

Getting the H outta there

Everything's copacetic with heartland rockers Local H.

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Local boys: Scott Lucas, left, is bound for South Florida without former bandmate Joe Daniels, right.

by Omar Perez

Local H didn't set out to get national recognition and escape their hometown of Zion, Ill., a town of 20,000 where people are born, work at the local nuclear power plant, marry, rear 2.5 children and die.

"The idea has always been the same: To have hard-rocking songs that are catchy," says Scott Lucas, the band's singer and guitarist. "Maybe the sound of the records has changed slightly. But for me, they all have the same intent."

Much of that intent is based on Lucas' idiosyncratic guitar technique, which derived almost by accident. When Local H formed 13 years ago, the group was a standard guitar-guitar-bass-drum quartet. When their lead guitar player left, Lucas took over.

"It was hard to imagine getting signed by a major label back then," Lucas remembers. "Nowadays, it seems that people start a band right away and they have the connections. We didn't know anybody at the labels. We'd just record demos and sell them for a buck at the show. It didn't really feel like we were making connections. We were just learning how to write songs."

Local H's 1994 major label debut, *Ham Fisted*, received very little attention despite extensive touring with everyone from Corrosion of Conformity to Silverchair. Still determined to continue, Lucas and Daniels began to write and compile material for their second album, the title of which would come from an uneasy realization.

"That's why it's called *Good As Dead*," Lucas says. "We figured that would be the last chance we would get to make a record on a major label. So, we figured, 'Let's just make it and throw every kind of song we want to record right in there.' We wanted it to be garage rock-sounding. We figured we'd do what we want. And it worked."

The album's "Bound to the Floor," also known as the "Copacetic Song," became a radio favorite with its uncompounded guitar hooks and soaring chorus. The second single, "Eddie Vedder," earned the band a bigger following and later landed them a spot opening for Stone Temple Pilots. Then, after a much-needed break, the band began writing material for their late 1998 release, *Pack Up the Cats*. The album shed much of *As Good As Dead*'s histrionics in exchange for more radio rock-type material, but without sacrificing any edge. Although the album's single, "The Kids Are Alright,"

received airplay, it wasn't as extensive as "Bound to the Floor."

"I can't really be bothered by worrying about that kind of thing," Lucas says. "If those people just want one song, that's fine. That song is there for them."

"Right now, rock bands should probably only be putting out singles," he continues. "It doesn't

seem like radio stations care about the entire record, and by the extension of that, make the average music listener not care. And that sucks."

Unlike *Good As Dead* and *Pack Up the Cats* (which, according to Lucas, evolved around the theme of the rise and fall of a "nobody to rock star back to someone worse than a nobody"), the band's next album won't be a concept album. It

also won't include Daniels, who recently split with Lucas for undisclosed reasons. Local H's appearance at the Buzz Bake Sale will double as a test for a new drummer and material from the next album.

— **Scott Lucas** "I don't want people to think that every record

has a batch of interconnected songs that follow the same theme," Lucas says. "We'll probably just make as much a straight-ahead of a rock record as we can make. I'd like the next record to be more representative of what the live show is like. I'm trying to make it a classic rock record like *Back in Black* — 10 songs and they're all cool songs."

Local H plays the Buzz Bake Sale Sunday at Coral Sky Amphitheatre in West Palm Beach. For more information, see page 29 or call 561/616-4688.

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When their bass player followed suit, Lucas decided to keep the band a duo of himself and drummer Joe Daniels ("It sounded better," he says), add a bass pickup to his guitar and run it through both a guitar and a bass amplifier. "A lot of people think we have someone hiding behind an amp or something when we play," he says.

After graduating from high school, Lucas and Daniels began playing punk clubs in Chicago and nearby Lake County. After releasing several promos, Local H sent unsolicited copies of their music to record labels and producers. Ultimately, Island/Def Jam Records took note.