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21 Black will take you back

PRINT EMAIL

THE BAND: 21 Black

THE MEMBERS: Robert Gloria, lead vocals and guitar; Roy Banda, bass and keyboards; Leo Zepeda, drums and vocals.

THE SOUND: It's the product of their generation. With two members in their early 50s, and one in his late 40s, their music brings to mind that late '80s, Deep Purple sound, and the finger-tapping guitar solos of Eddie Van Halen.

While 21 Black is not exactly the music of today's generation, what's a demographic to a generation with "Guitar Hero" and Pink Floyd laser shows?

"Like they say," lead singer Robert Gloria said, "what was old back then is new again today."

Somewhat bluesy, and inspired by classic rock, jazz, and even classical music, for 21 Black, it's all about the songwriting. It makes for perfect bar music, and an awesome dose of nostalgia for those who long for those days, and the youngsters who wish they could have been there.

The chorus of the song "Now is the Time" will bring Pink Floyd to mind, and "Open the Door" sounds a bit like Agent Orange, both with the added benefit of a shredding Peavey Wolfgang electric guitar.

"I really like that guitar. For the longest time, I was playing the Fender strat," Gloria said, "but the Wolfgang is more precise."

It has a shorter neck, a lockdown guitar tuning and a Floyd Rose tremolo system, a whammy bar perfect for those squealing dive-bombs.

So, while it may not be a good bet at the roulette tables, or even an allowable one, but 21 Black is the way to go for classic rock fans and guitar heroes who want to catch a good show.

THE BACKGROUND: Formed in May of 2005, with a different bass player, 21 Black was a random idea bred in the workplace.

Gloria and the original bassist had discussed forming a band, and eventually met Zepeda. Nearly two years ago, that bass player left the band. Banda, who has played with bands such as Ground Zero and Strange Parade, has been there ever since.

Zepeda, who has been with the band since the start, is the son of Freddie Fender's drummer. He has a Tejano background, playing trumpet and saxophone for Latin Lites II, Jesse Serata and the Sunshine Band, and La Sombra.

As a guitarist, it's obvious that Gloria draws inspiration from the technical. Inspired by classics ranging from Eddie Van Halen to Bach and Beethoven, he provides the showmanship needed for a great rock show.

21 Black has worked a good deal of the San Antonio bar and club scenes since it formed, until a few months ago when the band got started on its first full-length album.

Now, 21 Black is focused on more public venues, such as the Rock 'n' Roll marathon and the Texas Folk Life Festival.

The band's music is a constant throughout the 10-movie series, "The Innocent Killers," by local Ponderous Productions, and the band appears in three of the movies.

WEB SITE: 21black.com; myspace.com/21black

CHECK THEM OUT: 7 to 11 p.m., Friday, Feb. 20, at Salud!, 8123 Broadway, with Rock Band Blues and Stolen Motive. The band's new CD, *Now is the Time*, will be on sale for \$10.

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