

# 311 Says It's the Fans that Keep Them Going Strong

BY LELA CASEY



Since 1988, Omaha-based 311 has been rocking their original mix of reggae, hip-hop, funk and metal. Their 1995 triple-platinum self-titled album introduced them to a wider audience, with songs like “Down” and “All Mixed Up” topping the radio charts. But while many of their contemporary bands allowed the pressure of rapid fame to tear them apart, 311 continued on to become one of the longest-running bands with original members.

Today, after almost 30 years, 12 studio albums, a biennial cruise, and even an unofficial holiday, 311 has become a true American music success story. Guitarist Tim Mahoney talked about the secret to their longevity and what’s ahead for 311.

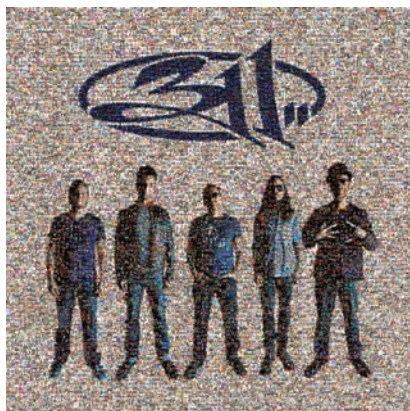
“We’re fortunate that we don’t have much drama,” Mahoney said. “Early on, we worked out most of the kinks. We all lived together for a few years—five of us in a three-bedroom house. We were always in close proximity, so we got pretty good at getting along.”

“I know a lot of bands break up over drama,” he continued. “But we’ve always been democratic about solving issues. We work at trying to figure out a solution that everyone can live with.”

Besides being able to work through problems together, the band members still appreciate each other musically.

“We genuinely enjoy playing each other’s songs,” Mahoney commented. “We still find it inspiring to hear each person’s take on a song and put it all together.”

That ability to collaborate was especially important on their most recent album, “Mosaic.” Producer John Feldmann joined the band and their longtime producer, Scotch Ralston, to put together a wide-ranging collection of songs.



*The band decided to use images that the fans sent in to create the album cover for "Mosaic."*

"Having John Feldmann work with us added a different kind of energy that really made this album unique," Mahoney remarked. "It's probably the biggest group effort we've ever put on a record."

But it isn't just the band members and producers who contributed to the creation of "Mosaic." 311 has long been known for their devout fans. Mahoney attributes much of the album and the band's success to their audience.

"We're fortunate because our fans will follow us into some weird territory musically," he observed. "It gives us freedom to explore. And we're really thankful for that."

So thankful, in fact, that the band decided to use images that the fans sent in to create the album cover for "Mosaic."

"It's our fans who ultimately support us and allow us to keep playing," said

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TIM MAHONEY

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Mahoney. "So, we wanted to make the cover of 'Mosaic' a compilation of some of their favorite moments. I love the communal vibe of it. The fans are a big part of the making of the record, whether they realize it or not."

A key reason that 311 has remained successful is their ability to find a balance between entertaining loyal fans and attracting newer ones.

"It's difficult to consciously stay relevant, because if you try too hard, then you get off track from what you probably should be doing," Mahoney noted. "We want to stay true to ourselves, but also consider what our fans enjoy. It's a balance we've gotten pretty good at. It's really nice to see fans of all ages enjoying our shows."

"Roots, reggae, and hard rock are the things we've always enjoyed," continued Mahoney. "We try to



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keep those currents that have been with us our whole career, but also get inspired by the new music that comes out every year."

Another way that 311 has stayed relevant is by thinking outside of the box for their performance venues. Besides their ambitious touring schedule, the band alternates between a yearly 311 holiday and cruise, both of which have become enormously popular. On March 11, the band played 86 different songs across two three-hour shows in Las Vegas to sold-out crowds. The 311 cruises draw equally enthusiastic crowds.

"The cruises are great," Mahoney said. "You're in this finite space with 2,000 to 3,000 people, and everyone is just partying. We play the top deck, which can fit the whole capacity of the boat. It gets kind of crazy."

Along with their busy touring schedule, the band is continuing to write music. They have been compiling songs over the last year, and are close to putting together their next album.

"We'll keep working on the new songs until we go on tour at the end of July," explained Mahoney. "Penn's Landing will be one of the highlights. Philly is one of the oldest cities we have supporters in, so we definitely look forward to getting there."

"The goal is just to keep getting better—to try to improve as an individual and as a group—and to put out music that's more hard rocking or more melodic or whatever we're going for," Mahoney continued. "We just want to keep evolving."

Perhaps it's that openness and willingness to evolve that is the key to 311's long-lasting success. | **R**