
Posted on Fri, Dec. 10, 2004

SUCCESS THROUGH 'REASON'

GRAMMY NOMINEES RETURN TO HOB

By Kent Kimes
The Sun News

The last time Southern California rockers Hoobastank visited the Grand Strand, guitarist Dan Estrin nearly lost his head - literally.

After the band's Aug. 26, 2003, show at the House of Blues, Estrin suffered head injuries from a minibike crash outside the concert hall, the same venue the band returns to for a gig Wednesday, having survived the mishap and now with a No. 1 song on its resume.

You may not be familiar with Hoobastank (which got its moniker from a Finnish relative of bassist Markku Lappalainen) but earlier this year, there wasn't much escaping the band's chart-topping single "The Reason."

"The Reason," a pop-inflected power ballad, has attracted a whole new legion of fans for Hoobastank, ones not necessarily familiar with the band's harder rocking material.

It has been a breakthrough year for Hoobastank, but drummer Chris Hesse insisted that success has not fazed the quartet.

"Nothing has really changed for us, but the perception of us has changed," said Hesse in a recent phone conversation from California. "The shows don't rock any less."

Prior to the over-the-top success of "The Reason," Hoobastank had some chart success but often was compared to its mentor band, Incubus.

Hoobastank's members went to the same Orange County, Calif., high school as the members of Incubus, and the two bands have shared the same producer.

Furthermore, Hoobastank vocalist Doug Robb has admitted to sounding similar to Incubus' Brandon Boyd.

Despite the band's self-titled debut album selling more than 1 million copies, Hoobastank was named the most faceless band of 2002 by a music magazine - a title Hesse said he didn't have a beef with. "We weren't trying to be [expletive] rock stars," he said.

Rather than wear snappy clothes and conform to a certain look, Hoobastank concentrated on its music, not its image, Hesse said.

And with "The Reason," Hoobastank has been able to step out from Incubus' shadow.

"As far as the pop mainstream is concerned, they've probably equaled or surpassed Incubus. With rock fans, Incubus may still be more respected," said Sean Ross, vice president of programming for Edison Media Research.

Capping off a career year for Hoobastank, "The Reason" (the single) was nominated for The Grammy Awards' Song of the Year and "The Reason" (the album) was nominated for Rock Album of the Year, announced Tuesday.

Hoobastank has been on quite a roll, but things didn't look so good after Estrin's motorbike spill forced the band to cancel the remainder of its club tour in the fall of 2003.

According to a release posted on the group's Web site circa the crash, vocalist Robb said: "We were riding these little minimotorbikes around the parking lot, and Dan drove into a dark, roped-off area by the buses. The rope caught him in

the chest, and he fell and hit his head pretty hard on the ground."

Estrin was taken to Grand Strand Regional Medical Center, and it was initially thought he had a small skull fracture.

But it turned out the guitarist also had a blood clot pushing against his brain. But the clot was removed with a simple surgical procedure, and Estrin recovered quickly.

"I wasn't really scared when it happened. He wasn't bleeding," Hesse said.

"We've all hit our heads before."

Hoobastank

With | *Letter Kills and Three Days Grace*

When | 8 p.m. Wednesday

Where | *The House of Blues at Barefoot Landing, U.S. 17 South in North Myrtle Beach*

How much | \$17.50-\$49 272-3000

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