

Guitar-driven Paloalto to rev up Seattle

Paloalto. Is it a typo meant to read a Northern California town? Or an up and coming power pop band from L.A.?

"Actually it's the preschool I went to in Phoenix where my mom used to teach," said Paloalto's lead vocalist James

Grundler.

"But it symbolizes new beginnings for me and for the band. Plus, it's kind of fun to hide behind the name by letting people think we're from Palo Alto."

But few

care where they're from, as long as they're coming here to play. Paloalto has put Seattle on the tour map and is due to grace the Graceland with their soulful sound twice this month.

Paloalto will perform at Graceland on April 10 with Swedish pop rock sensation The Soundtrack of Our Lives, or T.S.O.O.L. for short.

Paloalto will be back April 30 for round two with former Smiths guitarist Johnny Marr on their return to Graceland.

"We're going to get polished up on some old Smiths songs for this one in hopes that Johnny will come out and play with us," Grundler said with a smile.

While the band's respective pairings will undoubtedly draw a crowd, Paloalto has a unique story and sound all their own.

Bringing a handful of musicians from previously



Photo courtesy of Paloalto

Paloalto band members include, from front, James Grundler (vocals, guitar), Andy Blunda (guitar, keyboards), Florian Reinert (drums) and Tommy Black (bass guitar).

signed bands to the table, Paloalto formed in 1998 in Grundler's studio (apartment, that is).

"We quickly made demos to start getting the music out there," Grundler said.

The band was discovered by the intuitive ear of Rick Rubin, famed producer for the Beastie Boys, LL Cool J, The Red Hot Chili Peppers, Tom Petty and Johnny Cash (to name a few), and four-time Grammy nominee for Producer of the Year.

"Rick invited us to his house," Grundler said. "And we were signed in '99."

Grundler said Paloalto's success begins with thoughtful songwriting. "Nothing is more important than crafting a really good song—it's a wide, spacious affair, as big as the planet."

But raw, musical talent certainly has something to do with it too.

"James has a truly unique gift for melody and a tremendous voice to back it up," Rubin said.

And U2's lead singer, Bono, who recently spent some time at Rubin's place, noted Paloalto's talent after listening to the song "Breathe In" from their new album, "Heroes and

THE DETAILS

WHO: Paloalto

WHAT: April 10 with The Soundtrack of Our Lives and April 30 with Johnny Marr

WHERE: Graceland, 109 Eastlake Ave. E, Seattle; call (206) 381-3094

GETTING THERE:

Auto ferry: From the ferry dock, go up the hill to First Avenue. Left on First and follow it north to Virginia. Right on Virginia and follow it approximately 10 blocks to Denny Way. Right on Denny and veer right onto Eastlake Avenue East. Graceland will be on the right in an odd locale under the I-5 overpass.

Driving: From I-5 North, take the Olive Way exit, No. 166. Slight right onto Olive Way. Right onto Melrose Avenue. Right onto Pine Street. Right onto Boren Avenue. Right onto Howell Street. Howell becomes Eastlake Avenue East.

Parking: Available on nearby side streets and pay lots. Arrive early for the best spots.

Bus: From the Colman ferry dock, walk 0.3 miles northeast (up the hill) to Third Avenue and Madison. Catch the No. 71 toward Wedgwood and get off at Fairview and Denny. Walk 0.3 miles east to 109 Eastlake Ave. E, aka Graceland. Bus fare is \$1.25. For information, go online to <http://transit.metrokc.gov>.

Villains." Bono said the song made him feel "so much better."

Grundler describes the band's intent as not trying to reinvent the wheel, but rather make it a smoother ride.

"We want people leaving the venue knowing that everything's gonna be alright," he said.

So, what is it about their sound that stirs up emotions? Paloalto's songs are passionate dealings with real life and its ups and downs. We can all relate.

And the music style itself? Some might call it guitar-driven power pop. Others describe Paloalto as "Cold Play meets The Who."

Whatever the category, listeners seem to be mesmerized by the swirling keyboards, tight drumming, skyscraping sound and the band's "wall of guitars

approach to melodicism," Grundler said.

The band's key influences are Pink Floyd, The Beach Boys, Swervedriver, Catherine Wheel and My Bloody Valentine.

Paloalto's song "Fade Out/In" was featured March 30 in the premier episode of the new WB-TV show "Black Sash."

A video for "Breathe In" is scheduled to be shot in April.

To sample their tunes, check out the self-titled album "Paloalto." The band's next album, "Heroes and Villains," is due to hit U.S. stores in June, but you can take a listen right off their Web site at www.paloaltomusic.com. To check out T.S.O.O.L., go to www.tsool.com.

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