



they were expendable...

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Kurt Johnson, Matt Wellendorf, Dave Zuck, and Craig Jensen make up the group they were expendable... The band plays as part of a rock-and-roll spectacular Feb. 7 with The Street Urchins at Harry Mary's. TWE will also contribute to a compilation due out this spring ("It Came From Uranus") for St. Louis-based Provel Records. We caught up with Kurt to talk about his two biggest passions: music and Elvis.

1 Why were they expendable?

It relates to a lot of things. Mainly it relates to old girlfriends.... Pretty much everything ends up being expendable. And of course the TWE (logo) fits in with the TCB Elvis band. We're hoping to get big enough to get sued by Elvis Presley Enterprises when they see how blatantly we ripped off their logo.

When people come to see your show, what should they expect?

Big wall of sound, guitars, rock & roll attitude, a lot of posing, lot of hanging out at the front of the stage and snotty attitudes. No gimmicks. A lot of three-chord songs.

2 What makes a good rock and roll pose?

A good rock & roll pose is making yourself look a lot tougher and a lot cooler than you actually are. People forget you're a lowly pee-on during the day, and when you're up there with your guitar slung low and God knows how many mazillions of watts behind you, for that one brief and shining moment, you are everything you dream you are when you're in bed at night, alone, weeping quietly to yourself.

How often do you have to practice your rock & roll pose, or does it just come naturally? Do you do it at work?

I used to do poses at work until they asked if I had Tourette's. Most of them just come naturally. I think I'm channeling a little bit of Elvis when I'm playing.

3 Are you a big Elvis fan?

Huge Elvis fan.

Why?

That guy is everything rock and roll is about, man: the sound, the look, the whole lifestyle. Nobody has ever done it better or even come close to Elvis. Everyone else is just an imposter.

Do you play any Elvis songs?

We used to do the song "Come On Everybody" from "Viva Las Vegas." It never really gelled. So we don't do any Elvis songs, but we do have a tribute song called "8-16-77" about the day he died. Eventually it's going to be a trilogy. One song's going to be about '56, when he broke big. '68 when he makes the big comeback and the last song, '77, when he dies.

What would you do if you actually ever saw Elvis? You're sitting around, practicing rock & roll poses, and all the sudden Elvis shows up. Would you put some clothes on?

First I (censored). Actually I was watching "True Romance" the other night I was thinking about that, when Elvis appears to him in the bathroom like that. That'd be sweet. Some night before a show, getting ready to go on, Elvis appears to you: "(Elvis voice) I always liked TWE. Always have, always will."

What do you take from Elvis that you want to use in your shows? Is it the poses or the showmanship?

It's not the poses. It's the presence. You lay it out there completely, every night. Every night it was all out. You lay it all out there and do the best you can. That's what it is, that's what I like to believe that we do as much as possible. Never do a half-ass show just because there's not a big crowd. Flat out put on a rock show. People are paying money to see you...that's the way E would do it.

4 When you're writing the songs, what's your favorite topic to write about? Is it girls dumping all over you?



You pretty much dredge up those memories of what you felt like; now I have to do it vicariously through other guys getting dumped on since I'm in a fairly stable relationship right now. But there's always the hope that it will end tragically and I can get a few more songs out of the experience. We don't have a lot of happy-cheery, I-love-you songs. Most of them are along the lines of "look what you've done to me."

How tough is it to translate hopelessness and depression and anxiety into rock and roll?

I find it's pretty easy. They say, "Write what you know about." I've experienced more than my share of heartbreak and depression in the past. It always seems like the topic. I try to get away from that and expand and write about other stuff. I guess nothing else really affects me or gets me worked up enough to write a song about it other than relationships and the pure hopelessness and devastation that they bring on.

5 Is it a mistake to put yourself too much into a song?

There's definitely a separation between me and the songs I write. There's a little bit of me in there, but they're not me. If the songs were really about me, they'd all be about sitting in my apartment by myself for weeks on end in the dark.

What kind of alcohol is involved with that?

Captain Morgan. Goin' sailin' with the captain tonight. It's going to be a bumpy ride, boys....I can't wait to see this in print. Chicks are going to be knocking my door down.