

Fastball's back with new album

By MIKE CHAIKEN
EDITIONS EDITOR

Austin-based band Fastball made its mark with its second album, "All the Pain Money Can Buy." The single from that album, "The Way," earned the group a Grammy nomination.

But five years ago, after it released the album "Keep Your Wig On," Fastball was put on the shelf. And the members stepped away from the national spotlight.

However, April 14, Fastball – vocalist/ guitarist Miles Zuniga, bassist Tony Scalzo, and drummer, Joey Shuffield—is back in the public eye with a new album "Little White Lies," which the band is distributing independently. "Little White Lies" is released to stores on April 14.

We caught up with Miles and Tony via email to talk to them about their new album and what's been going on with Fastball since we last heard from them.

Q: Why wait five years before releasing an album?

Miles: Periodically we go off to molt. It's therapeutic to get away from each other, play with other people and then come back.

Q: What was going on with the band during those five years?

Miles: I had a busman's holiday with some friends that turned into a band called the Small Stars. We put out two records. I also started writing a musical.



Fastball is back with its new album, 'Little White Lies.'

Tony: Between this new record and our last one, myself and the other members of Fastball have been branching out and writing with other artists, Dandy Warhols and Bowling For Soup... I have recorded some solo material and played a few gigs here in Austin with my band, Tony Scalzo Machine. I've also produced an EP for a local artist named Madelyn Cascio, who writes and sings her own brand of R&B/ pop. Plus we've all got families. We spend as much time as possible with, you know, life is fun...and busy.

Q: After five years, what happened that made you decide now was the time to hit the studio?

Miles: It's all about the songs. When we have songs

we think are good enough to record, we go in to the studio.

Q: What inspired the songs on this album?

Miles: Many different things. In the case of "All I Was Looking For Was You," it was Buddhism and meditation. In the case of "Little White Lies," I was thinking about the Bush administration and that mutated into a breakup song.

Q: What makes you most proud of "Little White Lies?"

Miles: I like the fact that we made it all by ourselves with no record company involved. It felt really good but it was also a little scary. There were no deadlines.

Tony: I'm proud of the

fact that this album literally belongs to Fastball and not to a major label recording company. It always will. Some of our music isn't even available anymore because the labels own the masters and they are lost in a sea of master recordings from many other artists, all the way down the line.

Q: How do you think the band has evolved since you first released an album back in 1994?

Miles: Our musical abilities back in 1994 were pretty limited. Since then, we've learned a great deal about dynamics, tone, harmony and songwriting.

Q: How have your musical tastes changed over the years?

Miles: Well, we enjoy

many different styles of music. I think everyone's playlist has become more eclectic with the advent of I-pods, satellite radio, and the like. Lately I've been listening to a lot of Nick Cave.

Q: You guys have a pretty timeless, organic sound. There's nothing trendy or flashy about it. No ProTools dance rhythms. No guest rappers. It's just you guys with the occasional accordion and organ tossed in. It's kind of like the electric Dylan, Buffalo Springfield, Neil Young, The Byrds and Tom Petty. What is it about that kind of sound you find attractive?

Miles: I think you just answered your own question. It's timeless. I like to experiment with sounds in the studio, but we've never been one to chase trends. Some of that '90s stuff sounds hopelessly dated. For about a year and a half there, every rock band had to have someone scratching a turntable on their song.

Tony: Most of our musical influences have sprung from our past, our experience. Rock and roll, by now, has been solidified and strengthened by mythology. These artists you've mentioned have all become "mythological rock and roll figures." I believe this is a testament to their great music. It is a testament to their aesthetic; for one reason or another, simple pop arrangements, performed on simple instru-

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Tony Scalzo, Fastball
ments, that showcase real human voices, expressing simple truths, always appeals to people.”

Q: After nearly 15 years, what keeps music interesting for you?

Miles: As a musician, there's always more to learn. It's endlessly fascinating. Playing live is different every night. It's the opposite of working a straight job, it's totally unpredictable.

Q: After "Little White Lies" is released, what's on the agenda for Fastball?

Miles: We're going to tour frequently in 2009. Then we'll make another album. You won't have to wait five years this time.

Tony: We're going to keep having fun making music for as long as we can. If it stops being fun, then we weren't really doing it in the first place.

For more information, go to Fastballtheband.com.

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