

The sky is the limit Duo performs on strength of new release

BY SALLIE TURNER
The Battalion

From its beginning as a duo playing in nightclubs in Washington, D.C., Vertical Horizon has worked its way up to signing with a major label, RCA Records, last year. Keith Kane and Matt Scannell, both graduates of Georgetown University, began playing acoustic gigs throughout the New England area, eventually joining with John Alagia and Doug Derryberry, who recorded five tracks for Vertical Horizon. In 1992, the band saved up enough money to record their first album, *There and Back Again*. The album, which was recorded at Scannell's high school, scored the group a job touring with the then up-and-coming Jackopierce. Scannell's high school, scored the group a job touring with the then up-and-coming Jackopierce. Scannell's high school, scored the group a job touring with the then up-and-coming Jackopierce.

pendently released album.

Running on Ice, the group's second album, released in 1995, included Carter Beauford of the Dave Matthews Band and backup vocals by Cary Pierce and Jack O'Neill of Jackopierce. According to the band's Website, Vertical Horizon employed a variety of drummers and other musicians to tour with them but made no permanent additions to the band until 1996.

The group finally found their permanent drummer, Ed Toth, through Scannell's mom, who was looking for a Vertical Horizon album at the record store where Toth was working. Toth permanently joined the band just in time to record and release the group's third independently produced album, *Live Stages*.

Live Stages is a recording of many of the group's older songs, with a more electric sound. Scannell said *Live Stages* was the first step in adding

more electric and heavier sound to their lyrics.

"The live record was a turning point for us," he said. "There was a lot of development, a lot of growth in a very short time, and I think it really shows on [*Live Stages*]."

Vertical Horizon said its focus was and continues to be songwriting, even though their sound has undergone some major changes over the past seven years.

Kane said they try to put the focus of their music on the lyrics, melodies and chord progressions. "We're not into huge productions," he said. "Just real emotions and real situations."

The band added Sean Hurley on bass guitar for their latest album, scheduled for release in June. *Everything You Want* marks their first major label release.

The new album is a change from Vertical Horizon's humble beginnings of playing acoustically at nightclubs to small audiences.

Scannell said the songs are still simple, recorded with sincerity despite the change to a more electric and louder sound.

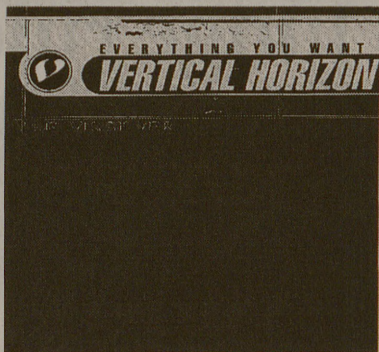
Kane said one of the reasons for the increase in the use of electric guitars was his desire to hear a lot of noise.

"After six or seven years of touring, toughing out relationships, struggling, you begin to feel a little more realistic about life," he said. "That realism, that anger sounded really good on an electric guitar."

The band will play tonight at Shadow Canyon with Sly Letter opening. Their performance is scheduled to be a mixture of both old and new stuff, but the emphasis will be on the new material.

Ed Toth said the new album and new sound are a step towards widening the scope of Vertical Horizon's appeal.

"If we allow ourselves to keep moving forward, we'll be able to cover a lot of ground and have fun doing it," he said.



Vertical Horizon
Everything You Want
CD courtesy of RCA Records

Everything You Want, the first major label album release by Vertical Horizon, brings forth a major change in the sound of this once acoustic band.

Their first album, 1995's *There and Back Again*, was a mix of acoustic songs and heavily romanticized lyrics.

The newest release is all electric with a much harder sound. The romanticized lyrics remain, but during many songs on the album, the lyrics cannot be understood over the music.

The loyal grass-roots following of Vertical Horizon can expect a shock by this album, which has an energy level unlike the band's previous independent CD releases.

One has to wonder if the band's signing with RCA is the cause for the change in the music.

The title track, "Everything You Want," is sure to please as it tells the story of the lovelorn lead vocalist, Matt Scannell.

Fans will have to adjust to the change in their music, which is not altogether bad but definitely different.

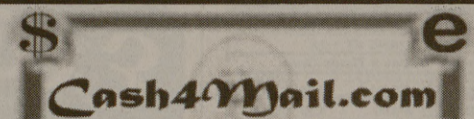
The future of Vertical Horizon's music is hard sound that fits into the mainstream of rock today. (Grade: B-)

—Sallie Turner



Kane and Scannell perform during one of Vertical Horizon's live concerts.

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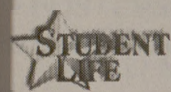
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