

Music Notes



Tribal Tongue Speaking of Southern Rock

Amy Edgerly

A few years ago in my travels to southwest Florida I first encountered Tribal Tongue. They were heating up the stage at The Beached Whale in Fort Myers Beach to the delight of locals and tourists alike. My husband and I recognized them as members of The Howlin' Dogs, which was one of our friend's bands. That friend is

drummer Stet Howland, but on that night, Stet was conspicuously absent and Gary Renshaw was drumming for the Howlin' Dogs - later becoming known as Tribal Tongue.

Though playing in a bar, it was obvious that this was not your typical bar band. Their playful gregariousness was only overshadowed by their dead-on precision musicianship. So it was no surprise to learn that Tribal Tongue's members, having played

with bands we all consider icons of American rock, all have impressive resumes.

Guitarist Tag Graves, a Louisiana native, is son of Red Graves, who played with Hank Williams, Sr. In his younger days Tag played both in a band with his brothers and another band that was signed to Polygram records. From there he was discovered by Leon Russell and asked to join his band. It was through his em-



ployment with Russell that Tag was able to perform with members of the Rod Stewart Band, the Charlie Daniels Band and The Southern Rock Legends.

Gary Renshaw, Tribal Tongue's drummer, played professionally in the Baltimore/Washington area dur-

ing the 80's and moved to Florida in 1989. There he met Dave Hlubek of Molly Hatchet and helped him form Hlubek & Friends, out of which another project, The Southern Rock Legends was formed. SRL was made up of Renshaw, Hlubek, Mike Estes (Lynyrd Skynyrd), Gary Nutt (Cinderella, Chubby Checker) and

Tag Graves. They disbanded within 2 years when Hlubek re-joined Hatchet.

Bryce Barnes, who plays bass for Tribal Tongue, performed as lead singer in other bands demonstrating a voice that has been compared to Jeff Tate and Rob Halford. When his east coast band broke up in the late 80's, Barnes was approached by Rickey Medlocke of Blackfoot about joining them as their bass player. At that time, Stet Howland was also a part of the Blackfoot lineup, along with John Housley, and Medlocke. Like Renshaw's experience with Hlubek however, Medlocke eventually returned to his first band, Lynyrd Skynyrd, and Blackfoot fell away, though the remaining members still played together in Florida.

We finally get to Tribal Tongue's lead singer, Joey Monroe. Joey is from Vermont and had been playing in the 80's with recording artist, Engine Joe. With the winds of change in the industry in the late 80's/early 90's, Engine Joe's deal and appeal were shelved. Monroe then decided to venture south to Florida as well, where he met and was hired by Bryce Barnes and Stet Howland to front the Howlin' Dogs. When Stet went back on the road with WASP in the 90's, The Howlin' Dogs consisted of Stet, Tag, Bryce, and Joey. With Stet out touring the world, Gary joined the Dogs, and in October of 2005 Tribal Tongue officially became what it is today.

Even if you've never seen or heard the band, after reading about their history, you might correctly assume



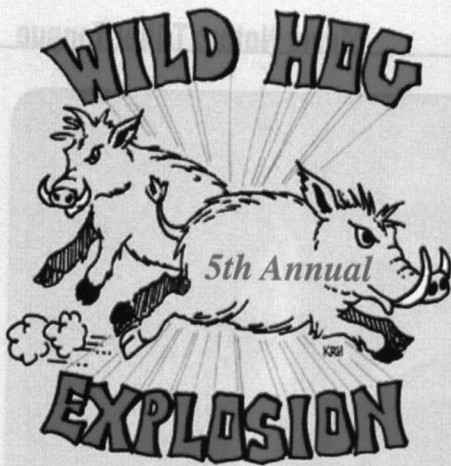
that they are a butt-kicking Southern Rock band. But they are also a *biker* band. Their tour schedule includes supporting and headlining performances at bike rallies and festivals all over the country such as Sun Fest in West Palm Beach, FL; Biketoberfest in Daytona Beach, Lake Havasu Rockfest in Arizona, The Longriders Hot Fun Summer Run in Tyler, TX and most recently the Lone Star Rally in Galveston, TX. Gary says of their Lone Star Rally experience, "We had a great time in Galveston and can't wait 'til next year. All we can say is we love Texas and the people and can't wait to get back."

I always try to find out if the artists I profile are riders, and this time was no different. Tribal Tongue's collective riding experiences are thus: "Joey Monroe rides a Harley and can often be seen taking in the scenery around Fort Myers Beach. Gary Renshaw raced dirt bikes as a kid and owned a Sportster through the 80's – but found it hard to carry his drums, so he bought a truck. Bryce Barnes and Tag Graves both retired from racing after their neck and neck Big Wheel finish in the Chocolate Milk 500 back in the day."

Although their live performances

include perfectly executed covers of America's favorite southern and classic rock standards, Tribal Tongue has also recently released a CD of original songs titled *One More Shot*. Whether "One More Shot" refers to the band making yet another bid for southern rock immortality, or whether it refers to a tribe-wide party philosophy, the CD showcases Tribal Tongue in its purest element. All-out driving pounding aboriginal rhythms and melodies persist throughout – to the listening enjoyment of every classic rock aficionado around.

Is the world ready for an era



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Mansfield Park, Bandera, Texas

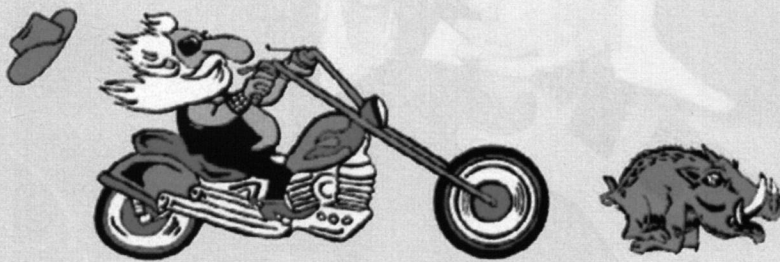
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2:00 pm at Frosty's Motor Cycle Stop, 584 State Hwy 16 North (Bandera Village)

Registration: Saturday March 17th \$20

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All Registration includes:

- ✓ Free Gate Admission to Wild Hog Catch for Arts & Crafts, Bicycle Rodeo, Wild Hog Catch, Pork Rib Cook-off and Bloody Mary Competition
- ✓ Entry into Poker Fun Run thru the Texas Hill Country
- ✓ Entry Fee for Ride & Shine Competition
- ✓ Free Patch to first 300 Registratants
- ✓ Taco Breakfast
- ✓ Free Admission to Gone Hog Wild Party at 11th Street Cowboy Bar
- ✓ Sunday Run to Koyote Ranch

CMA Spirit Riders will host Sunday Services at Mansfield Park

Pre-registration application on-line at

WildHogExplosion.com ★ 830-796-4447



where old rock is new again -- and good, and loved by all? Will the south rise again (as Charlie Daniels predicted) at least when it comes to its own brand of rock and roll? If the work of Tribal Tongue is any indication, there is very real hope for both. Renshaw defines 'Southern Rock' as "a country song with attitude that makes you want to sing and dance, drink beer, ride a motorcycle, chase women, etc. For the most part, southern rock songs tell a story that a lot of people can relate to or rally behind." He goes on to say, "with the new generation of country artists coming out today, it seems their style is more rock than country. You have to figure the new generation of country musicians listened to Skynyrd, Hatcher, Blackfoot, Outlaws, the Allman Brothers, The Eagles, etc., so the new songs of today reflect the energy that southern rock brings to the table."

A lot of us would agree Tribal Tongue is a must-see band. They know the language of rock, southern or otherwise, and they speak it well. They speak it loud and proud, and they speak it with commanding authority. I've spent a some time with this band in social settings, and I could tell you little tidbits like Bryce likes to bite, Joey isn't too proud to ride bitch, Tag hates to roadie, and Gary is the biggest sweetheart ever.

But I won't get personal. I will only tell you that Tribal Tongue is a great band that is well on its way to earning its own spot in rock and roll history. Find out when they will be playing near you at:

www.tribaltongue.com