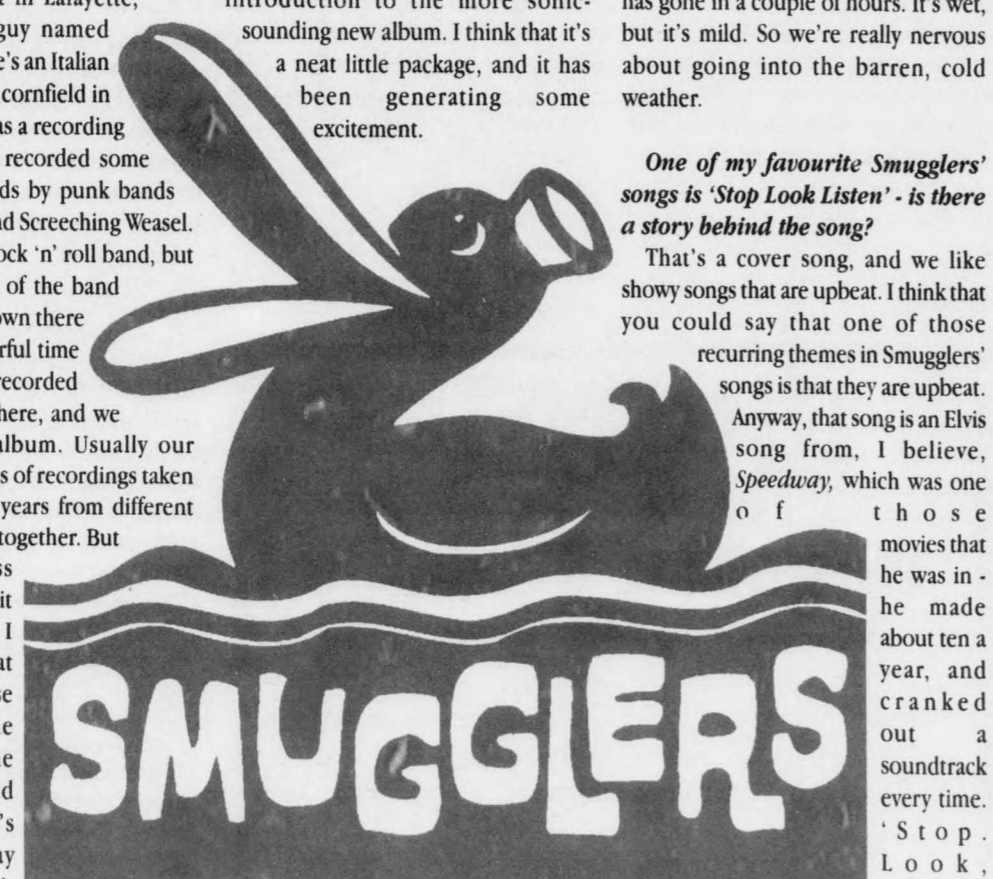
Yes, definitely - he actually wrote the liner notes for the new album in which he tells the legend of the Smugglers, and how they came to be. He is the one who actually named us - Nick and I from the Smugglers were in a band called the One-Eyed Jacks, and the guitarist was really into metal while we were into early Stones, the Animals - stuff like that. Because we were such chums, we didn't want to kick him out, so we broke up the band instead. I called up Nardwaur out of despair and asked what we should do, as we really wanted to have a band, but we didn't want to hurt that guy's feelings. So Nardwaur told us to think of a new name that had a classic North West garage scene feel like Paul Revere & The Raiders or The Whalers or The Sonics - something akin to your surroundings. And he said, "I know - how about The Smugglers? And you can wear toques and navy peajackets and turtle-necks and rubber boots!" So we did that for a long time, but wool jackets

and wool turtle-necks were really hot on stage - one time we were playing in Arkansas, and our drummer fainted. So now the only thing from that original outfit that has stuck are the rubber boots, and we sell Smugglers toques at the shows.

The band has a definite 'garage rock' sound - are you a fan of that kind of scene?

Totally. One of my favourite bands ever must be The Sonics - they were from Tacoma, Washington and had a couple of albums out in Sixties and they just had it. They were able to capture raw, punk rock for the first time ever, but they also sounded good. They had melody, the best white rock 'n' roll singer ever, the best sax sound, best guitar sound, best piano sound and a wild, wild drum sound. So I think of those guys all the time when we are recording, as they had the pure, live attack on their records that other Sixties bands just couldn't get.

And New Brunswick will be fortunate enough to witness the live attack of The Smugglers when they tour the Maritimes with dates in Moncton, Saint John and Fredericton.



COMPETITION RESULTS!!!

Who won the Everclear CDs? Here are the fortunate five:

- Scott Eagles, Darcy Aiken,
- DJ Barton, Tiffany Toussaint
- and C.J. Turbide.

Stop by The Bruns office on Friday some time after 12 noon and pick up your prize.

No competition this week, but stay tuned after March Break for more great giveaways from your friends at The Brunswickan.

