



# Life, Love & Dessert

# ORLANDO WEEKLY

[news](#) | [music](#) | [calendar](#) | [movies](#) | [dining](#) | [arts and culture](#)  
[books](#) | [culture to go](#) | [selections](#) | [dog playing poker](#) | [happytown](#)  
[blister](#) | [bad sport](#) | [savage love](#) | [slug](#) | [horoscopes](#)  
[comics](#) | [news of the weird](#) | [classifieds](#) | [notable noise](#) | [local links](#)  
[message boards](#) | [best of orlando](#) | [letters](#) | [home](#)

## MUSIC: FEATURE

### Hot Rod Circuit



[upcoming shows](#)



Punchy punks: Fast-traveling Hot Rod Circuit hails from Alabama, via Connecticut

### No tears, just rock

By [Omar Perez](#)

Published 2/13/2003

And then there's the joke about how many emo kids it takes to screw in a light bulb. The answer is five: one to do it, one to form a band about it, one to write a poem about his loss, one to publish a 'zine about it and one to cry to his girlfriend about it. But there are *four* members in Connecticut's Hot Rod Circuit, a band that's certainly established its emo credentials. So forget about the crying.

"I'm not here to make anyone cry. The fans at our shows don't do that when we play. They rock out," says HRC frontman Andy Jackson, who utters that particular cliché without a hint of sarcasm. Like-wise, HRC's latest album, "Sorry About Tomorrow," makes no apologies for its upbeat, melodic pop-punk stylings that, while simple enough, grab attention from more than just weeping fans looking for emo's dejected diatribes.

Ads by Goooooogle

### [Resorts In Orlando](#)

Stay in a luxury resort condo for the price of a hotel room. Specials  
[www.condoexpress.com/](http://www.condoexpress.com/)

### [National Obituary Archive](#)

Search over four million obituaries in 1,900 newspapers. Updated daily.  
[Ancestry.com](http://Ancestry.com)

### [2 Bedroom Family Suites](#)

Staybridge Suites Orlando Hotels Our Lowest Internet Rates  
[www.sborlando.com](http://www.sborlando.com)

### [Florida Villas](#)

Villas near Disney and Gulf Coast Villas & Apartments from £275 week  
[www.holidayvillasonline.c](http://www.holidayvillasonline.c)

The origins of Hot Rod Circuit (Jackson, guitarist Casey Prestwood, bassist Jay Russel and drummer Mike Portman) go back to Auburn, Ala., where the band (then called Antidote) recorded their "Mr. Glenbowski" EP one month after forming in 1997. Despite the rush into the studio, "Glenbowski" helped the band earn a Best Unsigned Band distinction by *Musician* magazine later that year. "It was something to put into press kits to get in clubs so people would take us seriously," Jackson remembers. While the band found itself opening for scene darlings like Jimmy Eat World and The Get Up Kids, HRC was growing disheartened with the Heart of Dixie. Their ticket out came via Jackson's wife, Brona, who was visiting her mother in Connecticut. On her recommendation, the whole family and the band members moved to the Northeast.

"Less than a month after we got there, we were already playing shows and had a booking agent and a label," Jackson recalls. However, after five years, Jackson, citing lower costs of living down South, moved his family back to Sweet Home, while the rest of the band stayed in Connecticut, where they remain today. "I have a house [in Alabama] and I had a shitty apartment there [in Connecticut]," Jackson reflects.

While long-distance songwriting may not sound like a positive, Jackson says it has worked for HRC, since each of the musicians can sit down and not deal with the interruptions that accompany having a bunch of musicians trying to write a song. ("Dude, check *this* out. No, check this out ... .")

Just before moving to Connecticut, Antidote discovered that its name was already taken, so the collective became Hot Rod Circuit -- a line from a "Simpsons" episode. The band self-released a self-titled EP in 1999 and began touring extensively with acts including At the Drive-In. Shortly, tiring of the band's increasingly hectic performance schedule, Wes Cross, the original drummer, left the group. "He just kind of went nuts about the whole touring thing and one day decided that was it for him," Jackson says, adding that the split was mutual.

Showing interest in HRC, New York City-based label Triple Crown signed the quartet and released 1999's full-length debut "If I Knew Now What I Knew Then" and the following year's "If It's Cool With You It's Cool With Me." Hip emo label Vagrant Records signed the band in 2001, and released "Sorry About Tomorrow" to much fanfare last year. (Last month, Triple Crown issued "Been There, Smoked That" -- a compilation of B-sides, live songs and the "Hot Rod Circuit" debut EP. "It was more of a favor to Triple Crown," Jackson says of the collection. "It was nothing that we threw out trying to make money. It was more like a thank you for supporting us and being the first label to take care of us.")

With nine songs already written for an upcoming, untitled album, HRC is undertaking its first headlining excursion across the country. When not on the road, Jackson fronts Safety in Numbers, a side project that includes Brona on bass. Though having a wife and three children makes the life of a touring musician that much more difficult (HRC spends up to nine months of the year on the road), Jackson, 28, has ample support.

"It's hard sometimes but we work through it," he says. "They know what I want to do and that this is how I make my living."