

ROCKING HARD WITHOUT GUITARS

When brothers play rock music they are apt to make a certain magic unique unto itself. Rock's sibling history has its Everlys, the fist-fighting Gallaghers, and Aussie brothers the Cesters. Now we have Antonio (Tony) Beliveau and Michael (Mike) Beliveau; Tony on keyboards and vocals, Mike on bass. From a long line of musicians, (dad played piano, grandpa played organ) the Beliveau brothers have played in five bands together prior to Crash Kings. It's no secret; these guys hit hard and play great together. That's what happens when you've been doing something together for a long time.

Of their formation, lead vocalist and keyboardist Tony Beliveau says, "I wanted a trio and my brother Mike and I have such a strong connection and we understand each other musically and emotionally so well; he was my obvious choice." Add to the sibling synergy the perfect drummer, Jason Morris, and the Crash Kings come together. This is Jason's third band experience with siblings.

"I knew what I was getting into," smirks Jason. "...The other two bands with brothers made for a good intro. Brothers have a much closer relationship and are much quicker to fight than strangers or friends who get into a room together to make music. At the same time things move faster because brothers tend to think similarly and ideas get out more quickly."

When siblings and music collide it makes for what we so casually call "undeniable chemistry." At times volatile, yes, but no fistfights...at least not on stage. Channeling their passion, they create music so powerful it's almost a crime—a crime that has been aided and abetted by nothing other than fate itself. Two brothers and one hard-hitting drummer come together to form an ivory-driven power trio firmly rooted in right here and right now; this is Crash Kings.

The Crash Kings' radical new sound is huge to say the least. Of their vision, Tony is quick to point out, "We wanted to create a band that once and for all could be 'The Big Rock Sound' without guitar." One might wonder...rock without guitar, how is that possible? Well, the Crash Kings have gotten a bit innovative in their quest to create rock with just keys, bass, and drums. With tube overdrive and multiple amps Mike's bass brings heaviness to the band's sound. On top of that Tony plays a clavinet (a keyboard with guitar strings), which has been customized with a large whammy bar allowing him to bend notes like a guitar producing an entirely new sound. Having these two very unique elements makes the Crash Kings' music feel raw and full at the same time.

In a few short months after coming together this current yet timeless band was quick to draw the attention of Linda Perry, who immediately wanted to sign them to her label, Custard. Linda's first encounter with lead singer Tony was during a chance meeting in a restaurant (he was her waiter!). She nailed him as a musician/front man and without hearing a note, encouraged him to take his music and career to the next level. When asked about his brother's and Linda's serendipitous meeting, Mike says, "Linda Perry is a true inspiration. A huge success but truly humble and one of the hardest working people I've ever met."

Once Linda and Custard were on board, the band showcased their talent for head of Universal Motown, Sylvia Rhone, who led Crash Kings to Dave Sardy. Sardy produced their self-titled debut on Custard/Universal Motown, which they rocked on their first national tour opening for none other than Chris Cornell. Not a bad start for a rock band with no guitar player.

According to producer Dave Sardy and anyone who hears their eponymous release, Tony, Mike and Jason certainly achieve their aims. Says Sardy, "The Crash Kings are the missing link between Queen and Rage Against the Machine."

"Dave Sardy is a sonic genius," boasts Tony. "That's why we wanted to make our debut with

him—incredible sounds. We share the East Coast connection with Dave – we’re Boston, he’s New York. He’s like our older brother. We respect him so much and he respects our musicianship. It made it easy for us to record with him.”

Bassist Mike Beliveau named the Crash Kings. “I came up with the name because we are all very absent minded and accident prone which makes for great Rock and Roll.” Great Rock and Roll? Presumptuous? No – not when you hear tracks like “1985” and “Raincoat.” Along with “Mountain Man” these and all their songs showcase the elements all great Rock and Roll bands share in common—a distinctive singer with undeniable appeal, a rhythm section that makes you move, and songs that are at once familiar yet simultaneously incomparable.

When asked about how they write songs, it’s not surprising to find out most of their tunes start from keyboardist/lead vocalist Tony Beliveau. But for rock that can be at times quite intense, it is a surprise to find out where he starts. “I visualize a place where I feel complete peace - usually a place of natural beauty, immersed in nature. Songs like “Mountain Man” and “Come Away” came out of me being out in nature. Most of the songs start with a chorus. When I find a strong chorus, I start building the song, writing verses and eventually a ‘middle eight’ comes. Then Mike, Jason and I work out the arrangement. It’s really important for us to make every verse, every bridge, every part of every song as important as its chorus.

For a band this electric and this hard-hitting, it’s surprising how often nature crops up. Drummer Jason Morris states, “We are like a seed that’s been planted that we hope will grow into a huge, beautiful forest...” Mike echoes this sentiment saying, “Our hope is that in the next three years we will take our music all over the world.”

With a quick glimpse into their history, their connection to nature doesn’t seem as aberrant. Tony and Mike have been skiing since Tony was 4 years old and Mike was 2! With this knowledge it becomes obvious why their music is saturated with the same thrill and excitement that’s elicited when racing through trees and down mountains. Being the avid skiers that they are, Crash Kings collaborated with the renowned ‘Warren Miller Films’. The next Warren Miller project, which is due out this fall, features Crash Kings making their way down the slopes of Vail (filmed impromptu on a day off between gigs on tour) against the soundtrack of “Mountain Man.”

Highly tuneful, very aggressive, hard-hitting rock. Crash Kings take the three-man-band concept to their own unique level, quite often surpassing guitar-driven bands. Tony Beliveau’s vocals soar above the band’s aural grandeur. His brother, bassist Mike Beliveau locks in with Jason Morris’ powerhouse drumming, driving the deeply personal, keyboard-born compositions straight to the heart. Their live audiences are always moved and always move to their groove, smiling the “knowing smile” of those who know real rock when they hear it – or more importantly, when they feel it. Their seed planted, now their sonic forest starts to grow into the biggest sound possible without guitar.

CRASH KINGS – ROCKING HARD WITHOUT GUITARS.

Crash Kings bio by PAUL ILL