

They write the songs and play them

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The following is a portion of an interview that was broadcast live on WUSC as part of its coverage of the Guided By Voices show Friday night at the Elbow Room Music Hall.

Kevin Langston: To my knowledge, you have never played in Columbia or South Carolina before. Why now?

Robert Pollard: We have not been offered a show, to my knowledge. We have a booking agent, and we pretty much do what he says, so like ... I guess it's time. The time is now. Is there a good scene down here?

Kevin: Oh, yeah. Well, it is when people like you come around.

"Bob": Well maybe we never played here because we heard Hootie and the Blowfish are from here.

Kevin: So what has touring for this album been like?

Bob: It's been good, I actually have a new lineup. Except for Doug [Gillard], Doug was in the last lineup. But it's been great.

We've been over to England three times, you know, and we're getting ready to go over to Japan and Australia. So this is the most extensive tour we've done for an album, in support of an album. And so it's really good. The camaraderie within the band is really good right now, and I'm happy.

Kevin: What's been the best part of touring for this album?

Bob: The best part of touring? I've actually been touring for the last six years now, so the best part of touring is fielding the question "How's Ric Ocasek?" I guess. I get that asked everywhere I go.

Kevin: Well that's going to happen in a little while. Speaking of touring, the worst part of touring? I heard that your van was broken into in New York.

Bob: Yeah, we had all kinds of good stuff in

there, records and everything. All they took was, like, boxes of T-shirts, so it's OK.

You've got to be careful, you've got to watch New York. Do you ever get up there?

Kevin: Yeah. We just came back from there for New Year's. But there's been a trend of people stealing stuff. Jon Spencer lost some stuff on tour and so did Son Volt.

Robert Fleming: So did Cibo Matto.

Bob: It happens all the time. We did a July 4th festival with a bunch of bands, and Sonic Youth had their whole bus stolen. And they've got like 50 guitars or whatever. So it can be bad. We just lost a few T-shirts, so that's not too bad.

Kevin: And the tour goes on. How important is touring to you?

Bob: I used to think touring wasn't that important, but if you're going to be a rock band, you should show people what you look like and not just make records.

It's important to make records. To me, making a record is kind of the spiritual part of it, and playing live it the physical manifestation of that. You've got to play. You're not a rock band if you don't play live. And I know some bands don't like it.

I think it's more important to make records, but it's also important to play live.

Kevin: That was, actually, where I was going with the next question. How does your music carry over from the studio to the stage?

Bob: Well, you know in the lo-fi four-track days, it was two completely different entities. We were this quirky, experimental low-fi band, and then, live, we were this power band.

So now the two things have come together. The record sounds like we sound live. It's finally come together as one entity.

Kevin: "Do the Collapse" is a departure for Guided By Voices. You're under a new label, you've got the big-name producer. With new members and a new polished sound, do you feel the music naturally has evolved over the life of the band, or do you feel that those added factors helped in the production of the album?

Bob: Yeah, from the beginning of Guided by Voices, I always wanted to make a big record. We just never had.

First of all, when we first started, we actually went into big studios and we weren't successful in making a good-sounding record, so that's why we kind of retreated into the basement to do low-fi stuff. And finally it at least sounded how I wanted the songs to sound like in my head.

And so we pretty much explored all the avenues and possibilities of that, so we thought it was time to go and make a big record.

We've kind of been teasing with that for the last couple of records. We've actually gone into big studios to make records. Still, it was hard for me



ROBERT FLEMING THE GAMECOCK

Robert Pollard of Guided By Voices leaps above the stage in the early set of their show Friday night at the Elbow Room. Pollard quickly showed fans that even a 42-year-old rock star can put on a good show.

to let go of that four-track thing, so even though most of the songs were recorded in big studios, there were still sprinklings of four-track music.

Of course, now, this is our first full-fledged attempt at a big record. I think it's a success, I think Ric did a good job. It's like ... I can't say shit on the air, can I?

Kevin: You just did.

Bob: It's like the line in "Echoes Myron": "We're finally here, and shit, yeah, it's cool." It's kind of where we wanted to be, and we're here now.

Kevin: How did Ric get signed up for the project, and was he familiar with your earlier work?

Bob: Well, yeah. It was a mutual

coming together. We were interested. We had gone out and spoken to Capitol, to the president there, about making the record, and he said, "Yeah, we'll do it. We'll finance it, but you need to get a producer and make the record you've been capable of making."

And so at that time, we had to think about who we were going to use as a producer. And I was thinking Ric Ocasek because I liked some of the stuff he had done. I liked the guitar sound on the Weezer record. But at the same time, he had found about us and was interested in working with us, and I didn't know that. So we came together and he started doing sounds for us.

Robert: This album was billed as the last great rock album of the millennium. Was this your idea?

Bob: Yeah, it was my idea.

Rob: Do you think it's justified?

Bob: Well, it was kind of a joke, you know. But I think it's justified. I think that there's not a lot of big classic-style rock out there anymore. There's like three categories of rock. There's post grunge, there's metal rap and chick rock, and we're trying to carry the old style.

Rob: What are your thoughts on the music scene of today? College and popular music.

Bob: Maybe it's because I'm jaded or something because I'm part of the industry and I see that it's

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Robert Pollard

Singer/Songwriter for Guided By Voices



KEVIN LANGSTON THE GAMECOCK

Pollard's energetic on-stage performance fueled the band and the Elbow Room's crowd.

not so glamorous. You know, being behind the scenes and everything. I don't think music is as good as it used to be. I think it kind of ran its course from 1967 to '79. That was the golden age of rock.

Obviously, when something is around for so long it's going to be hard to come up with original ideas. I don't think people are so interested in songwriting as they used to be. It's kind of more about style and image and that sort of thing.

Rob: In comparison with previous Guided By Voices albums, how do you think this album stacks up?

Bob: I think they're all different. They all have their own personality. This is a different record. In hindsight, I don't think it's the best record, but it's not the worst, either.

Rob: What's your favorite record that you've released?