

AGGIELIFE

THE BATTALION

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On the road again

Former Toadies vocalist brings his new band, The Burden Brothers, to College Station

By Kendra Kingsley
THE BATTALION

When the popular rock group Toadies first disbanded, Todd Lewis had a lot of time on his hands. "I had to keep my brain active," said Lewis, the Toadies' former lead vocalist. "I helped photographers set up props, and I worked with my brother-in-law, who was starting up a power tool business because I had to keep myself busy."

These days, Lewis is still constantly on his feet, but it's not because he's working a typical nine-to-five job.

Along with Taz Bentley, a current member of the Izzy Stradlin Band and the former drummer of both Reverend Horton Heat and Tenderloin, Lewis created The Burden Brothers, an eclectic rock band that will perform tonight at Concept in College Station.

Lewis, who has adopted his legal first name, Vaden, said he and Bentley create a unique sound together.

"Taz is a little more pop-oriented than I am," Lewis said. "I write things that are weird and edgy, and he writes things that are easier to listen to. It's a cool mix."

Lewis, a Dallas native, said he met Bentley through the Dallas music scene but never performed with him during the Toadies' lifespan.

"After the Toadies broke up, I thought, 'screw it,'" he said. "That only lasted about a month. Then, just on a lark, (Taz and I) met up, got together in the studio, wrote some stuff and headed to Chicago to record."

From that partnership, Lewis said, The Burden Brothers evolved and is thriving under Dallas-based Last Beat Records, an independent recording label. Lewis said he and Bentley chose to pursue an independent label rather than a larger-scale label to escape certain management issues.

"We wanted to attack (our music) on a major label scale without a major label," Lewis said. "Without the pressure of a big label, we don't feel as constricted with our time, but there's really a lot more work involved than there was with the Toadies. There's a lot of paperwork and phone

calls, but it's very gratifying."

In addition to handling The Burden Brothers' internal issues, Lewis said he and Bentley find ways to create the band's unique style.

"Taz and I have similar ideas about what we want to do with the band, but we're still figuring out a lot of it," he said. "At first, we were just going to do it on the Internet and through live shows, but we didn't want it to stay contained; the Internet is too limited. We're trying to make our music more mainstream without losing our style."

When performing live shows, Lewis said, he and Bentley employ the talents of Casey Orr (former bassist/vocalist for Rigor Mortis), Mike Rudnicki (guitarist/backing vocals for Baboon), Mark Hughes (bassist for Baboon) and Josh Daughtery (guitarist for Pinkston). Lewis said the band is able to create a more diverse sound by employing these guest musicians for different songs.

"We wanted to go every direction we could (with our music), so we call on a bunch of different musicians," he said. "We have a lot of fun together, and I think that combination makes for a good live show."

Chris Bowlin, a junior mechanical engineering major, who saw The Burden Brothers perform in San Marcos, said he couldn't agree more.

"(The Burden Brothers) are the best live show there is," he said. "(Vaden) has been my favorite frontman of any band because he has the coolest voice. He really gets into the crowd and has a good time."

Bowlin said he is a fan of The Burden Brothers' distinct sound and will be at Concept for the band's live show Wednesday.

"All of (The Burden Brothers') songs sound different," he said. "They have several songs that I'd love to hear on the radio, and they sound great in concert."

Mary Elzner, a sophomore biology major, said she attended The Burden Brothers' concert in Houston last summer and has been planning to attend Wednesday night's concert since the beginning of the semester.

"I've had a flyer on my dorm room door since January," she said. "(The Burden Brothers) is sort of an underground band, so that's why so many



PHOTO COURTESY OF LAST BEAT RECORDS

The Burden Brothers, featuring former Reverend Horton Heat drummer **Taz Bentley** (left) and former Toadies vocalist **Vaden Lewis**, will perform tonight at Concept on University Drive. Doors open at 8 p.m.

people haven't heard of them. I've been telling everyone about (the band), and I've already recruited six people to go with me."

Justin Wolfshohl, a sophomore microbiology major, has been a fan of Lewis since he could purchase an album.

"When I was in seventh grade, the Toadies CD was the first CD I ever bought," he said. "(Lewis) is definitely my favorite performer of all time, and his shows are killer."

Wolfshohl said Toadies fans may expect similar music from Lewis, but The Burden Brothers' has a distinct style and sound.

"People will probably go to the show on (Lewis') name alone, but when they get there they'll realize it's a quality show," he said.

"(Lewis') vocals say it all, and Taz can tear up the drums like nobody's business. It's a show for everyone, and I don't think anyone will be disappointed."

For now, performing concerts and writing new music are plenty to keep The Burden Brothers occupied.

"We have enough to keep us busy and happy," Lewis said. "We want to be on the radio, we want to be on Conon O'Brien, we want to do all those things that mean you're successful, but there's no formula. Who else gets to make a living at having fun and making people happy. It's a blast."

The Burden Brothers will perform at Concept tonight. Tickets can be purchased at Journeys or at the door for \$10. Doors open at 8 p.m.

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Clarification
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