

Seattle grunge is state of mind

SEATTLE (AP) — Ah, to be young and grungy in the springtime.

In Seattle, the Wonderland of Grunge, there's not a day on the calendar when you can't be blasted into dreamy-eyed oblivion by super-fueled guitar, gut-wrenching bass and drums that pound, pound, pound.

It's Nirvana. Actually, it's not anymore. You'll have to pay close to \$30 to see those grunge rockers gone golden, but there are plenty of bands still in the city belting it out nightly.

What is a grunge band, anyway? Like life, grunge is hard to define, but it has certain recognizable characteristics.

Grunge often sounds like Engine Kid, whose show and record release party I caught recently at the Weathered Wall. Sure, the lead singer had a Brady Bunch haircut and was wearing a green polyester shirt buttoned to the top, but the music was fierce. Seemingly every song went from clean, gently plucked notes to pounding barre chords and shouted, sometimes screamed vocals. No guitar solos — a characteristic of true grunge. (Solos are for posers, heavy metal guitar heroes and Eric Clapton wannabees.)

Engine Kid was preceded by Dirt Fishermen, a group fronted by two female guitarists and singers that's begun to develop a loyal following. Are they grunge, too? Sure. The clothes fit the grunge image, and the guitar, running from nifty start-stop rhythms to fairly complex scale runs, fits the grunge criteria. In other words, it's loud.

How about the Kent 3? I saw their show at the Off Ramp recently. The music is sweaty, shirtless thump more akin to punk rock than the smooth, distorted chunk of Nirvana, Pearl Jam and other great big grunge acts. But then, if Nirvana weren't punk rock when they were working the Seattle circuit, I don't what to call them. Sure, the Kent 3 is grunge.

The Family? This band features a wall of guitar noise no earplugs can take you over, and a Charles Manson lookalike wandering around the stage in prison coveralls. A wad of guitar-hero type solos in every song make it more like thrash metal, but when it's so loud, who can tell?

The Bumping Uglies, a thumping three-piece that opens its set with a tightly poetic round of swearing, is most definitely grunge. You can tell by the knit stocking caps.

No Good No Evil is grunge, even though all their songs have catchy hooks and tasty guitar

Mob fights end show by Screaming Trees

YAKIMA, Wash. (AP) — A concert by the alternative music band The Screaming Trees was stopped early when fights broke out in a mob that had rushed the stage.

Police were called to quell the Tuesday night violence in the crowd of about 500. There were no arrests or serious injuries, but seats were smashed in the Capitol Theater.

The band, formed in nearby Ellensburg, has made recent appearances on *Late Night with David Letterman* and *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*. They had played just a few numbers before music was stopped about 9:30 p.m. when fans jumped on stage.

At least 15 police officers formed a wall across the stage shortly after band members announced they wouldn't play anymore. Trouble began during the opening performance of the Seattle band Love Battery, when a crew member hurled a fan off the stage into the crowd.

Some fans grabbed the crew member and tossed him into the crowd, causing others to rush the stage.

Theater management and Screaming Trees singer Mark Lanegan tried to quiet the mob.

"Stay in your seats. It's cool with us," Lanegan said, but the crowd did not comply.

Brett Eliason, tour manager for the Screaming Trees, said the incident was unusual for the band and blamed inadequate security.

Theater manager Steve Caffery said there had been minor incidents in past concerts, but "we didn't think something like this would happen."

Damage was a dozen broken theater chairs and a broken light, Caffery said.

He said it would be the last such concert in the 1,500-seat theater, a restored vaudeville-era house more accustomed to symphonies and traveling Broadway productions.

Caffery said the Screaming Trees quit playing voluntarily when things got out of hand.

"The band was concerned about the safety of the kids," he said.

licks: The Rhino Humpers are grunge for their attitudes alone — not so much a sneering at the crowd as a disdainfulness that hardly recognizes the others in the room.

Hand of Sand, a band from across Puget Sound in Poulsbo, is grunge, despite tight three-part harmonies, a female drummer who makes percussive magic and songs good enough to listen to without earplugs. Heck, they've got the grungy look and yes, they're loud.

My own band could be lumped into the grunge category, despite a lot of guitar-hero solos and songs with fairly complex changes. We're loud enough for grunge, and we're not pretty.

Bathtub Gin, who sound more like a good, clean hard-rock band, are grunge because they're from Seattle and they dress down. Their non-label demo tape is getting some solid airplay on a local FM rock station.

Even whitemaleguit is grunge (sorry, guys), despite oodles of smoothly textured guitar and soaring vocals, for their casual onstage approach.

Seattle bands often complain that the national media lumps them all under grunge.

Well, we do. If they'd blow-dry their hair, squeeze into full-length spandex tights and trade their flannel and black military boots for artfully ripped tank tops and boot slippers, they'd be heavy metal glam bands.

Perish the thought. Grunge is simplicity in dress, and usually in music.

The names are where it gets imaginative. On any given night you can see Blow-N-Smoke, Fear the Cow, Girl With 100 Heads, Mama Troll, The Hungry Crocodiles, Poverty's Child, Rawhead, The Pleasure Elite, Alcohol Funny Car, Tad, Stink, Conifer Bog, Panic, The Tramps of Panic, Voodoo Gearshift, and my personal favorite, Big Daddy Meatstraw.

Not all of these are grunge bands, (no one admits being in a "grunge" band anyway), but they're all part of the still-booming Seattle scene. We'll get to know a few of them on a more personal basis in upcoming columns.

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