

Expendables to play at The Venue

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Santa Cruz reggae-punk-surf-ska band [the Expendables](#) will take their Winter Blackout Tour to [The Venue](#) tomorrow, Feb. 24 for their second of nine shows in the sunshine state. Tickets are available for \$15 general admission on [ticketmaster](#). The show, which starts at 8:30, will also feature [Big B](#), [iLa Mawana](#) and the [Crazy Carls](#).

Recently, we chatted with the band's 29-year-old lead guitarist [Raul Bianchi](#) about touring, songwriting, and some of his musical influences.

Hey Raul, has playing guitar for the Expendables been anything like you imagined it would be? Yes and no. Because we started as friends jamming in high school, we never really put too much thought into where the band was going to take us — let alone try to make a career out of it. Playing music for people that enjoy it is the most rewarding thing I have ever done. The amount of time, energy and money, as well as the physical toll that touring takes on the band is much more draining than I ever would have imagined, but I still can't picture myself doing anything else.

A friend from Santa Cruz told me that you guys are hometown heroes. How do you feel about playing there? I don't know about hometown heroes. We are from Santa Cruz, and are proud of it. We love representing our city and playing for people all over the country and the world. Any place where the fans are receptive and energetic is our favorite place to play. Playing in Santa Cruz is always great for us because it feels like we're coming full circle. It's where we started, and it's always nice to play in front of friends and family that have been with us since the beginning. It's a double-edged sword though, because we have so many friends and family that love to drink too much and punish us.

Your website has you guys on tour up to March 26. Do you have any tour plans for the rest of the year? Once we get off the road, we're going to take a break and work on some new material. Hopefully, spend some time in a few different recording studios getting some tracks laid down. We've always wanted to do an acoustic album, and a live album. We'd love to be able to do both.

Awesome. What is the song writing process like for the band? We never have a set way for writing a song. Music is very organic, and for us it never really works if you try to force it in a particular way. Sometimes band members will come in with complete songs, other times we've built songs around jams during sound checks or practice sessions. Other times guys will just come with a shell of a song and we'll work on it together. Whether it's a full song or a verse and a chorus, we've been playing together for so long that it's easy to see the ideas in each other's heads and work out a full song from just an idea, or a partial song.

You guys really don't fit into any one genre. How would you describe your musical style? The Japanese label that works with us has the best description of our music. "Mixture Rock." We aren't a reggae band, and we play rock music but in many different styles and many different influences, so you can't really call it anything other than mixture rock.

Cool. What is your favorite track on your newest album, "Prove It"? "2 inch dub" was a jam song that was about five minutes long that we just took into the studio. Our producer, Paul Leary just hit record on the 2-inch machine and we dimmed the lights and played until the tape ran out. We did it one

more time and then let Leary add some crazy effects. It was just a lot of fun to record and listen to.

Changing the subject into perhaps something not so fun: What did you think when Sylvester Stallone came out with the movie that shares the band name? The only thing that sucked (besides the movie itself) about sharing a name with the Stallone movie is that the movie studio has a lot more money than we do. So, they bought up all the Google space. So, now it's a little harder to find the band on the internet. That, and people keep posting how great the movie is on our facebook! Apparently fans of the movie aren't the sharpest.

-Greg Allard