

Zebra

(Continued from page 6)

genre feel they need. Not being flashy enough to attract the heavy-metal fans, and yet being too aggressive musically for the pop rock fans, Zebra got caught in between the established taste boundaries of music fans, which may have prevented a national audience from latching on to them.

Whatever the reasons, their album sales tapered off after their first record. In a world where sales figures are the bottom line, Zebra apparently did not succeed in the eyes of Atlantic; their recording contract was not renewed after the requirements of their three-record deal were fulfilled.

Since then, the band has been in a sort of rock 'n' roll limbo, playing occasional shows in and around the old stomping grounds of New York and New Orleans. They can still draw a crowd in these two cities, where the band spent many years maturing and honing their musical chops, but national success seems as far off as it was in the 70s.

After 14 long years, and after tasting success and then having it slip away, it is not surprising that rumors have started that the band members are getting restless, and that the demise of Zebra may not be far off.

When it was announced that Zebra would wrap up a brief Louisiana tour with two shows at New Orleans' Storyville Jazz Hall on May 19 and 20, the rumors started anew: were these shows going to be Zebra's last New Orleans hurrah?

If they were, it was only fitting that they be at Storyville. Filling a half block of an ancient two-story brick and wood building alongside the Mississippi River, sandwiched between Decatur Street and the open-air French Market at the edge

of the Vieux Carre, Storyville has been the site of legions of legendary concerts over the years.

These shows are a representative slice of the musical melting pot that is New Orleans, with everyone from upstart punk band The Red Hot Chili Peppers tearing through the place, to New Orleans' own masters of funk, the Neville Brothers, filming an HBO special there.

Storyville had also been part of the Zebra legacy. In 1986, Zebra filled the building with their fans and filmed the video for "Can't Live Without," the third album's lead single.

Only five hundred or so people made it to the Friday night show at Storyville on May 19. Jim McGinnis of Big J Productions, the promoter of the Storyville concerts and many past Zebra shows, said the crowd would have been bigger, were it not for Storyville's policy of not admitting anyone under 21, and its location in a congested area that makes commuting from the suburbs and parking difficult.

Nonetheless, a thousand of the faithful packed Storyville for the Saturday night show; the crowd was almost too large for the hall, even after its chairs and tables were moved outside.

A Zebra tradition of giving up-and-coming New Orleans bands the opening slot at their hometown shows (which helped Lillian Axe, a former Zebra opening act, get signed to MCA Records) was continued at the Storyville shows when the local hard-rock band Razor White performed an hour of covers and originals to kick things off.

Thirty minutes after the clock struck 12, the three members of Zebra — vocalist/guitarist Randy Jackson, bassist/keyboardist Felix Hanemann, and drummer Guy Gelso — took the stage and lit into "As I Said Before," a driving mid-tempo rocker

from their first album.

Dressed casually in a baggy pink tank-top, stone-washed jeans, and white Reebok sneakers, the low-key Jackson, who bears more than a passing resemblance to Billy Squier, avoided vocal cliches, letting his actions show how he felt toward the hometown crowd.

When a fan pressed against the stage motioned to the singer that he couldn't hear Jackson's singing, Jackson told the fan to turn around one of the monitors that lay across the front of the stage, so that it faced the crowd.

The monitor is used so that vocalists can hear themselves singing. To Jackson, it was more important that the fan hear.

Throughout the show, the band was loose and playful, but still performed as a tight unit, the result of 14 years of performing together. During "Slowdown," which incorporates a falsetto version of lyrics borrowed from "Blue Suede Shoes," a sax player came onstage, turning the song into a tasty rock/blues/jazz blend.

During "Bears," a melodic rocker from the second album that features some fine keyboard texturing by Hanemann and one of Jackson's smoothest, strongest vocal performances ever, end-of-the-tour hijinks added to the fun. A couple of Razor White's personnel made a surprise appearance onstage, dressed in zebra and bear costumes. They danced around as the grinning members of Zebra did their best to ignore them and play on.

The crowd sang along as Zebra ran through a set list drawing from all three albums: the acoustic "Who's Behind the Door," "The Lala Song," "Better Not Call," "One More Chance" and "Take Your Fingers From My Hair."

After almost two hours, Zebra left the stage, only to come back for the

traditional encore of Zeppelin classics. This night, though, they played them with a little more fervor than most.

"The Immigrant Song," "Over the Hills and Far Away" and "Heart-breaker" (with a little bit of "Black Dog" thrown in the middle for good measure) were all given regal treatment by Zebra, with Jackson doing a smashing version of Jimmy Page's guitar work and the powerful Gelso doing the late Zeppelin drummer John Bonham proud on drums.

With the completion of "Heart-breaker," the band said goodnight and left the stage. The crowd began to file out of Storyville into the rainy night.

But then, a few minutes after 3 a.m., local rock DJ Michael Costello bounded onstage and asked if the crowd wanted to hear another. The response was affirmative, and the band came back onstage to play one more song.

After the show, Jackson didn't say that this was the end of Zebra. He did say that a deal to release a live Zebra album had fallen through, and that he is working on a solo album (which will be released by Atlantic), and Gelso is actively involved with a jazz band.

Jim McGinnis, a long-time associate of the band, has said that he doesn't think a solo album by Jackson necessarily means that Zebra is finished, and also said they will probably continue playing as a group.

Perhaps unwittingly, though, the band left more than a few fans wondering about the future of Zebra after they finished their final song that Saturday night. The song they chose to close out the show was one from Zebra's early days, a rarely played song that was not placed on any of their albums.

The final number was a tune called "The Last Time."

In Advance

Free movie screening Friday in Central Park

A free screening of Walt Disney's classic movie "The Fox and the Hound" will take place Friday night in College Station's Central Park at dusk.

Those wishing to attend are encouraged to bring lawn chairs and insect repellent.

Czechoslovakian troupe performs Monday

An evening of Czechoslovakian culture and dance will be presented by Podluzan, an amateur Czech ensemble, Monday night at 8 in Rudder Theater.

The troupe will present original songs, dances and folk culture of its native country. Dressed in traditional costumes, the dancers will simulate a wedding ceremony, a national feast and a folklore festival.

Providing music for the dances will be a hammered dulcimer band.

Podluzan is an amateur group from Breclav, Czechoslovakia, and is composed of people having various professions. All members of the 30-year-old group study folk art in their free time.

Tickets for the event are available at the MSC Box Office in Rudder Tower. Prices are \$4 for the general public and \$3 for students.

A concession stand will be on the site. Central Park is located at 1000 Krenektrap Rd.

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ROAD TRIPS

Open weekend at Live Oak Nudist Ranch

The Live Oak Nudist Resort will be celebrating this weekend's upcoming National Nude Weekend with an open house.

Visitors may tour the club's grounds on Saturday or Sunday and meet members of the resort as well as people who work there.

Other weekend events include volleyball tournaments, hot air balloon rides and a Saturday night concert by Tony Ray Jones.

All activities except the balloon rides are free.

Although Live Oak Ranch is a nudist resort, guests will not be expected to disrobe unless they use club facilities such as the pool or the whirlpool spa.

The resort is located west of Navasota on Washington County Road 99, two miles north of the intersection of 99 and FM 102.

For more information, call (409) 878-2216.

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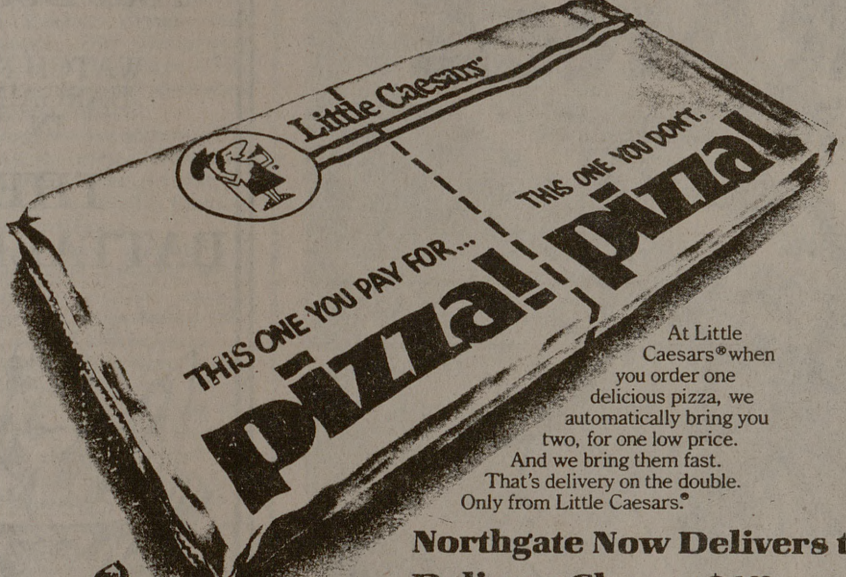
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