

Zack Rosicka: A Real Guitar Hero

By Chris Manson May 1, 2008 Issue

It's Thursday night at the Village of Baytowne Wharf's Funky Blues Shack, and "Howlin'" Jack Lowe is raving about Zack Rosicka. "He plays guitar with the speed of John McLaughlin and does that upside-down Jeff Healey lick," says Lowe. (Healey, for those not mired in All Things '80s, is the recently deceased blues guitarist who had a big hit with "Angel Eyes" and appeared in the seminal Patrick Swayze film Road House.)

Rosicka, a native of Fort Walton Beach, moved back here a year and half ago to start his own group after paying his dues in Carolina bands like Charlotte's Contagious and Columbia's Mojo Blues Band. "It was a great experience, opening up for big name acts like Kenny Wayne Shepherd and Joe Bonamassa," says Rosicka of his sideman days.

Drummer Joe Lajter and seven-string bass player E.C. Kuntz round out the power trio. Lajter's father Gary has been an ardent follower of the band since his son started goofing around with Rosicka. "I've been a fan of live music by good professionals all my life," says Gary. "They're strong in every respect. Being from Chicago I've seen a lot of good groups. I saw Muddy Waters when Johnny Winter showed up to jam with him. And these guys are good!!!"



Rosicka says his band focuses on harder-edged blues-rock, funky pop originals, and "hard, hard-rocking originals." There are ballsy Stevie Ray Vaughan and Jimi Hendrix covers, and selections from "Bayou Soul" singer Marc Broussard's catalog. "We're trying to fit more and more originals in. We can pretty much play whatever we want wherever we go."



The first set begins a little before 10 p.m. Ferocious riffs and fluid lead playing hail the arrival of a new guitar hero. Lajter's heavy drumming is straight out of the John Bonham trick bag, while Kuntz' bass rhythms keep the S.S. Rosicka afloat on a sea of funk. This is one of the hardest rocking bands I've seen in ages. Rosicka's solos never bore; vocally, the guy wails like his life depended on it. Even the most casual listeners will detect a southern rock boogie influence and an unabashed appreciation for heavy metal crunch.

The Zack Rosicka Band is a challenging but crowd pleasing outfit, especially for those who love Led Zeppelin's take of the blues. And just when you think a song has run its course, Rosicka tacks on a great breakneck guitar outro.

After some first-rate originals—there is an album in the works, Rosicka tells me—the kid nails the Stevie Ray cover. Rosicka is more than a skilled student of the blues. It's obvious that he's in it soul deep. www.ZackRosicka.com