



THE MIX

THEY SAID IT

"I love sleep. My life has the tendency to fall apart when I'm awake, you know?"

— ERNEST HEMINGWAY

cowboy mouth

Inspirational band aims to make fans feel alive with music

By ALEXIS ARNONE
FOR THE GAMECOCK

Cowboy Mouth has been a household name around the country for about 14 years, and their show Thursday night at Headliners will prove why the name is worth remembering.

The founding fathers of the band are Fred LeBlanc, John Thomas Griffin and Paul Sanchez. About six months ago, the guys brought a newcomer into the band, Sonia Tetlow — a bassist whom LeBlanc said "is a lot of fun to watch."

Cowboy Mouth opens every show with LeBlanc screaming, "Are you feeling alive?" and will not stop until every person in the crowd is screaming back, "yes!"

With his upbeat attitude, it's hard not to answer honestly.

In most cases you can find LeBlanc either climbing the rafters or trying to keep the crowd rockin' some other way, yet he claims he's not the group's front man.

"Everybody has their own space and can be who they are and have their own individuality," he said. "Watching us is like watching four individual shows."

Fans attest to the group's ceaseless enthusiasm and energy. LeBlanc said the realization of his dream to be a musician fuels his performance.

"This is all I wanted to do since I was 5 years old," he said. "I keep that in mind whenever life gets me down and realize that I am doing it, and that's where my wave of energy comes from."

Cowboy Mouth is all about positivity. "You are responsible for what you put out there," Fred said. "We want something positive out there, like the great feeling of being alive."

The group compares its shows to old Southern gospel church services. You go in with your burdens and give it all up and come out with a feeling of contentment. The band members said they wanted rock 'n' roll to be more like those soul-purging events.

It's no mistake that Cowboy Mouth is seen as an inspirational band. LeBlanc emphasizes that the band wants to deliver a strong and uplifting message to its fans.

"Millions of people would give their left arm to do this. I've learned to



PHOTOS SPECIAL TO THE GAMECOCK



Members of Cowboy Mouth compare the band's live shows to Southern gospel services capable of rejuvenating the burdened soul with rock 'n' roll.

appreciate what I have and not to whine about what I haven't got. Life is short, and I am lucky enough to be doing what I love."

Cowboy Mouth gives major props to another local band-gone-famous — Hootie & the Blowfish. "When they hit it big, they brought us out to California to open for them. It was our big break."

For all you already-devoted Cowboy Mouth fans, have no fear. There is a new CD already in the works. It should arrive later this year.

Also playing with Cowboy Mouth is local favorite Closer. David Reed, Lee Summerville, David Baker and Nathan Reed make up Closer and have been around the local music scene for about five years. They renamed their band this past February (formerly the Thomas Reed

Band) and chose Closer because "it held no preconceptions." The band put together a new EP, a six-track, self-titled album produced by Allan Ploth, and released it in April. It has gotten rave reviews.

According to a review on melodic.net, the album has been described as having "perfect guitars, a perfect chorus and an impressive production." It appears that with each "Change" (no pun intended, this being the first track off their new EP) this band makes, the better they get. Be sure to check the band out at its new Web site, listentocloser.com.

The show starts at 8 p.m., and the cover is \$12.

Comments on this story? E-mail gamecockfeatures@gwm.sc.edu

CD REVIEW

Common offers soulful carpe diem message

By JAMES PRINCE
FOR THE GAMECOCK

"And time stood still." Take a moment and press pause on the remote control to life, and press play on your CD player, because you have to, as Common, one of Chicago's finest rappers, says, "Just be in the

moment."

Listening to "Be," his sixth LP, is like viewing a piece of great artwork. You have to pause and hear lyrics like, "Explored the world to where my soul begun / Never looking back or too far in front of me / The present is a gift and I just want to be."

This album is Common's proverbial testimony to his audience, as he has learned to appreciate the present. It is the synonymous nature of the word itself he wants his audience to realize — the present is a gift. Common takes the memories of the past and the thoughts of the

future to illustrate this.

The veteran hip-hop artist's testimony is a discussion of his experiences as a product of the projects and of his discovery of the importance of love, all the while



"Be"

Common

★★★★ out of ☆☆☆☆☆