

# 311



by John Stouffer

311 is a band that recently moved to Los Angeles from Omaha, NE. But this isn't hick, cowboy- or classic rock-inspired group of kids looking for fortune and fame. Mixing rap, reggae and rock styles together, they are reminiscent of bands like Urban Dance Squad. Not necessarily what you would expect from five white boys who call Omaha home. But their music on the new album, *Music*, speaks for itself.

311 played for several years in Omaha, building a reputation and releasing several independent albums. "We grew up in a pretty nurturing environment," says vocalist Doug Martinez of the bands' white-bread upbringing. All five members were raised in a stable suburban environment. Two went to one high school and the other three attended a rival school. "It was a full-on showdown-at-Burger-King time," says drummer Chad Sexton.

"It was the perfect place to be from as far as we're concerned," says the other vocalist, Nick Hexum.

Credit their upbringing. Musically, this group of 22 years olds — except bassist Aaron Willis who's 18 — is primed and ready. They know their music — they have a rigorous practice schedule every day — and work well with each other. Indeed, their playing is tight and charged.

"We like to build up the pace of the show and go fast for about the last half of it," says Hexum. The pace got too frantic one night, causing guitarist Tim Mahoney to throw up on stage near the end of the show. To his credit, he turned around, let it haul, and turned back around and kept playing. Of course, the rest of the band won't let it go.

But live performances do have bonuses. "It's great when chicks jump up on stage, grins Martinez. And, he noticed, "It's been happening more lately."

If they were so inclined, they could bring the women home with little cause for alarm. The three-bedroom house in which the five live is clean and orderly. Their beds are always made; their refrigerator, well-stocked with health foods, vegetables, milk and juice. Their moms would be proud.

Now, though, it is time to leave the new nest, and head for the road. "We have this belief," says Martinez. "It's a take-off on the saying, 'life's a bitch and then you die.' We believe that life's a bitch and then you live. This is our time to shine. It's great to be here, doing what we do."

Willis gets a funny look on his face. "I've never heard that before, but I like it."