

PUNCHY KEEN

Austin band makes stop in College Station

BY CHRIS CARTER
The Battalion

No, "Fritz Beer" is not just a clever stage name. The lead singer of the Austin-based pop/alternative band Punchy laughs at the question.

"My real name is Fredrick Beer, but everyone has called me 'Fritz' since I was a child," he said. "I come from a long line of Fredricks, obviously German, and all of them have been called Fritz."

For the past two and a half years, Beer has led Punchy through the release of their debut EP and hundreds of shows.

"We normally play about five shows a week," Beer said. "It's usually a couple during the week and then traveling around on the weekend playing a few more."

Beer is definitely no stranger to the stage. The former lead singer of the St. Louis-based band, The Bishops, has racked up more than 2,500 gigs over the past eight years. While in St. Louis, The Bishops practiced playing rock in the Midwestern-style of Husker Du, Soul Asylum and The Replacements, and released two albums. Nothing serious came of this outing, however.

After it became apparent some of the other members of the band were not as serious about The Bishops so Beer decided to pack up and move to Austin.

"I had been to Austin a couple times before to see some friends and was like, 'Wow, this is great!'" he said. "I finally moved down here and I love it. Now I get to just play my ass off!"

Once in Austin, Beer teamed up with friend Daniel Bull, a bassist, and they ran an advertisement in the paper for a drummer. Instead, they got guitarist Errol Siegel.

"Errol saw the add and said he liked the singer/songwriter philosophy we had," Beer said.

"He turned out to work real well for us as a group, and for a while we played sets as just two guitars and a bass without a drummer."

Today, Punchy still consists of Beer and Siegel, but they have since added drummer Armando Reyes, and replaced bassist Bull with Lee Abramson.

Beer hesitates to describe Punchy's musical style, but is very clear on his musical philosophy.

"Someone compared us to Elvis Costello the other day," Beer mused. "I guess I can hear that, but I like concentrating on the songwriting aspect of this music. I don't want to do the folk thing, but writing a good rock song is a great feeling."

Punchy will bring its stripped-down style of rock music to College Station this weekend.

"We're excited about coming back to College Station," Beer said. "We've been there several times over the past few months, and we've had a good time every time we've played there."

Punchy will play an acoustic set on Saturday at Sweet Eugene's. Cover at the door is \$1 and they will begin to play at 9 p.m.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BITTERKITTEN RECORDS
Guitarist Errol Siegel.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BITTERKITTEN RECORDS
Drummer Armando Reyes.

Punchy Punchy CD Courtesy of Bitterkitten Records

Straight from the clubs of Austin, Punchy offers a cheap, mindless sort of genre-dodging rock that can be as confusing as it is oddly appealing.

Throughout the eight songs on this CD, there seems to be a common theme in songwriting — repetition. Though many of the cuts on this release have a good mix of electric and acoustic guitars with a solid rhythm lineup, the songwriting itself is simplistic at best. This simplicity does lend itself to some catchy

tunes such as "Daddy's a Postman," and "16 Shades of Gray," but the overly repetitive nature of the lyrics and weak musical style of songs like "Spray Job" and "Crawl" ultimately weight this CD down.

The overall sound of Punchy is a toned-down, Midwestern-rock sound, sans the ever-present ode to post-evolved punk rock, such as Soul Asylum, Local H or the Replacements. Though they pay homage to this school of rock and would fit very well in the clubs of Minneapolis or Cleveland, they are right at home in Austin, being much closer to the musical style of fellow Austin natives, Fastball. All in all, this music sounds like it would be much better if it were not confined to the medium of a compact disc, but brought to life through a solid performance. [Grade: C+]

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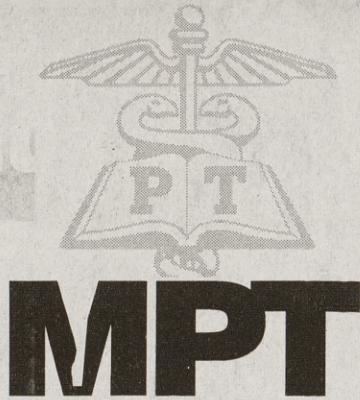
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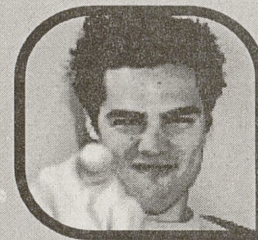
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