



## Toadies

Vaden Todd Lewis - vocals, guitar  
Clark Vogeler - guitar  
Mark Reznicek - drums  
Doni Blair - bass

"There's a certain uneasiness to the Toadies," says Vaden Todd Lewis, succinctly and accurately describing his band—quite a trick. The Texas band is, at its core, just a raw, commanding rock band. Imagine an ebony sphere with a corona that radiates impossibly darker, and a brilliant circular sliver of light around that. It's nebulous, but strangely distinct—and, shall we say incorrect. Or, as Lewis says, "wrong."

"Things are done a little askew [in the Toadies]," he says, searching for the right words. "There's just something wrong with it that's just really cool... and unique in a slightly uncomfortable way."

This sick, twisted essence was first exemplified on the band's 1994 debut, *Rubberneck* (Interscope). An intense, swirling vortex of guitar rock built around Lewis's "wrong" songs—like the smash single "Possum Kingdom," subject to as much speculation as what's in the Pulp Fiction briefcase, it rocketed to platinum status on the strength of that and two other singles, "Tyler" and "Away." Its success was due to the Toadies' organic sound and all-encompassing style, which they aimed to continue on their next album.

Perhaps in keeping with the uneasy vibe, that success didn't translate to label support when the Toadies submitted their second album, *Feeler*. Perhaps aptly, things in general just went wrong. It was the classic, cruel story: the label didn't 'get' it. "These were the songs we played live," says Rez. "It was pretty eclectic... different styles of heavy rock music—some fast, heavy punk rock songs and some slower, kinda mid-tempo stuff. I've never really been able to figure out what the beef was."

"We got approval for a record," says Lewis, "and somewhere in the process of handing over the masters to get mixed, it got unapproved. So we went back to the drawing board."

Eventually some of the *Feeler* tracks made it onto *Hell Below/Stars Above*—a sophomore offering that came seven years after *Rubberneck*. "It was a very weird, trying time," says Lewis, who didn't see the next blow—the sudden departure of bassist Lisa Umbarger—coming. "We went out on tour, and

immediately the band split up," he laughs sardonically. "We kinda shot ourselves in the foot." They released a live album, *Best of Toadies: Live from Paradise*, and it was over.

Coming out of the Toadies, Lewis, guitarist Clark Vogeler and drummer Mark Reznicek were disillusioned. Vogeler went to work as a film editor, Rez hooked up with the country-western band Eleven Hundred Springs. Lewis initially thought, "Fuck this whole business. I'm gettin' out. I just wanted to do anything else."

Toadies fans, though accepting, stuck with them, often inquiring as to the band's activities. Says Lewis, "People just asked me "So, what are you doin' now?" Although he'd been "foolin' around" with Rev. Horton Heat drummer Taz Bentley, he answered, "I don't know. Nothin'. This, that and the other. Workin' around the house, workin' in the garage, just toolin' around." Soon it occurred to him that music was all he wanted to do. "I'm a musician. That's what I do, and I'm not happy not doing it."

Lewis and Bentley formed the Burden Brothers in 2002 and released a slew of EPs, two albums and a DVD while touring profusely. "I took some of the lessons I learned in the business and took off with that band," says Lewis, "and tried to apply that knowledge." That's how he wound up with Texas indie label Kirtland Records.

Meantime, "Possum Kingdom" never left the airwaves, enjoying constant rotation at major modern rock stations. Fans clamored for a Toadies reunion, which Lewis, Vogeler and Reznicek discovered wasn't such a remote possibility. "The band never went all the way away;" says Lewis. They regrouped in 2006 for a couple of sold-out shows around St. Patrick's Day, and again the next year for the same thing. In August 2007, when personnel changes with the Burden Brothers resulted in that band going on hiatus, Lewis began writing.

"I was pissed off again and wanted to keep goin'," he says. "I didn't know what I was writing, right out of the gate, but... it was just coming out very "Toadies."


Lewis called Rez and Vogeler and asked if they were interested in making another record. They were—and the Toadies officially reconvened, signing with Kirtland and recording *No Deliverance* with David Castell (Burden Brothers, Blue October) at Fort Worth Sound in Fort Worth, and Music Lane in Austin. Lewis says the band has gone for a "bare knuckle" sound, amping up the psychotic stomp heard on *Rubberneck* and *Hell Below...* on the grinding, relentless title track as well as the seething, death-of-a-romance gem "So Long Lovey Eyes" and the towering, sludgy "Man of Stone." The upshot is a taut, exhilarating listen that is quintessentially Toadies.

Lewis is stoked on “the freshness of this new record. I wrote it between first week of August and, what? About a month ago. Getting back into this, back into the feel of the Toadies, is cool. Lewis, Rez, Vogeler and new bass player Doni Blair (Hagfish, Only Crime) are optimistic that their indie incarnation will succeed, thanks to the support of their devout fans—and equally supportive label. “The music industry has changed so much,” says Vogeler. “A band like us can be on an independent label and still get the music out to the people who want to hear it.”

The Toadies are now free to pursue success on their own merit and muscle. And things are starting off nicely: On August 2, The Toadies will play Lollapalooza and, following the album’s release, they’ll embark on a nationwide tour offering old fans and those to come—as he recently told SPIN, “Balls. A ton of balls.”

“Getting back to the bare knuckles element of the Toadies,” continues Lewis, “is what I really enjoy, after being away from it for so long.” Vogeler and Rez concur. “I’m here and still doin’ it,” furthers Vogeler, “because the music’s good.” And Rez proclaims in his thick Texas drawl, “The Toadies are back in business.”

And suddenly, everything wrong is right.

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