

Texas rock 'n' roll band defies labels

## El Flaco does its own thing

By JOHN LeBAS  
THE BATTALION

What do Star Trek, ZZ Top and Ronnie James Dio have in common?

They top El Flaco's list of people to meet and things to do.

The members of the three-piece Austin band want to go on Star Trek as Klingons. Flaco aims to open for the bearded fellows of ZZ Top and dine with Dio. Eventually.

For now, says bassist Rob Gray, El Flaco will keep building its base in Texas until the record deal comes around. The band, playing tonight at Vertigo, tries to visit as many

college towns as possible because the fans there are so loyal.

That's why we like the small college towns," he said. "If they like you, they'll stick with you."

And what fans can expect to see is Texas rock 'n' roll, he said.

"We definitely consider ourselves Texas rock," Gray said. "We rock 'n' roll with our own personal style. Texas rock is different here's less influence here from bands, and more individuality."

El Flaco, like most Texas bands, just does its own thing, Gray said. It doesn't fit into any

kind of musical category. A lot of Texas bands don't fit

where," he said. "I think it's the whole influence of Texas at Austin."

Gray said Austin helped El Flaco get away from ripping off music from the bands that influence it.

"When you're starting, your influences drive you and you try to copy them," he said. "Once we

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Rob Gray  
El Flaco bassist

spin on it." El Flaco's classic rock influences, and influences like ZZ Top and Dio, all go into the mix.

Gray said fans seem to like El Flaco's brew. The shows are simple — no theatrics, he said — and fun.

"From what people tell me, we all are having a good time, and that lets them have a good time," he said.

Gray said El Flaco is "easily accessible": Young and old listeners alike get into the groove.

And the band is now going all out to be even more accessible, he said. El Flaco has toured on the East Coast and throughout Texas in support of its self-produced album, *Thub*. But the road to success can be long and a little bumpy, he said.

Gray and El Flaco drummer Brad Turner were in the Austin band Bouffant Jellyfish until it broke up in 1992. Still itching to play, Gray and Turner recruited guitarist Chris Hay and formed El Flaco later that year.

But band members juggle practice, touring and school.

Turner recently went to chef school and Gray is currently working on his Ph.D. in psychology at the University of Texas.

"It's been hard, but time management has been the key," Gray said. "It's kind of interesting, because people have this stereotype of what musicians are supposed to be like. They think people in rock 'n' roll are all one way. I put [school and music] together, and it's hard for some people to understand."

But it doesn't really matter to El Flaco what others think, Gray said.

"We try to expand the parameters of normal rock 'n' roll by doing what we feel like doing," he said.

Hopefully, this will continue to attract more of the record label attention the band is already getting, Gray said. It has about 15 new songs that are itching for a new CD release, he said.

And then maybe meeting ZZ Top will become a reality.



El Flaco



Missile Command

Former Gals Panic member in new band

## Missile Command lifts off

By APRIL TOWER  
THE BATTALION

Missile Command lead vocalist Jeremy Pollet thought he needed helicopters to get out of the situation he was in this summer.

Stranded onstage at a club in Austin, Pollet discovered the other band members of Gals Panic had different plans for their future. After releasing the debut album *I Think We Need Helicopters*, performing in the movie *The Underneath*, and spending almost four years of musical coherence with Austin punk band Gals Panic, bassist Cardinal Connor and vocalist Lance Sever parted with the band in July.

"When we got off our last tour in July, Lance was offered an amazing job with an animation company," Pollet said. "He's a good cartoonist and has a degree in graphic design from the University of Texas,

so he chose that career over a career in rock 'n' roll. The bass player had just gotten in a serious relationship with a girl, so he saw this as his opportunity to get out."

Sever and Connor are currently playing shows around Austin with a band called The Playdoh Squad.

Pollet and Gals Panic drummer Dave Keel were not expecting the sudden breakup, but Pollet said that there are no hard feelings between the Gals Panic band members. Now they see it as a "blessing in disguise."

"Dave and I thought we were doing well and were excited about the music," Pollet said. "We want to be even better than Gals Panic. One thing that didn't make the transition so bad was that I had been managing the record label for Gals Panic, so I knew how to do the managing work."

Keel and Pollet auditioned bassist Craig Shindig,

began writing new music and became the "power three-piece" Missile Command by late August. The band has played four shows in Austin and San Marcos and recorded the album *Try Japanese Fast Food* on Pollet's label, Pope Yes Records.

Pollet said the album will not surprise Gals Panic fans.

"It's still bouncy-punk music," he said. "The vocals are a little gruffer and more melodic — people used to say Lance was half rapping."

Matt Applegath, a senior wildlife and fisheries science major, said he is a fan of the album *I Think We Need Helicopters*.

"I think they're just crazy," he said. "They really go nuts and are totally into the music. It's really fun music, and it does have some meaning."

Pollet said it is necessary to put on a show for the audience. He said that when people pay to see a band, they are paying to be entertained as well.

"I'm still a complete spaz," he said. "People will come up to me after a show and say, 'I can't believe you're so confident.' I'm so nervous when I'm up there, but when I get stage fright, I'm too nervous to stand still so I run around like an idiot. If you're going to get onstage, you've got to give a performance."

Now that Pollet has made the transition from guitarist to vocalist, he said he has observed a difference in space constraints onstage.

"When I didn't have to have a microphone in

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"I'm still a complete spaz... If you're going onstage, you've got to give a performance."  
Jeremy Pollet  
Missile Command singer

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