

The Expendables would really like a hit record, but they'll settle for some respect

by Alan Sculley

Geoff Weers has no problem identifying what he's hoping his band, the **Expendables**, will accomplish with its new album, **Prove It**.

"I hope we sell a billion records," says the singer/guitarist for the ska-inflected Northern California band.

That's a pretty ambitious (if not particularly serious) goal for a group that started out as a party band in the most literal sense of the word. And creating a fun atmosphere at the band's live shows remains a definite priority.

Actually, the Expendables do have a more realistic ambition for the new album, which arrived in stores earlier this week.

"I hope this album gives us a little bit more respect from you guys, the critics," says Weers. "We kind of get hounded on for being just another ska, weed-toking, reggae-punk band. But I feel like we have a little bit more substance than that, and I hope this album kind of proves it."

Prove It is the fifth album from the band, which formed in 1997 in Santa Cruz and built its career in a decidedly do-it-yourself manner.

"From the beginning we've always been a party band," Weers says. "That's kind of how we started doing stuff back in the day. We'd tour — well, not really tour, but we'd take weekends and play college towns that were near Santa Cruz. We'd go and play Santa Barbara, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Chico, and it was pretty much backyard parties. That was pretty much how we developed our live show."



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The Expendables, with Tomorrows Bad Seeds, Big B, Dirty Penny

Saturday, May 22, 8 p.m.

Black Sheep, 2106 E. Platte Ave.

Tickets: \$15, all ages; blacksheeprocks.com, 227-7625.



But even if the group began life as strictly a weekend endeavor, Weers and his bandmates — guitarist Raul Bianchi, drummer Adam Patterson and bassist Ryan DeMars, who replaced the band's original bassist in 2001 — quickly raised their sights above bar-band status by getting into songwriting and recording early on.

The group's first album, *No Time to Worry*, came out in 2000 and was followed up just a year later by another called *Open Container*. By 2004, the group was on to album three (*Gettin' Filthy*) and had begun touring regionally.

It was around this time that the Expendables made a pivotal connection with the ska-rock group *Slightly Stoopid*. The more established band took the Expendables out on tour and eventually signed the group to *Stoopid Records*, which released a self-titled *Expendables* album in 2007.

Weers, in fact, credits *Slightly Stoopid* with inspiring his group's own blend of ska and heavy metal.

"Actually for me personally, I think the real eye-opener was *Slightly Stoopid's* *Longest Barrel Ride* album," says Weers. "There's a song on there — I can't remember what it's called — but it goes from reggae to a metal thing. I was like, 'Wow, that's amazing.' They never really did it much after that album, but I think we took that and then just created song after song after song that has that kind of flow between mellow and metal."

The band is sufficiently pleased with the songs on *Prove It* to showcase them on the current tour.

"We're all really stoked on this new material, and we all feel this is hopefully going to be our best album yet," says Weers. "We get tired of playing all of our old stuff, and the new stuff is really fun for us."