

## Debut Plays to Band's Strengths

Written by Jesse Virgil

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Octane, the debut album from the Quad Cities' The One Night Standards, features a reverb-y guitar that calls no place home on the fret board, wandering place to place in search of the perfect combination of notes. This instrumental lead is more than enough to overcome a standard-issue rhythm section – straight-line bass riffs and basic drum beats.

The all-instrumental surf/rockabilly trio has put together an album that offers a wide variety of genre tunes – from surf rock to spy movie to folk to romance to western – with similarities to Los Straitjackets' not-too-over-the-top-style. Guitarist Scot Haut's playing stands out, particularly his knack for strewn progressions that give the music true soul.

"Mexican Standoff" kicks the album off with a fast-paced, simple 4/4 beat with drummer Mike Mudd. From the start it's obvious that Mudd and bassist Joel Rose hold back on their playing to allow Haut to take over the show with his dynamic style. This holds true through most of the album, as Rose doesn't stray from the root notes too often and Mudd keeps a steady beat in place. The song itself has the vibe of Shadowy Men on a Shadowy Planet (who provided the theme to *The Kids in the Hall*), with a hint of the Lone Ranger theme.

The second track, "Full Throttle," continues the same fast-paced rockabilly sound. Haut adds some tremolo picking – faster paced – but the majority of the track is straight-line playing from Mudd and Rose as Haut thrashes the fret board.

"Weehawkin" is a change of pace, with a spy-movie feel. It slows down the album and allows you to be seduced by the bass – which has traces of the Blues Brothers theme. However, it's the longest song of the album – just over four minutes – and gets a tad repetitive without vocals.

The task for any all-instrumental band is challenging. Vocals add another dimension to music, and the words add further variety. The One Night Standards take on song structuring as if vocals were intended in songs such as "Lethal Plus" and "Dragline" – with verses, choruses, and bridges – and the result is tunes that sound as if something is missing.

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"My Zombie Romance" has a romantic spy-movie sound with soothing riffs that tug at any hopeless romantic's heartstrings. It would also be a great fit for the end credits of any James Bond flick. "Blue Ribbon" offers a wildly different sound, more along the lines of country/folk music that could be found at a county fair.

The best track of the album is "Insomnia," comparable to Chris Isaak's "Wicked Game" in texture and feel. A main riff spread throughout the song has a hint of the main vocal melody of "Working My Way Back to You" by Frankie Valli & the Four Seasons. But the creamy bass alongside steady and soothing guitar hooks are what make it the most enjoyable song.

*Octane* moves easily among styles and genres, but the actual *sound* of the album becomes tiresome. The CD was recorded live, with the trio playing together and without overdubs, which leads to a sameness of sound. The "natural" guitar reverb is a nice addition to most songs, but its ubiquity leads to indifference in listeners and a thirst for a something different.

Still, *Octane* demonstrates The One Night Standards' strengths, even if it can't capture the band's elaborate on-stage performance, which includes everything from playing guitar with a lit lighter to sensational instrumental breakdowns from time to time. Those theatrics and a variety of great covers give their music a sense of energy and passion that don't fully come through on this recording.