

# THE L.A. UNDERGROUND

A GUIDE TO SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S FAVORITE LOCAL BANDS

## KAURA Embarks on a Journey

BY MARY E. MONTORO

I SIP MY CAFÉ AU LAIT WHILE waiting for musicians Malcolm Guess and Ben Jones to arrive. Together, they are Kaura (pronounced kay-aura) – a hard rock band with a metaphysical edge. Don't worry, these guys don't preach on stage or give heartfelt sermons on how to love your fellow brother or sister. What they do is create music that leaves you feeling good.

Kaura hopes to restructure the balance and uplift its fans instead of encouraging them to reach for a razor blade. In order to do that, Guess and Jones had to re-charge their own batteries. They decided to escape L.A. for a few months and travel to Thailand, India, Bali, Laos and Cambodia.

Besides immersing the musicians in different cultures, the trip will hopefully churn out new ideas and renewed vigor. This is what separates them from other musicians: Not many bands would go all this way to find inspiration for something fresh and innovative.

"The agenda is we can be there and write, get inspired to come back and write an album. We're actually doing the production for the album," Guess remarks. "Doing all of our preparations beforehand, making sure all our gear is working, getting camcorders. We're going to



(l to r) Kaura's Benjamin Jones and Malcolm Guess.

do recordings and demos over there."

Kaura has been together for a couple years. Guess refers to their partnership as a work in progress. They make a good team – sharing not only studio space but also living as roommates. Amazingly, they don't get on each other's nerves but instead feed off of each other's talents.

"We have real good communication," says Jones. "We work really well together. We're all dif-

ferent but we each have different traits and skills that I think make this band pretty well rounded."

Kaura blends its musical resources along with its business acumen. Guess works as an engineer and producer for the band while Jones is the publicist. The combination both exhilarates and tires the duo.

"The tough thing is that we work for a lot of other bands," Jones continues. "We put a lot of energy into other artists and it gets frustrating because I'm like, 'You're doing all this work for this band and you wish that you can be doing the same for your own.' I think when we come back from this trip, we're looking to work less and shift the focus more toward our own thing and really push it. We're at the point in our lives where this is it. There comes that point where you really need to make that leap of faith."

That leap of faith includes dropping their side gigs, which pro-

vide their steady paychecks, and focus solely on their music. It's always frightening to leave the familiar for the unknown but it's even more daunting not to take the chance and see what could happen. Guess understands that this move is necessary in order to soar to the next level.

"It's scary but you have to embrace that challenge. If I believe in this, I have to put my ass on the line. I got to work if I want to make this happen. If you're half-assed and say, 'Oh well, I'll do this and see which one takes off,' it's not going to happen."

Kaura hopes their upcoming CD, which Guess describes as haunting and reminiscent, will stir emotions in their fans. Jones wants their music to be something to lean on during hard personal times.

"We want our music to get out there as much as possible. This is our art, we feel like it really has a positive influence with the possibility of changing peoples lives." ■

Read about Kaura's travels at [KauraTravels.blogspot.com](http://KauraTravels.blogspot.com). For more information, visit [www.kaura.com](http://www.kaura.com).

## MUSIC 101 CD REVIEWS

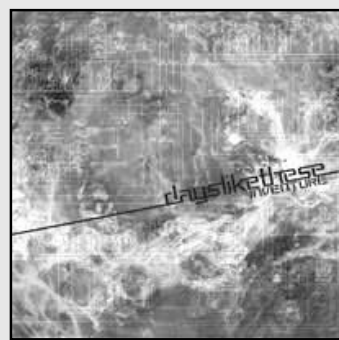
MAKING THE GRADE: A EXCEPTIONAL | B WORTHWHILE | C MIEDIOCRE | D SAVE YOUR MONEY | F WILL BE ON HELL'S JUKEBOX

### DAYS LIKE THESE

*Inventure*

(Lobster Records)

There are albums you can listen to once and love. And then there are albums you have to listen to a few times – like *Inventure* – to get the essence of their creative energy.



The album ranges from something you'd listen to in a hard-rockin dive bar ("Control Freak") to something you'd play to impress your girlfriend, ("The Queen"). These Jersey boys have done their research on the synthesized '80s and the distorted guitar '90s. Every track has a variation of musical influence, including the aforementioned with a touch of ska on "Caution" and the

basic top 40 tune on "Somehow Saturn."

The album's only real downfall is the drawn-out "99 Cent Dreams," which falls around one cent short for jukebox play. You do have to give the guys a nod, however, for adding a background violin to the guitar – again adding a different sound variation to the album.

This CD is hard enough for manly-men and soft enough for chicks to dig, making it a well-rounded album for most to enjoy.

Grade: B

—Laren Mahoney

*Inventure* is currently available.

### CORETTA SCOTT

*Scream and Shout*

(Rise Records)

Besides invoking the memory of history class and a sense of reverence for their namesake, Spokane's Coretta Scott doesn't have much else to offer. In a market oversaturated with bands whose music is indistinguishable from one another, these guys seem to find some relevance in what they do. Come on, even Blink 182 called it quits!

If a label must be given to Coretta Scott's debut album, *Scream and Shout*, it's probably emo pop-core. But pop implies hooks and Scott's songs are severely lacking in that department. The quintet knows how to lay it down thick. But when choruses appear, they are lackluster and forgettable with the exception of "Selfish Animal," which is probably the most memorable number on the disc.



"Fashionably Depressed" is singer Seth Woodward's castigation of self-saddened suburban royalty; as he put it, a raised eyebrow to the contest of who is more damaged.

Relevant, and one of the better tracks.

Everything else is pretty unsatisfying; in fact the highlight of the whole effort is drummer, Mike McClung's heavy-handed approach, which creates a thick backbeat and spine for the whole album.

Grade: C

—Rama Sobhani

*Scream and Shout* is currently available.

### THE DARKNESS

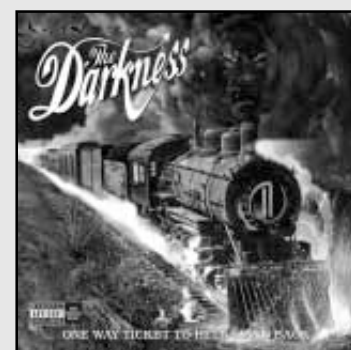
*One Way Ticket to Hell*

*... and Back*

(Atlantic)

If you found The Darkness' histrionics hard to swallow when their *Permission to Land* debut broke in 2004, imagine how aging head-bangers like Warrant felt. They're playing state fairs and sports bars while these spandexed dandies sell millions camping up their once unfashionable sound to ludicrous extremes.

Those extremes are even more ludicrous on The Darkness' second disc, an album whose first sounds are that of a pan flute and cocaine being snorted, and whose best song – the "Riverdance"-inspired "Hazel Eyes" –



you pray your neighbors don't hear you yodeling along with.

It's so laughable (save for the mind-numbingly Meat Loaf-esque "Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time," which is just inexcusable) that you try to have a chuckle with The Darkness.

But then you hear Justin Hawkins singing the utterly pretentious "Blind Man" in his absolutely preposterous falsetto, and all at once you feel Warrant's rage.

Grade: D

—Patrick Berkery (KRT)

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