

Opium Taylor's success built on good chemistry

By Paula Lavigne
Senior Reporter

Mix four young guys, drums, guitars and a musty room, and you have a generic band.

It's open season for cloning these generic bands, as they start popping up in every garage and basement in the Western Hemisphere, but it takes a solid band to break the mold.

The Lincoln band Opium Taylor may have the strength to do that. It has one ingredient other bands may not have — determination. The members want it, and they want it bad.

Through luck and a mutual interest in music, singer Chris Heine and bassist Pat Noecker paired up with drummer Matt Focht, lead guitarist Mike Mogis and somewhat debatable mascot Zooney, the black Labrador.

For the members of Opium Taylor, the band is their lives.

"I want to rock," Noecker said. "That's all there is to it. It's what I'm best at creatively."

Bandmate Heine said playing could become an obsession or a natural process like eating breakfast.

Mogis has an alternative reason. "I just wanted to get, like, chicks," he joked.

Focht said he planned on making the band his life. The members of Opium Taylor want to preserve their image, he said.

"We all agreed on not becoming regular middle-class adults," he said. "We don't want to wake up every Saturday morning and have our dog bring us the paper."

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—Noecker
bassist

"We want to be Indie rockers till we die!" he said.

Heine mocked the situation.

"A week after this is printed you'll hear, 'Opium Taylor signs with Atlantic Records today. Matt Focht is hung in effigy at that local Common-place concert,'" Heine said.

If the band members could get together and compose the "Opium Taylor How To Start a Band" guide, they said camaraderie would be a priority.

"No. 1 priority: Play with people you can get along with outside the band," Noecker said. "Otherwise, there's no chemistry."

"You can come in and be the hottest guitar wizard in the world, but if you can't get along personally, you'll never get there," he said.

Mogis added his own chapter. "The next step is the music that you make," he said.

Although playing in a band may be considered the ultimate fun, Noecker said, it's also a job.

"It is a huge part of your life. It is a



Travis Heying/DN

Chris Heine, left, and Pat Noecker of the Lincoln band Opium Taylor get behind the music during a practice Tuesday night. The band is scheduled to play at Duffy's Tavern this weekend.

hobby, but it's also a way of life," he said. "There's a lot of nitty-gritty crap, like when your van breaks down on the road. That's not fun at all."

With three-fourths of the band in

college, balancing classes and music is difficult.

"As far as the four priorities in my life, it goes: music, people, school-work and job," Heine said. "If we had

a cool gig in Lawrence and my boss said I had to work, I'd quit."

Opium Taylor will be performing at Duffy's Tavern on Feb. 6 at 10 p.m. Tickets are \$3.

MUSIC REVIEWS



"Mind Bomb"
Mind Bomb
Polygram



Mind Bomb's self-titled release brings back some older sounds and also produces some completely new alternative rock.

The album leans toward the heavier side but has a couple of good ballads.

It starts out with a rather original tune, "Prepare Yourself." This piece has a novel guitar riff that sounds mysteriously like the Inspector Gadget theme.

It stays heavy through the next two songs, "Segue" and "Do You Need Some?" It then softens with the first (and better) of two ballads, "Almost There." The vocals and instrumentation in this song make up for its sappy lyrics.

The rest of the songs are mostly heavy, and a couple of them are really good. The first of these, "Violet Dream," has a distinctive Faith No More sound to it and some pretty good lyrics. "Had a 'Violet Dream' / A 'surreal' it seems / It told me to demean everything / but I know this can't happen to me."

The other is "Daisy Chain," a

lighter song that has good sound and some socially conscious lyrics. "I heard a voice / It spoke in tongues / It told me that the future ends tomorrow / And if we don't prepare ourselves / There might be nothing left to borrow."

The album concludes with a bonus track — an eight-minute version of "Do You Need Some?" that sounds even better than the original.

"Mind Bomb" is an admirable debut album that would make a good addition to any alternative collection.

— Joel Strauch

"Live From Hell"
Sam Kinison
Priority Records



Though it's been more than a year since he died, it is still possible to enjoy the comedy of Sam Kinison. Recorded in Houston before his death, "Live from Hell" is Kinison's fourth and hopefully not his last release.

It is vintage Kinison, rightfully earning the Parental Advisory label for explicit lyrics. Kinison begins with a bit about his missing the Joan Rivers show and segues to imagining Arnold Schwarzenegger as a gay Terminator and exploring the dark side of children's show hosts, such as Pee Wee Herman and Captain Kangaroo.

But lest anyone think the humor is completely scatological, Kinison also takes on world affairs. He touches on topics such as the Persian Gulf War and the Russian Revolution.

There are other classic Kinison bits about cable TV, the homeless

and rap music. (The titles for these prospective rap songs are hilarious but unprintable here.) It is straight-ahead, high-decibel, politically incorrect comedy. The terrible thing is that after hearing "Live from Hell," we realize what we lost when Kinison died.

— Sam Kepfield

"Antenna"
ZZ Top
RCA



I've never been a big fan of ZZ Top, so when the band came out with its latest release, "Antenna," I was less than thrilled.

ZZ Top — why are they still around? Then I listened to the album, and I was surprised. They're still around because they're, well, good.

"Antenna," the group's 11th release, is a musically strong, well-made album. It comes off sounding dirty, raunchy and sleazy — the way a rock 'n' roll album should sound — yet maintains a high-quality, polished tone.

Seriously, "Antenna" offers such a wide range of sound and style, anyone from a Judas Priest fan to a Lynyrd Skynyrd lover can find something on this record to enjoy.

From the bouncy, rollicking "Girl In a T-shirt" to the hard-hitting first single "Pincushion" to the foot-tappin', ass-shakin' "Deal's Goin' Down," ZZ Top is in its prime.

With beards to their knees and hot licks in their pockets, guitarist Billy Gibbons, bassist Dusty Hill and drummer Frank Beard combine the sounds of their classic early albums with a modern twist and contemporary issues.

— Ann Stack

Book evokes emotion



Dan Simmons
"LoveDeath"
Warner Books

Dan Simmons is a member of a select group of horror writers, such as Charles L. Grant, F. Paul Wilson and Peter Straub, who produce work of exceptional quality but do not enjoy the fanfare of bigger-name authors like Stephen King and Clive Barker. It is hoped that Simmons' new release, "LoveDeath," will help introduce new readers to this excellent writer.

"LoveDeath" is a collection of five novellas that contain within them variations on themes of love and death.

The opening novella, "Entropy's Bed At Midnight," is a moving tale of a man who is spending the afternoon with his daughter at a slide in Colorado. The man, who sells insurance, recalls tale after tale of horrifying accidents from his years visiting accident sites. He suddenly realizes, as his daughter is whipping ahead of him down the slide, that she now is a member of the world that produces such horrors, such accidents. As he watches his daughter whip ahead of him, all the years of witnessing horrible accidents suddenly take on a very human touch.

This story is moving, and the end-

ing, which is subtle in its message, is perfect.

The second novella, "Dying in Bangkok," is probably the weakest story. It is the story of a Vietnam veteran who returns to Bangkok 20 years after the war to get revenge on a female vampire by giving her AIDS.

"Sleeping With Teeth Women" is more of a retelling of a legend than an actual story. Lame Badger is a young Sioux who receives a vision that he, by his actions, will either save or destroy the Sioux nation. The story details his journey through the wilderness, searching for the answers behind his vision, and concludes with his reaching a tent where three sisters, the Teeth Women, await him.

"Flashback" is a weaker story. It is about a drug called flashback, which allows people taking the drug to relive experiences in their lives over and over again. Most of the American public is addicted to the drug, and the Japanese, who do not use flashback, pretty much run the world.

"The Great Lover" is the last novella in the collection and by far the best. It takes place during the Battle of Somme during World War I and is told through the diary of James Rooke, a British officer and poet. This story is absolutely brilliant.

The horrors of the war are so well-detailed that readers actually feel like they are there with Rooke in the trenches of Somme, blindly charging toward the Germans. The novella also shows how the "powers that be" regarded the enlisted men. Although Rooke is injured again and again, so bad that he has to use a cane to walk, he is continually sent back to the front.

"The Great Lover" is laced with poetry from real World War I poets. Simmons incorporates the poetry into his story to give it a realistic feel and help set the story in time with other poets.

"LoveDeath" is an excellent piece of work and well worth picking up.

— William J. Harms