

The Local Scene with Ozone in the AM This Month: Recycled Zombies

Greetings fellow Zoners! There was a lot of great music in town in the last month, so I hope you got out to catch a few of the local bands. I also hope everyone got a chance to tune in my radio show, Mondays from 7-10AM at www.whrwfm.org or, for the faithful radio listeners, WHRW-FM 90.5. Please give me a listen, because I always love listener input!

This month I'm going to feature one of the tightest (in more ways than one) bands in the Southern Tier: The Recycled Zombies! First of all, "Recycled Zombies" is just an awesome name!

The Recycled Zombies feature Jim Popeck, guitar and vox; Bob Phelps, guitar and vox; James "Packrat" Bates, bass and vox; and Tom (Zom Bonham) Sedlock, all drums and percussion. From the first downbeat of the band's set you immediately sense how tight the band is musically. It wasn't until I met the guys in Recycled Zombies and got to know them that I found out how tight the guys in the band are as brothers. I once again cannot stress enough the importance of chemistry and just getting along with your fellow bandmates!

The band has a VERY crisp sound live, absolutely great! It starts, as with any band, with the rhythm section—Zom and Packrat—holding the bottom end down. Bob has the classic meaty, gutsy Gibson guitar, which is a natural fit for the Zombie sound. Jim has a few "clear" type guitars... actually one is clear, and the other Zombie Machine is translucent green in color. Jim told me the look, as well as the sound, of the guitar for Zombie needs fits like a glove.

One of the things that fascinates me about The Recycled Zombies is some of their song selections, which as Jim says "Don't get played by anyone... bands or radio stations." A few examples of the tunes are "Not Fragile-BTO," "Love Gun-Kiss," and a plethora of JP, Metallica, and other heavy metal delicious selections. I personally love "Not Fragile" because of the prominent bass sound/mix in the song.

Packrat starts the song off with his eight

string, which sounds awesome! He said the eight string is a nice complement to the band because of the rich and full sound it delivers unmatched by normal four-string basses. The extremely fat sound from Packrat's basses and rigs is so solid and heavy it shatters your breastbone with the resonance! Believe it or not that's a good thing! Another one of his basses—the AR-15 bass—is pretty self-explanatory. A lot of times when you have a really cool-looking axe the sound will suffer. Not with any bass I've seen Packrat play. The last time I saw him he had neon strings on the AR-15. These are extremely punchy strings, so no matter what bass Packrat is playing he has the entire bottom end spectrum covered!

Jim is excellent on vocals, which can obviously make or break a band. Every Zombies gig I've been to Jim has the crowds catering to his every whim and desire. They told me when you come home from a Zombies show they want you to remember it because of all of the musical and production values. Jim opts not to just bang out their great tunes; he interacts with every crowd, which is key for any live musician. He specifically told me he wants to interact with what I call the Toe Gazers. Nobody wants that, and Jim certainly delivers in the high-energy department. Jim has never been shy to share the stage with other local musicians too; something I highly admire. Local bands have a wonderful sense of camaraderie, something lacking in our society? I think bands sharing the stage is a great start.

Bob, the "other" guitar player, has an excellent tone when he contributes his renditions of original and cover tunes. He is never too overpowering, but his guitar leads are as sharp and crisp as a freshly honed blade! It is critical with the type of music the Zombies play to have a rhythm player chunkin' away to high heaven helping out rhythmically, then not at all afraid to step out front for some vicious-ass leads! Jim switches in and out of the lead/rhythm mode flawlessly. He told me he really liked Ace, and after seeing Bob do leads, AND rhythms, Ace would be soooo proud. Pentatonic heads, you gotta love 'em! His leads are intense and technically proficient, something that is key for a heavy band like the Zombies.

Hammering away on all drums/percussion is the man, the legend, Zom Bonham. To come close to being a drummer that'll fit into this band, you're going to have to be an extremely

hard hitter. Tom is NOT a toe tappin' pussy foot drummer! I wasn't paying attention (I was "supposedly" working the Shelter Slam door), but I would imagine that he goes through a ton of drum sticks every gig. Hit that drum like you mean it!! He threw in some very tasty kick pedal work too. I never cared for "over kicking," but Tom does his kick drum concisely, precisely, and with resolve. You can tell just by watching a Zombies set how much Tom enjoys playing drums! You can't fake having enjoyment and Tom has a blast playing. And oh yeah, he's a human metronome holding down the bottom end with Packrat. He completely fills the drumming needs of The Recycled Zombies!

Of all the numerous, tremendous accolades on The Recycled Zombie resumé, I would have to say the number one thing they do is donate their time as a band, doing many benefits and charity gigs. They've done every Shelter Slam; they play The Allsider gig, etc., etc. Pretty much anyone that needs help, The Zombie horde is there to lend a helping hand. I like that a lot. The amount of money and good will and good karma banked in the Recycled Zombie good-will karma account is immeasurable!

Every band member said they enjoy doing gigs that help people. It was unanimous with the band when I asked if they had a benefit that was nearer and dearer to their hearts. All said Shelter Slam, which benefits our furry friends, very important members of our families! Zom Bonham is friends with the organizer of Shelter Slam, John D., and the band is a highlight and greatly anticipated portion of the show. Just like that old commercial: When The Zombies take the stage, people listen!

They are a natural magnetic attraction to anyone who goes to see their live sets. I look forward with much anticipation to the release of a CD of Zombie tracks laid down. If you listen to my show you've heard Abercrombie Zombie (among other tunes) every week since the week The Zombies were kind enough to come in to WHRW for an interview.

Please tune in to WHRW-FM 90.5 Mondays from 7-10AM or catch us on the 'net at www.whrwfm.org. Catch ya in the Ozone! Thank You!



MINDFUL MUSIC Tips from Dave Rice

Your Music is Awesome (You Suck)

A hit song can be the soundtrack to a fond memory of times past. It also can be an annoying neighbor who permeates every aspect of your life to the point where you hear them when they're not home. What is the difference and where do these things come from?

Songs will beat you down over time. No matter how much they suck, eventually you will grow to love them. This curious mystery delves deep into the human psyche and poses bold questions such as "why the hell do I have Hootie stuck in my head?" We've all suffered from this, but is the weak flesh of the brain to blame or what music critics refer to as the "repetitive earworm?"

If people have told you that your band sucks,

don't get discouraged. You probably stand no chance at having a huge cult following, but you are well on your way to having a HIT SINGLE! A great song from a talented band is just fine, but a globe-sweeping hit single is a different animal entirely. It's a separate concept from even the artist who created it; everyone will know the name of the song (or at least the lyrics to the chorus). Some may show interest in the creators while most prefer to spend their time enjoying the music!

Great bands have from time to time released songs that suck. We still forgive them and love them. However, sometimes horrible bands write songs that are undeniably good, the kind of good that nets them millions of dollars. Musicians who've sold zero albums will be the first to inform you that these bands suck. The writers of these hits agree that they suck 90% of the time and are flabbergasted that their fans failed to acknowledge the other 11 tracks on their new album.

Musicians should be the last people in the universe put up to the task of selling their music. There are producers who specialize in making music that sucks and they employ all sorts of software designed to make you suck just a little bit more than you actually do. Artists make music, but the industry wants to make money! It seems counterintuitive when a producer takes

one of your songs, slows it down and puts a real beat behind it. Next they water down the message of your lyrics and remove more than half of the instrumental solos you played. It's bizarre to hear your music turned into crap, but they are just trying to help you!

The bottom line is that simple, fun, uplifting, easy to remember and easy to dance to music sells. People love it because it doesn't speak to a small group, it speaks to everyone and includes all demographics. Why try to confuse people by being "good" when you can entertain them by being yourself? Music should be fun. Debating its creative merits or intellectual value sucks. Try to imagine a world where every song was so deep and depressingly true that all we did when getting together was sit and cry into our beers. No one wants to live in that world. Don't take for granted those songs that make people get up and dance to the chagrin of every moping hipster.

One can walk the line on both sides of the argument and entertain others while staying true to themselves. Exercise your guilty musical pleasures. You only feel guilty because music that's awesome sucks.

Dave Rice owns and operates Basement Audio Recording Studio in Binghamton, NY. Please send feedback, questions, suggestions for an article or your own tips to BasementAudio@gmail.com.