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B)SIDE
The Audience is never wrong

THE MIDGETMEN

Let's Make Noise!

text . Brittany Wilson

image . Eric Uhrir

I've never seen The Midgetmen live, but if they bring half as much energy to the stage that they brought to a Thursday evening interview, I'm pretty sure it's a balls-out performance.

I met up with three-fourths of The Midgetmen for a head-spinning sit down where I didn't learn much about music, but I did learn that not only can a case of skunky beer probably get you into this Austin-based punk rock quartet's good graces, but beer can most likely get you anywhere with these guys-- including the lineup.

Alex Victoria (guitars/vocals), Justin Petro (drums) and Marc Perlman (bass/vocals) were quick to state that Jon Loyens (guitars/vocals) couldn't make the interview because he's in India. "Anything cool, he isn't doing," Marc pointed out. "We like to pretend he's hanging out with Ravi Shankar learning to play the sitar, but he isn't. He's not having sex with Bollywood stars either." Alex, the voice of reason, told me he's outsourcing American jobs to India, and I'm *pretty* sure that's the truth.



On we go with The Midgetmen, minus one. These guys have been playing with their current lineup since 2003, when they "outsourced" their fifth man and former singer to either Korea or Virginia-- they can't quite remember which. Rather than find a new singer, Alex, Jon and Marc decided to share vocal duties; a fitting move for a band that takes pride in being entirely self-produced.

"I'd always been interested in producing ... you don't really have to know what you're doing to record stuff yourself," Alex said. The Midgetmen have now invested in a Mac to assist them in 'knowing what they're doing.' "Apple tells you what to do. You plug everything in and it's instant Coldplay in a laptop," Marc said. "That's what Steve Jobs wants you to think," Alex claims.

While Alex takes care of the band's recording, Justin is responsible for the posters and album art which have earned a few Austin Chronicle Austin Music Award nods. Marc heads up the PR department booking shows and promoting the band. Jon, well, I'm not sure what Jon does, mainly because he's in India giving away American jobs, but I think I heard something mentioned about him driving the van.

The Midgetmen have released two albums to date: *Pool Party Emergency* in 2002 and *High Life* in 2004. Both are heavily influenced by their love of loud, fuzzy indie and punk rock (think late 80's underground like The Pixies and Dinosaur Jr., not the Hawthorne Heights MTV kind.) as well as booze fueled good times. I personally prefer the latter where rasping vocals complement plucky, resolute guitar playing and a driven rhythm section.

The Midgetmen are currently working on material for a new album and you can hear some of it if you catch one of their two shows during SXSW. They figure they'll have the new album out sometime around 2009.

Apparently it takes a while to get songs back when you outsource them to The Matrix.

"They're [The Matrix] a group of Swedish people in Sweden," Marc said. "They wrote some of Avril Lavigne's stuff and Liz Phair's last album." However, for the Midgetmen songwriting is a group effort.

The Midgetmen are toying with the idea of a Northeast tour this summer, a going-home tour if you will. All four members originally hail from up North: Toronto, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and New York City respectively. Here's hoping it goes smoother than some of their previous out-of-town dates.

While not answering most of my questions, The Midgetmen *did* share a cherished memory from their first tour. "In Abilene, Texas we actually covered about 30 songs in a matter of seven minutes," Marc said. "It was really like toothless biker mania and we were scared," added Alex. "To Jon's credit, he can play the first four bars of basically every classic rock song ever written on the guitar, and that's really all that toothless hillbillies need to hear." "Play the first riff of Sweet Home Alabama," advised Marc. "Then the toothless guy is more than willing to get up and sing the entire song for you." "It was the most money we ever made at a show," revealed Alex. "And none of us got corn-holed."

In a city awash with here-today-gone-tomorrow bands, The Midgetmen seem to have staying power. Check out the previous show listings on their [Website](#) and you'll see dead links for the vast majority of the bands they've played with in their four-year existence. That kind of longevity is something to celebrate, and celebrate they will.

The Midgetmen are having their four-year anniversary show at Flamingo Cantina on Friday March 31st. The show will feature their first ever acoustic set in Austin as well as a full-blown electric set. They'll be joined by local bands Just Guns, The Fall Collection and The Lemurs. "It's a miracle that we've lasted this long," Alex said. "It's going to be the best party in Austin."

You can also catch them performing at Cream Vintage as the self-proclaimed 'first band of SXSW' on March 15 at noon and Friday March 17 at Trophy's in the early afternoon.