

Dildos R Us

Volcom, Sessions, Santa Cruz Surf Shop--a throng of hoodies. Hundreds, nay, thousands of them cloaking countless teenagers in a shroud of surf/skate/punk/thrash anonymity at the Toys For Tots benefit at the Catalyst last Friday. Judging by people walking around with rock swag bags, it seems that the event was a success, although it's no surprise that a show with the **Lonely Kings** and the **Expendables**--two of the heaviest hitters on the local scene--would sell out. There was a whole gang of people outside talking on cell phones, saying things like, "Dude, where you at? I'm outside, I can't find a ticket, bro. They're all sold out." Meanwhile, there was an interesting spectrum of kids inside, from tattooed, studded-belt, Dickies-wearing punk rock kids to the prototypical surfer-jock types, and everything in between. The Colorado-based band **P-Knuckle** opened up the show with a mix of punk/ska/reggae and some oddly placed scratching, but anyway they fulfilled their duty to warm up the crowd by inspiring a modest mosh pit. The Kings came on strong in matching white button-down shirts and black pants, thrashing their way through an energetic set of originals.

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Things got so crazy that frontman **Jake Desrochers** had to urge the audience to tone down the intensity in the pit when the bouncers reported the casualties of the evening: One broken arm and one broken rib, fried and battered. But the band didn't even heed its own advice, wrapping up their set by wrecking the drum set and hanging from the rafters. Personally, I can't get over the fact that a thrash/punk band plays a song with a Greek title and hook, meaning "Lord have mercy." "Kyrie Eleison / For everything that I have done" goes the hook, delivered by Desrochers in a guttural scream, proving once again that the Lonely Kings rock so fucking hard.

Then, in a startling sign of the times, the Expendables headlined above their kingly heroes. Without a doubt, the Expendables have the best draw in town, with consistent sell-out shows at the Catalyst. Their popularity is well-deserved--they sound great live and put a lot of variety into their music. They've got sweet, steady-rockin' reggae tunes with which they lure the ladies up onto the stage to dance and strut their stuff. They've got a manager who dubs their music live, giving it that spacey, nitrous feel. Then they've got galloping nuevo-punk-thrash romps to get the mosh pit raging. And they've definitely got (almost more than) their fair share of furious butt-rock anthems, complete with Metallica-esque synchronized dual-guitar riffs and billion-note solos. And, like most successful party bands, they've got groupies. I've seen the girls waiting

anxiously by the bar at the end of a show, hoping to give their favorite Expendable the eyes as they make their way back up to the green room. Is it their rock-star appeal? Or the sensitive songwriting? I saw eyes a-fawning as singer/guitarist **Geoff Weers** joked about the toy he brought for the tots. "I brought a dildo ... " he said, trailing off into teen heart-throb land. Yup, it's *gotta* be the dildo jokes.

See, It's Not Just Me

After prattling on and on about local country bumpkins **The Devil Makes Three** in this column, it's occurred to me that some people might suspect some sort of corrupt arrangement involving a chaise lounge, grapes, and a tackle box full of "toys" between myself and the band, but no--I just like their music. And apparently, so does *The New York Times*, because one of the entertainment writers recently reviewed the trio's debut album. It's a huge relief to me, as I've been in desperate need of validation ever since I fell in love with the sleazy, kitsch stylings of the 1970s jazz whore **Serge Gainsbourg**. And if that weren't enough, I committed the atrocious crime of feeling indifferent to the **Flaming Lips'** wuss-a-thon *Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots*. Please believe me when I say I'm no knee-jerk contrarian, and I really do love *tons* of wussy music. Like, I totally dig **Beck's** and **Little Wings'** new albums, but I just can't seem to muster more than a tail wag of enthusiasm for

Yoshimi. Pray for me, that I might not burn in the flaming depths of music critics' hell!

Upcoming

Lonely Kings fans have a special treat awaiting them this New Year's Eve. They will be headlining the Downtown Fury show at the Vets Hall, along with **Spark to Life, First to Fall, Frontier Zero, FHS** and **Yours in Murder**. The show starts at 8:30pm and tickets are \$5.

Mike Connor

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From the December 25-31, 2002 issue of Metro Santa Cruz.

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