

# THE PSYCLONE RANGERS

The Lehigh Valley has gotten its first major label alternative rock band. The Psyclone Rangers have been slugging things out in places like the 4-G's for many a year. I spoke with singer Jon Valania over the phone, just after they returned from their nationwide tour with the Rev. Horton Heat...

**FOE** How'd you get hooked up with touring with the Rev. Horton Heat?

**PR** Their booking agent was looking into some of the bands on our label, and he got a copy of our album. He said he was out there for three days in a rental car, and all he did was listen to our tape. We all love the Rev. stuff, they had been on tour opening for Porno for Pyros, they listened to the tape and we were the band they picked!

**FOE** Where did the tour take you?

**PR** It started in Chicago, worked east, then down south along the coast, and we spent like a week and a half in Texas. We hung out in Bisbee Arizona for awhile with our friend Buzzy. Bisbee was an old mining town, now it's an area with a lot of artists, weirdos, Indians and Mexicans. It's a very cool place.

Then we went up the west coast and came back home. The sizes of the clubs we were playing were rather large, like the size of the Trocadero in Philadelphia, 1,000 to 1,500 capacity. Actually the Khyber Pass in Philly was the smallest place we played. The Rev. has been touring for like five years straight. The tour lasted two and a half months. We went 17,000 miles. It was our first tour, and on our last day we stopped at Graceland. We were very lucky on his tour. We did have some bad days, we played this place in Fort Worth called the Hop. We played that show by ourselves. The "p" on the neon sign outside the club was burned out, so it was the "Ho". Which was fitting because about seven people showed up and five of them left before the night was over. I met a lot of interesting people along the way. We were playing NY, with the Friggs, and Ben Vaughn was there, he was changing his pants right next to me. Dez Cadena was at the show in Richmond Virginia. I think he's starting a new band there. In Washington, the singer from Velocity Girl was there. We played the club that is run by Pete Buck's wife, who is beautiful and very nice. We played at the Wiskey and got a great response. Black Francis, Joey Santiago, Gibby Haynes and Bobcat Goldthwait were there. And someone even said Jay Leno was there. Something weird and interesting happened everyday while on tour. I kept a tour diary, I'm gonna try and write it up. A guy got shot outside one of the clubs we played at. We were loading up our van, and we thought we heard a car backfiring, and these kids came running, yelling there's some guy with a gun out there!

**FOE** What did you miss out on while you were gone? What did you sacrifice?

**PR** Scott and I are both freelancers, and Pat was between jobs, he likes to keep it that way. Jamie has a regular job but he got an administrative leave. So we didn't really miss any work or anything.

**FOE** What was the most frustrating thing about being on tour?

**PR** It was the hardest thing I've ever done. It's really a matter of endurance. We're used to playing like once a month in the Lehigh Valley. It got to the point that a 12 hour drive was nothing. Really we had no complaints and the Rev. guys were really great.

**FOE** How is the reaction compared to the response you get from Lehigh Valley crowds?

**PR** The last night we played in town before going out on tour, there were like 50 people at the 4-G's. It was very frustrating. From what I understand the disc has sold like 400 copies in the area. That's much more than we've ever had show up at any of our shows... I think the one thing that really hurts the live shows in PA is the 21 drinking age thing. That cuts out a whole lot of people who would potentially be interested in seeing live original music. A lot of the places we played you didn't need to be 21 to get in the club, you just needed to be 21 to get a drink, which is a much more reasonable way to handle things.

**FOE** When did the band start?

**PR** In 1989.

**FOE** And you took some time off?

**PR** Yeah, right before we signed. We took about 4 months off. We didn't break the band up over personal reasons. We are all really good friends, and we have a juvenile sense of humor, and we all know what not to say. We were just looking for one break, one little break. It was really just a matter of beating our heads against the wall. And so the interest from the label, revitalized the whole idea. We never even had the money to send tapes out to labels. We only sent out like 3 tapes.

**FOE** So the disc is out, the tour is over, and the label has plastered ads all over the place.. What's next?

**PR** We're in a lull here. We're going to go out and do two weeks with Paw in December. And then we'll be hooking up with someone to do another major national tour in January and February. The record comes out in Europe in March and then we'll do a Spring European tour. That is what it takes. You gotta just spend a year plugging away.

**FOE** How many copies of the disc have you sold so far?

**PR** I don't really know. It goes through a cycle where the retailers order and then reorder and that's how you know how many you've sold. Apparently it is harder now to sell records than ever. You can even be a band with a good buzz on them, like Medicine, and they've sold like maybe 5,000 copies. Belly have probably only sold like 50,000 copies. That's a major accomplishment, you can make a decent living without being enormous. You have an audience and a career in rock!

**FOE** So are you going to do a video?

**PR** Early on there was a lot of talk about doing a video. The label made videos for a bunch of the bands on the label. They made them for really cheap, compared to most video budgets, like under \$10,000. And they maybe got aired once, like at the end of 120 minutes or something, and that was \$10,000 totally wasted. So their attitude is let's spend it on advertising, and if we have results then let's make a video. There's a guy in Philadelphia who makes video's on a Fisher Price toy video camera. I'm trying to get a hold of this guy to try to make a video.

**FOE** You also have a 7" on Sympathy...

**PR** I had been trying to get World Domination to put out a 7" for about a year. It took a lot of arm twisting. World Domination was interested in the

Crack Babies (putting out a single), but I'm not sure what the status is on that.

**FOE** So will you be having another release on World Domination?

**PR** Yes, we have a multi-album deal.

**FOE** Who did the disc artwork?

**PR** Frank Kozik, from Austin. He is an amazingly twisted genius. He used to do poster art for gigs in Austin. I saw an interview with him in Your Flesh. He does all these fucked up things with Hanna Barbara characters. It's very wild and psychedelic colorwork. We called him and he was like fine, I'll do it. He sells his stuff through the Rock Art Gallery in San Francisco. We're in the new catalog.

**FOE** How do you like being on the other end of interviews? (Jon being a freelance writer)

**PR** It's flattering that people think enough of our work to talk to us.

**FOE** How are the reviews? Are they comparing you to anyone?

**PR** Good. Very good actually. We get a lot of the Iggy, Cramps and Velvet Underground. Some off base stuff like some guy said we sound like Nirvana. CONTACT THE PSYCLONE RANGERS THROUGH WORLD DOMINATION: P.O. Box 8097, Universal City Station, North Hollywood, CA 91608. The Psyclone Rangers are: Jonathan Valania (vox), Scot Dantzer (guitar), Behler (bass), Jamie Knerr (drums).