

PEARL JAM | YEAH YEAH YEAHS | LILY ALLEN

Issue 1072
February 19, 2009 >> \$4.50
rollingstone.com

Rolling Stone

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The Rolling Stone Interview



The Battle of the B-List Bands

When multiple versions of the same groups hit the road, everyone loses
By Andy Greene

ONE NIGHT LAST SUMMER, L.A. Guns took the stage at the Taste of Lombard food festival in Lombard, Illinois. At the same time, 1,200 miles away, L.A. Guns hit the stage at the Muscle Party Rockfest in Sarasota, Florida. How was this possible? Because L.A. Guns, like a growing number of acts, are touring in two competing lineups: one fronted by the group's original guitarist, Tracii Guns, and another led by his fighties bandmates, singer Phil Lewis and drummer Steve Riley. "Tracii's L.A. Guns is bogus," says Riley. "People want to hear the songs sung by the original lead singer." Guns counters, "Those guys are a couple of dirty motherfuckers. I hired them for my band - if you get hired as a manager at McDonald's, you don't take over the McDonald's."

Two versions of the Guess Who, War, Jefferson Airplane, the Temptations and the Beach Boys are all but tling for bookings next summer. Not to mention bands that compete with their former lead singers, like John Fogerty and Creedence Clearwater Revisited, or Dennis DeYoung and Styx. "Fans are often able to suspend their disbelief for these shows," says Andy Cirzan of Chicago-based Jam Productions. "Journey went out with a Steve Perry sound-alike last summer and had a massive tour."

Prog supergroup Asia have handled the situation with surprising civility. When the original lineup re-formed in 2006, John Payne, a singer who had been touring with the group, was out of a job. The various parties agreed to allow Payne to tour with a new band as "Asia Featuring John Payne." "Letting John use the name was us letting him earn a living," says original Asia drummer Carl Palmer. "And at the end of the day, fans will know the difference."



GUNS N' POSERS? Tracii Guns (second from right) and Phil Lewis (third from left) lead competing versions of L.A. Guns.

Why Can't They Be Friends?

Can't decide which version of Asia (or War) to see? Our guide helps you sort through the madness

L.A. Guns With Tracii Guns VS. L.A. Guns With Phil Lewis

Founder and guitarist Guns leads this unit, which plays L.A. Guns tunes and covers. Singer is Marty Casey - best known as the runner up from *Rock Star INXS*.

Sticking to classic Guns jams, original singer Lewis and drummer Steve Riley lead this group, which includes a guitarist named Stacey Blades (clever!).

Best Bet: It's a tossup, though Tracii put the "Guns" in L.A. Guns.

War VS. Lowrider Band

Number of original members: one. After a 1997 lawsuit, original keyboardist Lonnie Jordan ended up with the name - and hired new Warriors.

Number of original members: all the other surviving dudes - including singer Howard E. Scott! They named their group after one of War's biggest hits.

Best Bet: Lowrider Band are clearly more legit.

The Guess Who VS. Bachman Cummings

In the mid-1970s, original bassist Jim Kale registered the name as a corporation after realizing nobody else had. He's toured with rotating players ever since.

Randy Bachman and Burton Cummings are the Guess Who. They wrote and sang nearly every major hit from "These Eyes" to "No Sugar Tonight."

Best Bet: Bachman Cummings. Duh!

The Temptations VS. The Temptations Review

Band leader and founder Otis Williams is the last surviving original member - 16 other singers have joined the group over the past four decades.

Dennis Edwards, who sang lead on funky early-1970s Temps hits like "Papa Was a Rolling Stone," toured as "the Temptations" until a lawsuit stopped him.

Best Bet: Another wash. Otis is OG, but Edwards has a killer voice.

Original Asia VS. Asia Featuring John Payne

The prog supergroup's original foursome re-formed in 2006 for a reunion tour, breaking out "Heat of the Moment" and songs by Yes and King Crimson.

Ex-Asia frontman John Payne, who sang with the band for 15 years prior to Original Asia's reunion, is hitting state fans with his own crew.

Best Bet: If you have to see Asia, go original.

But Bruce Sullivan, a booker at the Wisconsin State Fair, doesn't quite agree. "Fans will be like, 'Hey, it's Asia and they'll play 'Heat of the Moment,'" he says. "The attachment is to the group and their music, not the individuals. It's also cheaper to book John Payne's Asia." Therein lies a problem that split groups discover: Competition drives their paychecks down. "Tracii poisoned parts of the country we normally play in because he was willing to play for exorbitantly low amounts of money," insists Riley.

Copycat bands are a decades-old problem for Fifties and Sixties R&B vocal groups. Name rights to acts like the Platters, the Drifters and the Coasters have been in dispute for years, and versions of the acts without a single original member perform regularly. "To watch them take [original Coaster] Carl Gardner's standing ovation is almost more gut-wrenching than the fact that they're also taking Carl Gardner's money," says Sha Na Na's Jon "Bowzer" Bauman, who has lobbied Congress to outlaw such "imposter" acts.

Tracii Guns says he's going to court, and he hopes to get the name back. "I just want to put it to bed and start a new band," he says. "This has proved beyond *Spinal Tap* ridiculous. The next chapter would be us trying to book a convenience store and battling over the \$300 they'd pay us." ❧