

MUSIC



(Includes concert events, interviews and reviews)

Weather Doesn't Dampen 'No Snow' Ball

97.9 Morning Show WRMF, known as South Florida's Variety Station, held its annual holiday concert event at Mizner Park, in Boca Raton. The No Snow Ball concert featured various artists, including Grammy award nominee KT Tunstall. Though the rain refused to let up on the Saturday evening's events, which kicked off at 5:00 pm, the bands' performances shined brightly on dampened spirits.



The first artist on deck was Michael Tolcher, an indie musician from Georgia. His alternative folk style songwriting kept the audience well entertained, as he helped to warm up the crowd for the rest of the artists. His country, blues, alternative rock melodies and lyrics gave rise to haunting ballads, which seemed very personable and kept the audiences attention. Not an easy feat to master if you're the soul performer up on an out door stage and your audience is sitting in a rainstorm- literally!

Mr. Tolcher did ease up a bit, showing his humorous side by detouring from his own lyrics and replacing them with lyrics from an old Christmas classic, “Rudolph the Red Nosed

Reindeer”. After his performance, he gave CD’s to whoever one, along with autographs. The CD “Certified Organic” information to his He even took the



is entitled and has web site. time to

answer a couple of my questions. See interview below:

Lena: Where did you get your start?

MT: During the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta. I was a street performer. Got booked for my first paid gig from that.

Lena: Who are your musical influences? You have a country blues sound to your songs.

MT: Southern accent must be the reason for the country sound, but I don’t listen to country music. I listen to dance music, James Taylor, Cat Stevens, The Beat.

Lena (Library related questions for BCLYS web site): What kind of books do you like to read?

MT: Philosophy related, I like to learn about the human mind. Also history.

Lena: Who’s your favorite author?

MT: Daniel Quinn

Next was the group “The Invisible”. They were definitely a change, from Michael Tolcher. This five-piece band rocked the audience with their edgy, scratchy, catchy vocals and sound. I tried to figure out whom the lead singer, Josh Cann sounded like. It was a toss up between three other well-known artists, Jon Bon Jovi, Rob Thomas, and even a little Brian Adams.

They showed their versatility as they moved from rock songs to ballads and got the crowd on their feet with a pounding, piano jazz, jamming finale. One of the guitarists had a problem with his guitar while up on stage, during one of the songs, but he handled it like a champ, not taking anything away from the performance.

Another featured solo performer was Matt Kearney, who only recently was a headline on MSN.com. His story-like lyrics and strong acoustics made his ballads sound much like some of Bruce Springsteen’s older material. Some of his lyrics really pulled at the heartstrings and his wide range vocals were proof that we’d be hearing more from this up and coming artist in the near

similar to Dave Mathews, except lyrics then you could swear you were U2.



future. His sound is when he talks through the listening to Bono from

When Matt got tired of the guitar, he migrated over to the keyboard and played a few songs there, but not before playfully teasing Augustana about having to share a keyboard with them. Supposedly, the keyboard player from Augustana did something to the keyboard, and Matt was not going to let him live it down. Later in his performance, he invited the audience to sing along with him on “Chicago” and then finished his set with his hit song, presently getting airplay called, “Nothing Left to Lose.”

There are quite a few good up and coming bands according to VH-1’s opinion, and Augustana, the Los Angeles based band is no exception. This five-piece band, who’s lead singer’s voice makes you think that one of the Opera house’s tenors escaped to join an alternative rock band (hey after all, that’s how Pat



Benatar got her start) played to the audience with soulful blues ballads and raging beats on their rockier numbers. For their finale, they played their hit song, “Boston,” which is enjoying quite a bit of airtime on various radio stations.

Later after their performance, they met the fans and signed autographs. Of course yours truly got to meet Dave, Justin and Jared. The lead singer was on the other side of the booth where they were all sitting. I even got a chance to ask Dan and Jesse a few questions.

Lena: It’s your birthday, I over-heard you telling one of the people from 97.9 Morning Show.


Dave: It was a couple of days ago. I’m 22.

Lena: How do you like the weather out here? (Yeah, we actually talked about the weather...I might as well have carried the watermelon too...need to see “Dirty Dancing” to get that joke)

Dave and Justin: It’s more humid out here than LA. It’s dryer out in California. Their debut album is titled “All the Stars and Boulevards”.

Some may call it a break from the music business, others may use more politically correct semantics and say sabbatical. Either way, the last time I heard about the Gin Blossoms touring was back in the mid nineties. Now with a new album out, “Major Lodge Victory” and the hit off of it “Learning the Hard Way”, making its way up the charts, it’s only right that the band members hop back onto a smelly, crowded, tour bus and

reunite with their old fans, and hopefully make new ones.

his  The lead singer, Jesse Valenzuela had no trouble showing humorous side when he grabbed a girl’s cell phone from the audience, speed dialed one of her friends and proceeded to perform one of the band’s songs while leaving a message on the friends answering machine. Jesse then had the whole audience yell a Christmas greeting.

The band also performed some of its older songs, like “Until I Hear it From You.” Unfortunately, this band knows too well the routine of these venues and managed to escape to the buses before their fans could catch them. Hey, that’s ok, KT what’s-her-face made it up to the crowd for you.

Speaking of the little devil, who hails Tunstall was the last artist to perform, but least. She played several songs off her album "Telescope", including the hit, "Black Horse and she took liberties to deviate from the original branch out and jam. I was only a little disappointed in it, because I really was looking forward to hearing the live version of it and was not up for any variations to the theme.



from Scotland, K.T. needless to say not the entitled, "Eye to the the Cherry Tree," while score and let the band

She's not particularly tall, but in her very short denim shorts and what looked to be aluminum foil tights and tan leather boots, her appealing stage presence maintained an intriguing command of the audience. Her songs carry a Celtic drum rhythm behind what I considered to be Carol King-like lyrics and melodies that can only be described by the oxymoron, edgy soft rock. When she sings, her vocals remind one of Natalie Merchant.

As K.T. rocked the thoroughly drenched crowd of die-hard fans with her unique acoustic guitar playing, beating out rhythms on its body with her hand, she encouraged the audience to join in.

She segued into the song, "Other Side of the World," a song about long distance relationships, by inviting all the ladies in the audience, who are in a long distance relationship right now, to throw their cell phones up onto the stage and she, meaning K.T. and the other band members would make the phone calls to end the relationship for them.

Her last song was "Suddenly I See." She kept true to this song while giving the audience a long-playing version of it. By the time she finished her set, it was clear why she was nominated for a grammy.

Overall the evening went really well. The audience was a good mix of really nice people with an age range of about 10 to 50, if you didn't include those whose parents could not find a baby sitter. Though it rained for most of the event, it was clear that no one's spirits were dampened. The evening ended around 10:00pm.

Additional notes. Eric Stenman, the manager for Augustana, took my questions and said he would email me the answers from the band at a later time. Keep your fingers crossed for that one.

Beth from 97.9 WRFM was the person I kept in contact with during the show. She was warm and friendly. If you need to contact her the email is beth@wrmf.com

Additional info on the artists:

Michael Tolcher

Record Label: Octone Records

Website: MichealTolcher.com

Debut Album: "I Am"

The Invisible

Website: the-invisible.co.uk

Matt Kearney

Record Label: Aware Records

Website: Matkearney.com

Album: "Nothing Left to Lose"

Augustana

Record Label: Epic Records

Website: Augustanamusic.com

Album: "All the Stars and Boulevards"

Gin Blossoms

Record Label: HybridRecordings

Website: GinBlossoms.net

Album: "Major Lodge Victory"

KT Tunstall

Record Label: Virgin Records

Website: kttunstall.com

Album: "Eye to the Telescope"

Plain White T's are Anything But Plain

By Lena Putzer

With so many up and coming pop alternative bands sprouting up everywhere, it's hard to keep track of all of them. What's even harder is trying to listen to so many, and decipher the ones who have that certain something -- je ne sais quoi from the ones that



don't. Plain White T's seem to be one of those "certain something" bands, and BCL Teen Monthly got a chance to talk to two of its members during their visit here, in Fort Lauderdale.

It was a few hours before they were to take the stage at the Culture Room, in Fort Lauderdale. This five-piece band, from the suburbs of Chicago, is sharing the tour with a few other bands, such as, Dear In the Headlights and Lovedrug.

Tom Higgenson, the lead singer and founder of the band, and Dave Tirio guitarist and were most eager to play, when BCL Teen Monthly asked them if they were up for a game of twenty questions. Friends since high school, Tom and Dave are more or less the steadies of the band. It's hard when you're first learning about a new up and coming band, although these guys have been around for a while. It's only recently that they have

been attracting attention. We started out with some basic questions, like how old are you and how did you come up with the name Plain White T's.

"We're in our mid twenties," Tom replied. Dave was happy to add, "I'm twenty-seven." It was a surprise to hear this since both Tom and Dave look very young for their age. As far as how the band's name came about, here is what Tom had to say, "Way back in the day, we had a bunch of bad names. This one (referring to the band's current name) was the best of the worst." Dave mentioned a concert that inspired them, "We saw this band and that's all they were wearing on stage – jeans and white t-shirts. So if it's good for them, it's good for us."

One wonders how a band gets put together. Sometimes it's a major record label that cookie cuts the band by picking select players. Other times, it's just a group of friends who happen to be musically inclined. For the Plain White T's, the latter seems to apply, as Tom explains, "We met in high school, Dave and I. We got the other guys when the bands they played in broke up. When Ken left, we got Mike."

All members of today's bands have obviously been influenced by bands from yesterday and even long ago. Both Tom and Dave proudly listed some of their favorites, "The Beatles, Ninety's Alternative like Pearl Jam, Smashing Pumpkins and Weezer."

Musicians are human too, and there are people in their lives that have left such an impact on them that there is a tendency to write a song about those influential few. BCI Teen Monthly talked with Tom and Dave about three of their songs. Tom revealed in "Hey There Delilah", a track off of the band's latest CD, *Every Second Counts*, "Some songs are inspired by life, but it's not a hundred percent. This song is true to life with a little bit of imagination. Delilah was about someone that I wished I kind of had something."

On the song, "Hate- I Really Don't Like You", Tom explained why he wrote it. "I wrote it at a time when I was upset. Music helps me get stuff off my chest. I write it then it doesn't bother me as much anymore. It's therapy."

When asked if Tom and Dave feared any repercussions from people listening to their music, like the song, "Friends Don't Let Friends Dial Drunk", a song about a not so amicable relationship Tom once had, Tom confidently answered, "No, I'm not worried. They're probably thinking, 'cool, he wrote a song about me.'" (Laughs). Dave joked, "Yeah, 'look, I really go to him!'" (Laughs). Tom justified his reason by saying this, "If it was flipped around and the girl wrote a song about me... I don't feel guilty getting rich off of it. I keep getting involved with the wrong girls," he confessed. Dave couldn't keep from teasing Tom by contributing his experience with girls, "My relationships are very cool, because I learn from his mistakes." Both Tom and Dave laughed at Dave's jab.

We moved on to talk about their music, how they go about writing and whom their music appeals to. When asked about their approach to writing a song, more specifically, the instruments with which Tom and Dave use when first constructing a

song, Tom told BCL Teen Monthly, “Always the guitar. Sometimes it starts with the melody, but ninety-nine percent is put together with guitar. I’m not that good with the piano.”

We delved further about their song-writing methodology. Which comes first, the lyrics or the melody? Tom explained it, “It’s always different. Sometimes you have lyrics going through your head. I’ll be playing guitar and there will be a melody, but no lyrics for a while.”

So, whom do they think their music appeals to? Both Tom and Dave collectively and humorously answered, “Ten to seventy year olds.” Dave unabashedly admitted, “My grandparents love Delilah!” Tom also added, “Grandparents have come to our concerts.” Dave immediately joked, “Our parents have to come!” On that line we all laughed.

Of course the next obvious question was what did they think made their sound so unique, compared to all the other bands out there? October Fall was mentioned as an example. Dave recalled, “I think we played with them.” Then he went on to explain, “Our consistency made it happen. We’ve been a band through a couple of trends, rock rap, and while everyone else was doing that, we stayed true to form. We didn’t change, so we stood out.” Excellent strategy there when you’re trying to not be like everyone else. It takes a great deal of courage to hold true to one’s form and these guys seem to be doing that extremely well.



The picture above shows guitarist Dave Tirio and lead vocals Tom Higgenson of the Plain White T's.

Like some of us who were fortunate enough, Tom and Dave grew up in the kind of family environment where they had people they could look up to, and trust to go to when they needed help. Who are some of those special people in Tom and Dave's lives? Here's what they had to say, "Uh... different people," Tom began at first. He was a little stuck on the question so Dave eagerly chimed in, "Your mom!" Then Tom added, in referring to his family, "Being on the road makes you appreciate them." Dave confessed, "All of us are pretty ridiculously close to our families." It's great to hear this, when most of the time, one will read about how some artists struggle with their family relationships.

While we were on the subject of supportive and influential people in their lives, we moved further to discuss the influences that non-family members have had on the band over the years. Tom and Dave spoke enthusiastically about one in particular. His name is Christian Lane and he heads a band called Loud Lucy. Dave shared his moment with BCL Teen Monthly, when he and Tom got to meet their idol, "It was inspirational!" Tom equated his admiration this way, "I really like to be there for the fans, because that's what I wanted when I was young. He (referring to Christian Lane) was there for his fans." Dave continued to describe his feelings that he and Tom have for Loud Lucy, "We loved that band! We looked up to them. Loud Lucy was like our role models!"

The twenty questions game continued with Tom and Dave talking about touring, award ceremonies and even doing a gig at the Gap. So, what is it that they like about touring? Tom answered this question with a huge smile, "It's awesome!" Dave also agreed and mentioned, "Traveling, and playing music every night! It feels kind of comfortable going to familiar cities."

The band won a Woody Award too. This is an award sponsored by MTVu and based on the college and university students' votes. Tom and Dave were happy to share this remarkable experience. Tom said, "It was surreal just being there." "Shocked! It hit us like a brick wall. Our award was the first one given," Dave recalled.

On the situation with the mini concert at the Gap, Tom explained, "They just asked us. I used to work at the Gap." Dave had this to add about the experience, "The Gap thing ...that was actually a cool thing, because it was like going full circle. It was a good turn out." Dave was referring to how Tom worked for them and now he was performing for them to attract customers.

A while back Tom was in a serious car accident. He described how this life-changing event affected him, "I took the band not more seriously, but more sincerely. Wow, this is life!" Dave shared his thoughts as well, "I think the songs you wrote were more about something."

Since the band can't be constantly on the road, BCI Teen Monthly asked Tom and Dave how they spend their leisure time. More specifically, what books they like to read, after all this interview was being conducted by BCL Teen Monthly, a library owned online magazine. Dave said, "I like Kurt Vonnegut. I'll pick up a classic that I was too lazy to read in school, like Hemmingway." So what movies do they plan on seeing this summer? When given the choices of *Spiderman*, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* or *Pirates of the Caribbean*, Tom jumped right in, "All of them!" Dave, on the other hand, was a bit more selective, "I think *Spiderman* and *Pirates*. I love Harry Potter, but I lost track of what was going on."

So, it's official! The Plain White T's are just like the rest of us – only different. When on tour, they're happily playing their hearts out on stage, to multitudes of die-hard fans. When not on tour, well, you just might find yourself standing on line, in front of or behind them, waiting to see this summer's block busters.

The Plain White T's have come a long way and proved themselves to be a substantially stable and consistent force on the music scene. After speaking with Tom and Dave, it was clear that their wit, humor and personal charm definitely enhance this bands success with the fans. Our best wishes go out to Tom, Dave, Mike, Tim and De'Mar.

Band: Plain White T's
Album: Every Second Counts
Recording Label: Hollywood/Fearless
Website: www.plainwhitets.com
MySpace: www.myspace.com/plainwhitets

Special thanks to Sharon and Greg, owners of the Culture Room

www.cultureroom.net



photo: jo lopez

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Blank Tape Rocks Pembroke Pines

By Mayroby Fuentes

Blank Tape is a group of talented teen musicians who have already started to be recognized for their outrageous performances. To begin with we have Lennon Livesay in vocals and guitar, followed by Fonzie Sandler as lead guitarist as well as vocals and Efrain Lopez with bass/vocals and last but not least Alan Penton with the rocking drums/vocals.

Anyway, who are these boys? And how did they come about to be Blank Tape? Here they tell us, "We got together in 2004, and went through some line up changes and finally settled on what we are now, we play honest fun music and we don't try to fit into any category, we just play the music we want to play." They also write their own songs about whatever they're going through with life as their main influence.

We asked them if they had any top musical influences and they said as follows, "One of our biggest influences is definitely Unwanted Superheroes. They were the first local band we ever heard that made us really just say "wow". These kids are from our town, and they're making amazing music. This made us motivated to really start taking the band seriously.

Other than that, we are influenced by all kinds of different music, from pop-punk to hardcore, and everything in between". Among other live shows, they've played at the Pines Day 2006 festival opening for Josh Turner, and also recently won the 5th annual David Posnack JCC battle of the bands!

A picture is posted as follows in which they were displayed by the Sun Sentinel. "Reading is a really fun way to expand your imagination. a series we would suggest would be Ian Flemings 007 novels, which most of the James Bond Movies are based on. Another great book is Peter & The Star catchers, which is a really good pirate book." Blank Tape supports these great series and they would love for you to support them, so check them out via their Myspace or their phone listed in the picture above.



THE WINNER IS: Blank Tape's Efrain Lopez, 15, of Pembroke Pines, signs autographs for his fans. Blank Tape won the competition. Blank Tape bandmate Lennon Livesay, 14, of Pembroke Pines, is at left.

MySpace: www.Myspace.com/blanktaperocks