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13 years of psychobilly freakouts

musicpreview

The Deadcats
 with *Season of Nightmares* and *the Benders*
 Saturday, 15 September at 8pm
 Velvet Underground

MIKE SMITH
 Arts & Entertainment Staff



It's been a long road for Vancouver's The Deadcats. They've been rocking our side of the country with their personal brand of psychobilly-meets-surf-rock since 1994, and in those 13 years, they've seen their micro-genre blossom into a full-blown, world-spanning scene.

These days, you can find numerous psychobilly bands covering the Canadian landscape, and the fashion statements their members and fans alike have brought back are instantly recognizable.

Any of the hot-rod-driving, tattooed, slick-haired guys with their Bette Davis look-a-like girlfriends that you see around town represent the growth of the psychobilly scene. To some, seeing a burly dude driving a '50s hot rod or a chopper might be intimidating, but according to Deadcats frontman Michael Dennis, those guys aren't so bad.

"We get along well with the hot rod guys ... we're friends with a lot of those guys," Dennis laughs.

For those who are unfamiliar with the genre, psychobilly is an eclectic mixture of rockabilly beats with punk timings and style. For many years, the genre has languished as a small, struggling underground scene, but in recent

years has grown relatively popular, making the payoff for bands like The Deadcats a sweet one.

"We were the very first band in Canada to start doing [psychobilly], so they hadn't been exposed to that much," Dennis claims, about the genre's slow rise. "Now, it's grown to the point where guys like us or the Gutter Demons can go on cross-Canada tours."

Much of this rise can be attributed to psychobilly torch-bearers Tiger Army. Ever since that band was signed to the popular Hellcat Records in 1999, acts like The Deadcats have seen concert ticket sales multiply. With their most recent release, Tiger Army has even managed to pull some heavy radio-rotation for the genre.

"If Tiger Army hadn't been signed to Hellcat ... we wouldn't be playing right now," Dennis admits. "With the rise of psychobilly and MySpace, our crowds [have] doubled."

Still, it hasn't been an easy journey for

the band. They've gone through many different members over the last decade, but have finally lost enough blood, sweat, and guitar strings to almost guarantee a good crowd wherever they go. And while critics point fingers at Tiger Army for taming their sound to appeal to the mass market, fans of The Deadcats need not worry about the band selling out. Dennis doesn't appear to expect—or want—any more success than the group has already achieved.

"We're just too raunchy, and we mix too many styles of music in there, even for the psychobilly people," Dennis states. "I also don't think most psychobilly will become too popular ... it's just too strange."

With their pure eclectic sound and ideals, The Deadcats personify the left-leaning urges of the genre. But anyone who has yet to experience the psychobilly couldn't choose a better introduction—The Deadcats promise one hell of a show.

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