



MUSIC

GIRAFFES RISK THEIR LIVES TO BRING SLEAZE ROCK TO FANS

BROOKLYN BAND'S SINGER DODGES BOTTLES, LOOGIES; ALSO CARRIES DEFIBRILLATOR.



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Before you head to a Giraffes concert, you might want to consider upgrading your health insurance policy.

"I was really f---ing wasted one night, and I actually propelled a microphone into [an audience member's] eye and split his eye open," said Giraffes lead singer Aaron Lazar. "That's probably the biggest damage that I know about causing, though I know I've kicked mic stands into people's faces before. But they deserved it."

Fans may take a beating, but it's all part of the Brooklyn, New York, band's electric live show, which also features Lazar and his bandmates pouring shots of bourbon and whiskey down each others' throats. While their Brooklyn brethren lean more toward British-influenced indie rock, the Giraffes tend more toward sleaze, culling their influences — both musically and stylistically — from the American raw rock of the 1970s.

With a bassist who has proudly cultivated mutton-chop sideburns and a handlebar mustache, and a lead singer who traipses the stage in straight-leg dark denim jeans and a leather jacket, the Giraffes aren't afraid to look the part as they pound out booze- and testosterone-fueled rock and roll.

For Lazar, who leads the band in catapulting through its set list, the live show that captivates the crowd can be potentially life-threatening, and not just because of the bottles and other heavy items that get chucked at him onstage. Earlier this year, he suffered two heart attacks and now has to wear a defibrillator that shocks him if his heart rate gets too high from, say, trying to one-up the band's opener.

"It nailed me in Chicago," Lazar said. "We were playing with the Blue Van, and they were really good at what they do. When I saw them, I was like, we've got to slay it tonight. So I went out there all half-cocked and excited and drunk, and the AC wasn't working. My heart rate got too high, and I wound up getting shocked three times by my little buddy. It hurts too, like a son of a bitch. But we finished the show."

If nothing else, the Giraffes are all about pleasing the crowd, which explains why they might have a bit of contempt for those sought-after indie rock bands.

"We just wanted it to be like a good time," said Lazar, "not shoe-gazing, self-important, look-at-me-I'm-fashionable-and-cute stuff. There's far too much of that. There always has been and there always will be in a town like New York. You just can't help it: People move here to be seen."

Despite their eye-catching look and commanding sound, the Giraffes weren't immediately noticed. Holed up in a practice space/recording studio under a Hasidic dry-cleaning shop (from which they were recently evicted), they recorded two albums and an EP before indie label Razor & Tie, which recently released the band's self-titled album, took notice.

The Giraffes has been referred to as "sexy metal," with good reason. The album starts with a slow build, a pounding march through "Jr. at His Worst," which features a menacing backing vocal singing "shebop, shebop." Lazar plows through hard rock tracks with his gravelly bourbon-soaked vocals, as on the ode to a soccer riot, "Man U.," which closes with a chorus repeatedly shouting, "You're going home in a f---ing ambulance!"

With songs that court violence, it's not surprising that the Giraffes often get back exactly what they throw out at the crowd, and then some. But Lazar maintains that he's happy with whatever reactions people have to his music — even if it's the desire to beat the crap out of him.

"I've been hit with bottles, I've been hit with loogies," he said. "Once I got hit with an extremely stale piece of bread. Like, someone had this baguette that they just whipped at my face and I had crumbs in my mustache. You name it. There was one show we played on Valentine's Day in Brooklyn where some dude tripping on acid literally attacked me and kicked my ass while we were playing. He grabbed me and started humping me repeatedly. When I finally got him off me and elbowed him in the mouth, he tackled me and started kneeling me in the face.

"But we never stopped playing," Lazar concluded proudly.

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