

Austin album rounds up top-notch guitarists

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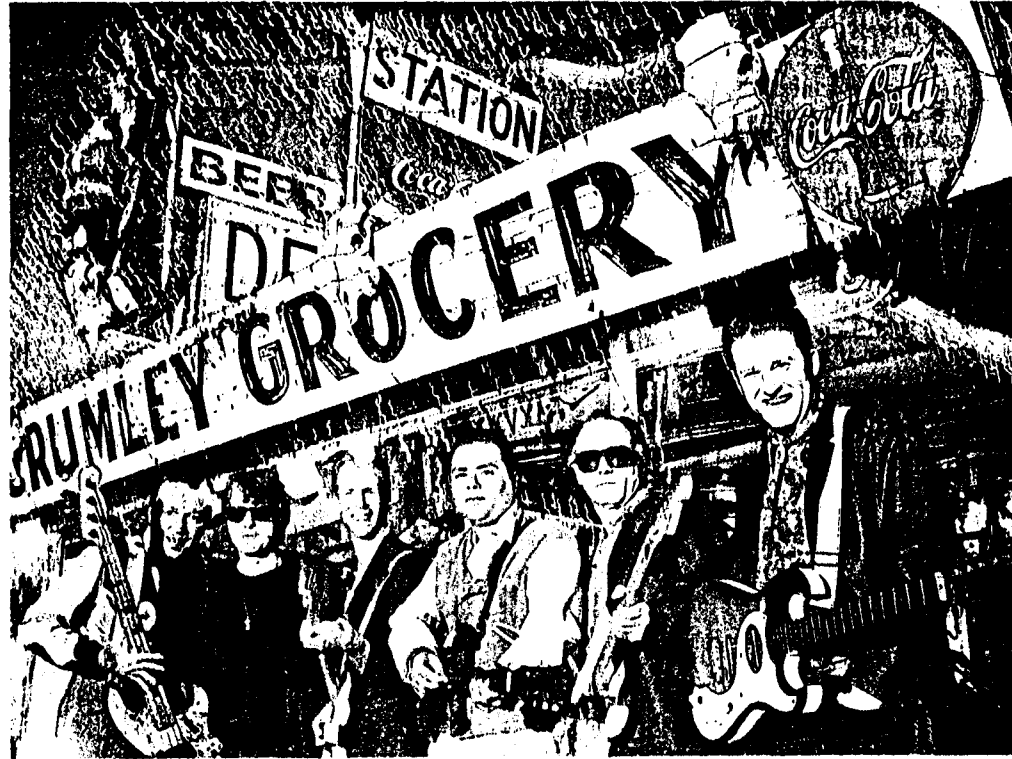
In the other states of the Union, kids dream of growing up to be president. Not in Texas; it's boring. Being president is a day job. Too much monkey business.

In the Lone Star State, girls and boys dream of growing up to be guitar players. And why not? There is a long and honorable tradition of Texas guitarists that runs from prewar bluesman Blind Lemon Jefferson (whose streetcorner musicianship was so accomplished that listeners stuffed bills — never coins — into his pockets) to Austin fretmaster Stevie Ray Vaughan, who has taken the Texas blues around the world.

So what more logical place on the North American continent to record an album showcasing guitar players than Texas? Or, specifically, Austin, where guitarists flourish under the gin joint neons? That's the idea Gary Rice and record producer Vince McGarry had when they conceived the album *Trash, Twang and Thunder: Big Guitars From Texas*.

"I always liked those guitar instrumentals," said Rice, "and there hadn't been one in a while that did a lot for me. So I thought, why not do one in Austin where all these hot-shot guitar players live?"

Rice had a multitude of "hotshots" to pick from but, since he manages the LeRoi Brothers, his thoughts understandably turned to the guitarist for that band, Evan Johns, and ex-LeRois guitarist Don Leady, who now fronts the Tailgators. After kicking some names around, Rice and McGarry settled on Moto X's Frankie Camaro and Denny Free-



Gary Rice and record producer Vince McGarry knew Austin was the logical place to cut the album *Trash, Twang and Thunder: Big Guitars From Texas*.

man, of the Angela Strehli Band, as the third and fourth guitarists, and LeRois drummer Mike Buck and Tailgators bassist Keith Ferguson to round out the lineup.

"I think Gary was dreaming about a wall of guitars," said a laughing Bruce Newlin, on whose Jungle Records label the album was

released. Well, that's exactly what he got. The record echoes with Dick Dale-style surf guitar, spaghetti-western filigree, garage-band echo, and twangy Duane Eddy-style licks. With song titles like *Ride of the Ruthless, Guitar Army, Chainsaw, Bulldoggin' Boogie*, and *Riot At Huntsville*, we're talk-

ing about a record that's awash in testosterone.

"As soon as I heard all four of us together, when we hit the first chord of *Boomerang* at the same time, I knew it was going to be right," said Evan Johns. "It was four guys all hitting an E chord with the right attitude."

Rice added, "We asked everybody to come in with a couple of their own songs, and we worked a couple up in the studio. Everyone contributed to each other's songs. I think even the guys would have a hard time remembering who did what on which song."

For example, said Frankie Camaro, "On *Breakers*, I played the melody first and Don played the lead, and then we switched."

McGarry and Rice strived for a variety of sounds on the album. "When I think of Don," Rice said, "I think of a guitar player who, if I was going to make spaghetti westerns for the rest of my life, I'd have him write all the music. Evan, if you're practicing in a garage, he'll be the guy to blow the doors off the walls; he's a real powerful, trashy, street-fighter sort of guitarist. Frankie had been around in California in 1963, and I think he does surf music as well as anyone I've ever heard. And Denny, I pretty much agree with everyone who says he's one of the best rhythm guitarists in town. But he gets to play a lot of lead licks on here."

Rice admitted the album was an indulgence, but with the pool of local talent available, it is an indulgence that could spawn any number of offspring. But not too soon. As McGarry told Rice at 3 a.m. after mixing the tapes for something like 20 straight hours, "I never want to hear a guitar again in my life."

But he was laughing.