

Elf Power flex their talent, influences

STORY AND PHOTOS
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Elf Power's dreams in sound were hardly anything you could sleep through Saturday night. The band, based in Athens, Ga. entertained fans and friends alike with a phenomenal performance at the New Brookland Tavern, closing out the week long tour of the East Coast that had started March 4.

The short tour along the coast was to promote the re-release of their first album, *Vainly Clutching at Phantom Limbs*, due out April 4, as well as a new album due in the near future. This marks the second appearance of the psychedelic pop rockers here in less than a year's time.

Their appearance in Columbia also included an on-air interview at WUSC-FM, where the band talked in great detail about their early beginnings and the history of their first album.

According to lead singer/guitarist Andrew Rieger, the band recorded a demo for the first album that was distributed among friends. Because of the local success, friends from Olivia Tremor Control offered them a spot on the Elephant 6 Collective alongside bands like The Apples In Stereo, Neutral Milk Hotel and the Minders.

Bassist Bryan Helium listed among their influences T-Rex, David Bowie and the Velvet Underground. Apparently, Elf Power were one of the 500,000 fans that purchased *Andy Warhol* and started a band soon after.

In the interview, Elf Power praised the achievements of opening band Summer Hymns, which would provide an appropriate opening for the show's headliner.

Taking the stage to close out the tour, the band kicked off with one their newer songs, "Embrace the Crimson Tide," in which they enlisted help from Summer Hymns to augment their sound with multiple drums and percussion. From there, the band drifted back into more familiar songs like "The Separating Fault" off of their 1997 album *When the Red King Comes* and "Jane" from 1998's *A Dream in Sound*. The cast of players for the night's show would waver between five and eight, which is pretty normal for a band that is a



Elf Power perform at the New Brookland Tavern on Saturday in support of their upcoming April releases. The band will be re-releasing its first album, *Vainly Clutching at Phantom Limbs*, in addition to releasing a newer album later this year. This performance was the final show in a seven-day East Coast tour in support of the upcoming releases.

part of the Elephant 6 Collective of musicians.

For fans like me, it was a great opportunity to hear songs that have never been heard before. After seeing "All Your Experiments" and "Finally Free" from *Vainly Clutching at Phantom Limbs* performed live, it makes its arrival for the first time to CD all the more anticipated.

Elf Power was in a definite rock mood, though. Rieger even taunted the fans and told them that they were going to rock the club out. He then asked his dad, who was present, for a beer.

"Old Tyme Waves" and "Noble Experiment" were performed with outstanding energy and excitement. Rieger was in perfect form, his voice as powerful as his guitar was loud. Helium matched Rieger in all respects. Organist Laura Carted added in all the elements that provided a sound that was more than an average rock 'n' roll band, and drummer Aaron Wegelin was outstanding. His skill as a drummer is almost unparalleled today. It was easy to see that the band was really glad to be performing live again and passed that joy onto the crowd, which enjoyed every minute of it.

More new songs were played throughout the night. "The Sun Is Forever," "The Skeleton" and a song about a giant psychic fly were all introduced to the crowd, which seemed to take to the new material nicely. But the show would end with an incredible version of "Icy Hands Will Never Melt Away" from *When The Red King Comes*.

Most of the fans left at the show's initial end, but those who remained cheered them on the stage for an encore. Helium asked, "You guys want to hear one more song?," and the crowd's remnants enthusiastically responded.

One song turned into two as Elf Power

treated fans to "High Atop the Silver Branches" from *A Dream In Sound*. The show's closer was a request by most of the fans there, and when the band kicked into an all-out version of Brian Eno's "Needles in the Camel's Eyes," the show reached a powerful and unforgettable end. Once the feedback ended, the band mingled with the group of old and new friends that had ventured out in the rainy night to see them play. Elf Power proved once again that rock music isn't dead, but in a state of hibernation. And with bands like it continuing to make fantastic music, it is hoped awoken from its slumber soon.

