

Free at last

Dexter Freebish tour in support of latest album, tries to dispel old image

By David Shackelford
THE BATTALION

For many bands, the aftermath of a hit single results in down time — and lots of it.

After the huge success of its signature tune "Leaving town," alternative rock band Dexter Freebish has refused to become one of the bands that have a hit single and then sinks without a trace. Armed with a set of songs that are harder than its previous efforts, a new album and a fresh new attitude, Dexter Freebish is playing sold-out venues on a new tour, proving there is life beyond the shadow of its hit single.

Its Texas leg of the tour will hit several spots around the state. The band also made an appearance at Hurricane Harry's Wednesday night.

Singer and bassist Chris Lowe explained why the band's live performances have been likened to the performances of rock legend Neil Diamond.

"We actually cover a Neil Diamond song, but basically, we go for a good time and get the crowd involved," Lowe said. "Kyle is also a good frontman. We've always valued our fans and talked with them after shows too."

Though the band's sound has been associated with teenage tastes, Lowe said he sees people of virtually all ages at its shows.

"We write melodic songs that anyone can relate to," Lowe said.

Senior accounting major Dass Cunningham saw Dexter Freebish when it played at Shadow Canyon a few years ago.

"That was a good show," Cunningham said. "I always liked 'Leaving Town,' but the other stuff they played was pretty good too."

Named after the Dexter Freebish Electric Roller Ride, a now defunct roller coaster in Houston, Texas, the band includes Lowe, lead singer Kyle, guitarist Scott Romig and drummer Rob Schliz. Kyle said the band has an optimistic agenda.

"We want to inspire people and give them hope," Kyle said. "I want to affect people. I want to show that good people can come out on top."

Lowe said the band members want to steer clear of a bad-boy image and be recognized for one thing — the band's music.

"We don't want to be negative," Lowe said. "We want to get press not for cussing or showing Kyle's boob. We're all optimistic good guys, and that's how we want to be recognized."

Ironically, this "good guy" band used to make its rounds aboard Motley Crue's old 1986 tour bus — a vehicle with some negative history.

In 1999, after several years of carving out a niche in Austin, the band approached Music Corporation of America Records (MCA) for



PHOTO COURTESY OF DEXTER FREEBISH

Alternative rock band Dexter Freebish will perform in several Texas cities in support of its latest effort, "Tripped Into Divine."

a record deal, but was rejected. After the decline from MCA, Dexter Freebish entered what would become a huge radio hit, "Leaving Town," into the John Lennon Songwriting Contest. It beat 27,000 other entries for Song of the Year, grabbing the attention of Capitol Records. The band's first album, "A Life of Saturdays," and an extensive tour followed in 2000.

In 2003, it struck a chord with the judges again at the John Lennon Songwriting Contest, grabbing best song in the rock category for its new single, "Prozak." This year the band independently released its sophomore effort, "Tripped Into Divine."

Lowe said the difference between "Tripped Into Divine" and its debut is the experience the band has gathered between the two efforts.

"Being on the road, you experience a lot," Lowe said. "Then 9-11 happened right after our tour ended, so the lyrics are a little darker and deeper this time around. You can hear that tone especially in songs like 'Ghosts' and 'Breathe.'"

The band's post-punk, guitar-pop specialty remains strong throughout "Tripped Into Divine."

The many hooks are complemented by equally-catchy keyboard lines. Clean vocal harmonies lead the listener up and down tightly wound bass lines and a triumphant chorus.

Though the album's title may hint at a religious motif, Lowe said the band's lyrics don't limit themselves to faith and fate.

"We are all spiritual people, and that comes out in the music; but we don't think of ourselves as a Christian rock band," Lowe said.

In simple language, the songs carry themes of passion, longing, loathing and paranoia. Lowe said its driving single, "Prozak," visits the hopeless desires of a social outcast.

In addition to its heavy touring schedule in the United States, Dexter Freebish has played in Italy, Spain and recently, the Middle East.

"That (the Middle East performance) was the highlight of being in this band," Lowe said. "We were invited to play for Naval soldiers stationed there."

The house that pop-rock built is haunted with one-hit-wonders. The aftermath of a success such as "Leaving Town" can cause some anxious tremors.

"That started to mess with our minds a little," Lowe said. "But we still think we have the best stuff in front of us. We want to be headlining stadiums in a few years."

Aggies can catch more performances by Dexter Freebish on its latest Texas tour, which will include performances in Wichita Falls, Amarillo and Lubbock.

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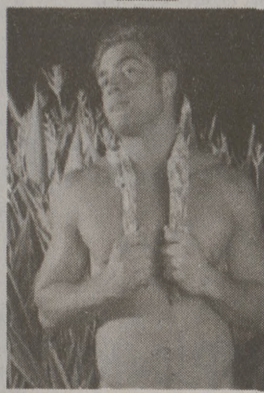


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