

Driving in the Fresh Lane

The Refreshments ride the commercial music highway in search of a roaring good time.

By JOHN LeBAS
THE BATTALION

Sudden success for a rock band can bring about a refreshing change of pace. PH. Naffah, drummer for the Refreshments, said he and his bandmates played for years in various Tempe, Ariz., bars. They never thought much about making it big, he said, until fellow Tempe artists the Gin Blossoms went national.

"Once we saw the Gin Blossoms on David Letterman, we thought, 'Maybe we can do it,'" Naffah said.

The Refreshments, which formed in 1983, signed with Mercury Records after a company executive saw them play at the South by Southwest music showcase in Austin. But success caught the band by surprise, Naffah said.

"We pretty much just got together, and it happened to be drums and guitars lying around," Naffah said. "We didn't have any expectations, we were just having fun."

"Fun" soon turned into a full-time job. The Refreshments has toured for about the last year, Naffah said, taking its "drunken delectability" throughout the country in support of *Fizzy Fuzzy Big and Buzzy*, the band's first release. Naffah said constant touring has made the band's hectic schedule worth the effort.

"It's tiring, but you know after you've traveled 1,000 miles, you get to play," he said. "That's the fruit of the labor."

And though the Refreshments works hard to entertain, Naffah said its main priority is because they're having fun.

"We're there just to have fun and play some good music," he said. "When you go to a show and see a band having a blast, you can't help but be infected by that. That's what we aim for. I don't mind working very night."

So fans can expect to have fun at a Refreshments show, but what do these guys really sound like?



the Refreshments

"It's not quite breakfast, it's not quite lunch, but it comes with a fruit cup," Naffah said. He said he does not want to put a label

"If I could wear a sombrero every night, I would," Naffah said. "But everybody in the band grew up in different places."

Naffah said he also listened to Thin Lizzy, Rush, AC/DC and other rock bands while growing up.

On the other hand, he said, singer Roger Clyne draws from bands like Camper Van Beethoven, Cracker and They Might Be Giants.

The Refreshments' formula has been working commercially. The band has released two singles from *Fizzy Fuzzy*, "Banditos" and "Down Together," which have been played over the radio and on MTV.

"The first time I saw myself on MTV, it was the coolest thing," Naffah said. "It's exciting seeing something you've worked that hard on come to fruition."

But success can be a little tough to get used to, he said. He said people react strangely when they recognize him on the street.

"It's hard to explain — they look at you all weird," he said. "I think it's mostly because we're as nervous to meet them as they are to meet us. It's the whole stranger thing."

Despite the weirdness, he said, success has its perks.

"What I like most about it is, I'm doing what I've always been doing, but now I'm making money doing it," he said. "And we get to ride in a tour bus. It's like a dream come true."

W²
When & Where

Dishwalla, Chalk FarM and the Refreshments will be playing at Rudder Auditorium Sunday, starting at 6 p.m. The location was changed from Wolf Pen Creek Amphitheater due to bad weather reports. For information call MSC Town Hall at 845-1515.

on the Refreshments' sound because the band's influences are so diverse.

"We take a lot of influence from our surroundings and the experiences we've had," he said. "We're influenced by the past couple of years, if not our whole life."

Living in Arizona, close to Mexico, he said, melds a southwestern flavor in the music, but doesn't dominate it.

Dishwalla, a Santa Barbara, Calif., alternative band with a socially-conscious edge, is playing Sunday at Rudder Auditorium at 6 p.m. The show was moved from its originally scheduled venue of Wolf Pen Creek Amphitheater due to predictions of bad weather.



Dishwalla

Formed in 1992, Dishwalla has attained success melding its music around social commentary.

"As a band, our first obligation is to make good music," Dishwalla wrote for *Swing* magazine. "But we understand the influence popular musicians can have today, and we feel a responsibility to go beyond 'do me' lyrics and irresponsible lifestyles."

But Dishwalla is not strictly a

political band, drummer George Pendergrass said. "There's a serious angle to the whole thing we do, but we don't want people to get overly dramatic," he said. "It's just music." Dishwalla is touring in support of its debut album, *Pet Your Friends*. The album spawned "Counting Blue Cars," which was number one for four weeks on Billboard's modern rock chart earlier this year.

Chalk FarM, an alternative band from Los Angeles, is playing Sunday at Rudder Auditorium at 6 p.m. According to a press release, the band's debut album, *Notwithstanding*, urges the listener to rise above the current trend of apathy in the world.

"The biggest difference between them and other bands is that their dreams came to fruition intact, without having been compromised, lobotomized or convoluted," the release said.



Chalk FarM

Singer and guitarist Michael Duff said Chalk FarM aims for originality.

"We're always looking to make a song of our own, so that a couple of chords you know it's Chalk FarM," he said. "All along,

we've just wanted to make music that makes us happy."

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