

# The AQUARIAN

Weekly

"ARTS & MUSIC WEEKLY"

**WHERE IT'S AT:**  
WE GOT GUITARS!

**LIVE:**  
VERNON REID'S  
1999 PARTY  
AT B.A.M.

**PLUS:**  
CLUTCH, GODSMACK  
**POLITICS:**

CONSERVATIVELY SPEAKING  
ANSWERS HOLLYWOOD'S  
CALL TO THE HOMELESS

**BUZZ:**  
BREAKBEAT ERA  
ZEN TRICKSTERS

**DISCS:**  
G.G. ALLIN RES-ERECTED,  
**PLUS:**  
CYPRESS HILL  
ALABAMA THUNDER PUSSY

## 311

UP ON  
THE INSIDE

**NJ NEWS:**  
THE INSIDE SCOOP ON  
THE METAL MELTDOWN

**PROMISE RING**  
Come To Your Emotional Rescue



**SPOTLIGHT: THE ROCKY  
SAGA OF JOHNNIE  
"B. GOODE" JOHNSON**





311

# Funkin' Evolution

The imagination is antithesis to physical limitation. Strolling through daily life, humans are constantly confined by flesh, weighed by thought, and serve as victims to the oppressive forces of gravity. Bound by logical influence of modern education mixed with illogical emotion, the mind often serves as buffer between fantasy and reality, forever deciphering and categorizing various occurrences. By standard, we are told to believe that the tangible is proven and therefore exists, and by default the invisible lives only under false disguise. Yet it is what we do not know that drives us; it is the unseen that is intriguing.

Be it cold whispers from closed shutters or suspicious auroras in Roswell, we share a cultural allegiance to the invisible. The mere chance of connecting with the infinite unknown is a dream shared by many, and shows through in all of our art forms. With a history dating back beyond Mesopotamian and Dravidian societies, our attempts at contacting other forms of life through music, literature, and painting have been tireless.

When 311 added their interesting blend of reggae, rock, and hip-hop to national airplay with their self-titled third release in 1995, their triple-platinum success was painted with references to these infinite possibilities. While more infatuation than dedication, their reaching out merely exemplifies the evolution of human searching.

"Thinking about things that exist outside of the earth, I try not to say I know anything," says guitarist Tim Mahoney. "It just seems that the possibility is greater that things exist outside of our planet. It's interesting to think about; there's so many conspiracy theories, and it's good that people are thinking there is more than what we now see. It's just our curiosity, but I'm just as curious about going inward and being an inward astronaut, because there's just as much to learn inside. I try to keep my mind totally open to any possibility."

This open-minded approach has helped Tim lead these groove masters to international stardom. Intense spiritual reflection combined with essential elements of rock and roots dub music, 311 became a household name when "Down" was on constant rotation in the country's largest radio stations.

Two albums later, in celebration of their latest release, "Soundsystem," the boys from Omaha are enjoying further success via "Come Original." Reaching this level of acknowledgment without compromis-

ing can be difficult; while airwaves are saturated with boring dance music, it is often difficult for bands to be truly creative. Yet 311 have built a career on being consistently diverse, finding a niche on radio where it once seemed none existed.

"As long as we've been together, we've just been playing music the way we play music without worrying about the business," Tim says. "We've been fortunate enough to always have artistic freedom and control over our music. We don't really try to fit in, but it's difficult because we don't fit a lot of radio station formats at times. We're just trying to create good music and keep it spiritual."

"A lot of times the most spiritual music isn't the most mainstream, whether it's jazz or reggae or blues. We just write music that's true to ourselves; all the business is second to the creative process."

This integrity has kept 311 alive since their roots were laid on high school stages in 1988 in Omaha, NE. Influenced heavily by reggae musicians like Peter Tosh and Bob Marley, jazz cats such as Bill Evans and John McLaughlin, rock idols like Jimi Hendrix, and hip-hop outfits De La Soul, Cypress Hill, and The Pharcyde, 311 have been able to create original rhythms borrowing from all these styles.

While this is all apparent on record, one need only to see them live to ingest the true energy transferred. Currently on tour in smaller venues with two recent nights at Irving Plaza, they are happy to get back to the intimacy shared outside arena life.

"We just want our shows to be a celebration; people gathering, listening to music, just coming to enjoy themselves and have a positive experience," Tim states. "We just travel around and have little celebrations each night, and have a release of good energy."

"The energy just flows back and forth, and it amplifies so much greater the smaller the place is, so we're really enjoying playing these sized venues."

Originally trained on trombone in his grade-school band class, Tim picked up the guitar shortly thereafter. Waywardly reminiscent of his old muse, the six-string instrument quickly became the voice with which he spoke. Moving with his posse to Los Angeles after exhausting all resources in Nebraska, the band patiently watched their recognition grow after each show. Soon they were opening for the bands that influenced them, eventually headlining major showcases.

While Tim's personal style was developed through jazz and reggae experimentation, hip-hop grabbed his attention early on. "The drum beats and the production of hip-hop really grabbed me," he says.

"Besides all the sociological aspects of it, of course. It's a cool evolution of music; there is many tribal aspects and intelligent social commentary, as well as just looking at it as sound without the lyrics."

Advocates of the technological expansion of music through digital means, 311 have spent the majority of their career experimenting with sounds, be it Tim with an envelope filter or co-vocalist S.A. Martinez on the turntables.

"Transistor" was an extremely successful dive into alchemizing dub reggae rhythms with rap and rock; and "Soundsystem," while more straightforward, still exhibits various space grooves and roots echoes throughout. Tracks like "Leaving Babylon," a Bad Brains cover, delve back to organic Jamaican influence, while "Livin' & Rockin'" employs futuristic breakbeats. "Flowing" begins with a melodic aura that makes one feel as if floating through the music of the spheres; a light, serene journey reminding one that life is about the trip itself, not necessarily the goal.

311's dedication to open-mindedness serves as an example to the general tide of American culture today. While we have seemingly move backwards in terms of interpersonal relations, highlighted by racial tension and the influx of lawsuits and divorce, our technology is expanding at speeds unfortunately uncontrollable. The Internet has saved our economy while offering endless new job and business opportunities, and is restructuring the music industry as well. Songs like "Evolution" point to this movement in hopes that we use our electrical skills for progressive actions.

"The web is great because of the alternate forms of communication we can have with each other," notes Tim. "It helps people get different angles on news, rather than having to rely on only three or four networks. But the whole process is up to humans to have good intentions with everything involved."

"Recording has evolved as well, so that now you don't have to have a record deal to make a great sounding CD. With digital, a band can make a record in their home and sell it over the web, and charge per copy. It will be interesting to see how all of this evolves in the future."

After 11 years, 311 are showing no sign of slowing down. Five studio albums, one live disc, and endless singles fill record store shelves. Their live intensity is unmatched, and their commitment to avoid mediocrity is powerful inspiration to many of their fans.

As the millennium clock dwindles, we are on the brink of another step of our own evolution. This will be a personal process shared among our physical and spiritual community. Regardless of outcome, it is apparent that changes will occur. Be it technological catastrophe or deeper reflections by our inner astronauts, there is a climax being reached, offered by an influx of artists and musicians.

Once worried, Tim sees this as another step, one to be handled as it occurs. The guitar will continue to speak for him as great as any voice can project. As for the worries, he'll leave that for someone else.

"I hope that people realize that 2,000 years is relative to human history on earth," he says. "People get so caught up in thinking that they are the most evolved species in the universe and don't realize that humans created time, created this whole Y2K syndrome. I mean, is there even one clock that has the exact time? For a little while I was totally paranoid about it, now it just makes me laugh."



by Derek Beres

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