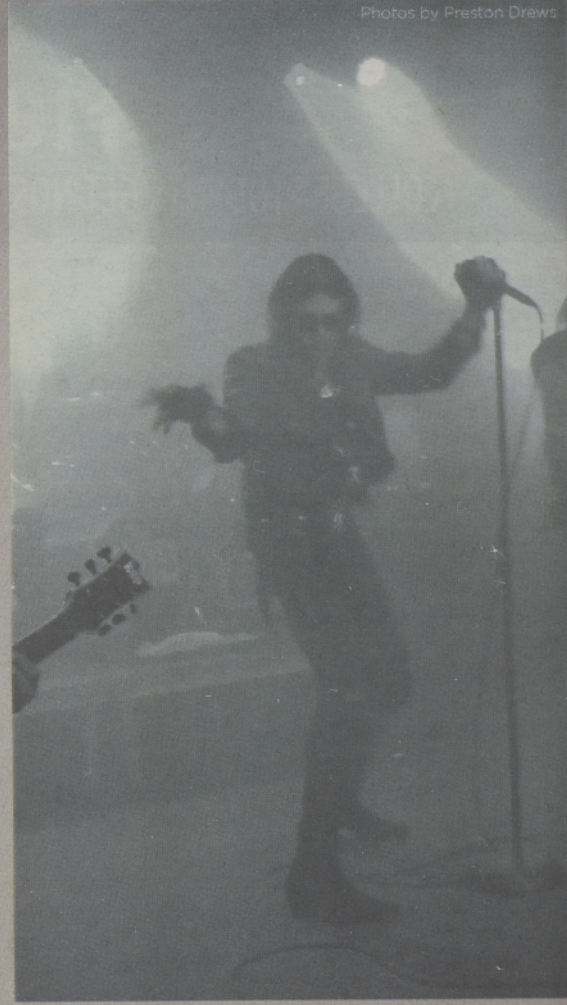
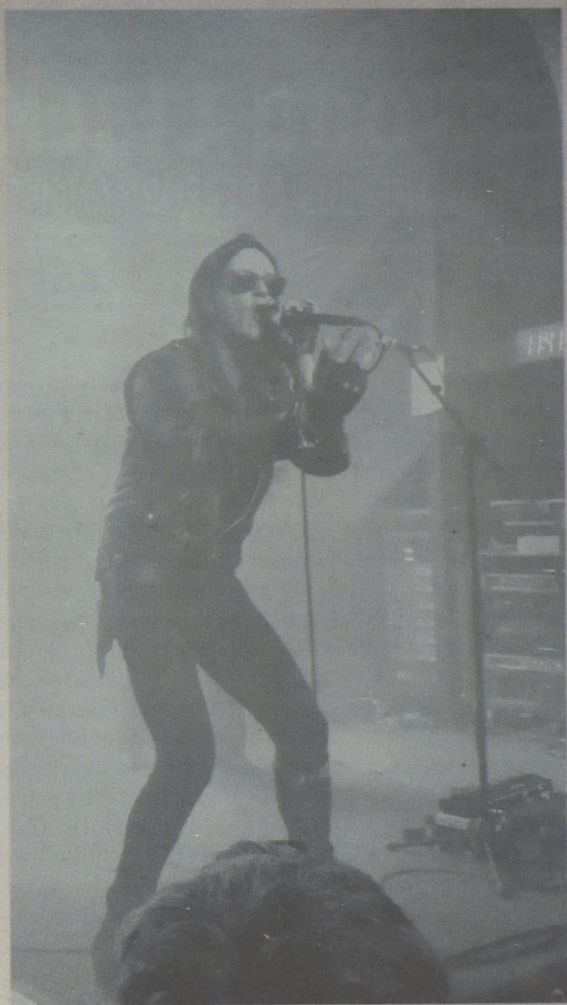
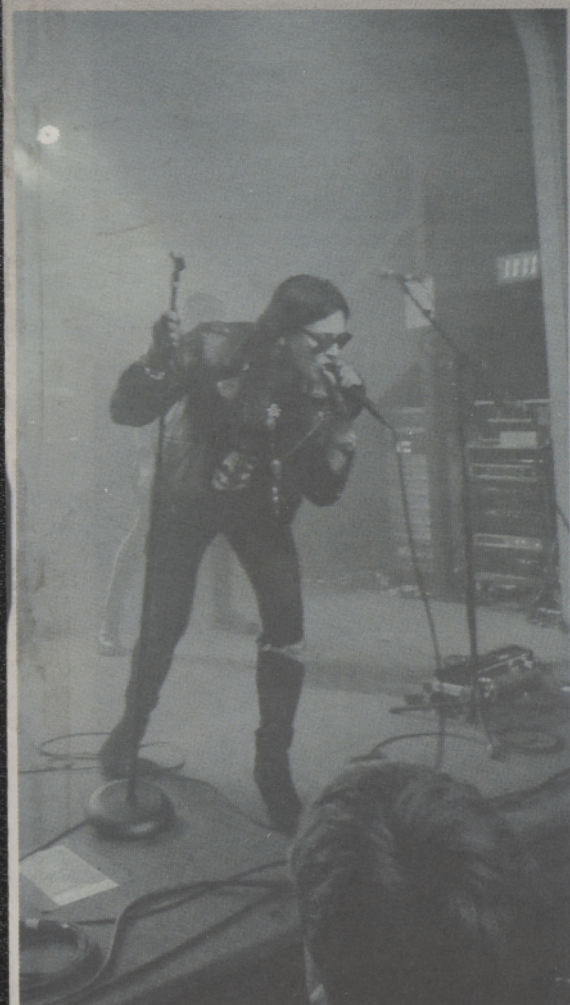


Photos by Preston Drews



curtains in front of me, and were planning to play every single song I hoped they would.

Slowly the band filtered on stage. Everyone crowded closer and I abandoned my leather jacket, already dripping sweat from the heat of the lights and the closeness of everyone. Packed shoulder to shoulder and ready to party, finally, through the smoke The 69 Eyes kicked their show off with “Devils” from their 2015 album of the same name. The crowd came alive and I couldn’t think or hear as the bass and lyrics rumbled in my chest along with my own screams.

Song after song I remained in awe of the quality performance they put on. Not a Goth Rock band, not a Goth band, and not simply a Rock band, The 69 Eyes describe themselves as a “Goth ‘n Roll” band, with a rock sound, and heavy gothic themes to their work and aesthetic; The 69 Eyes put on an electric performance and the crowd ate up song after song, shouting their love for them between tracks and transitions. Their stage and lighting wasn’t fancy and they didn’t employ costume changes or special effects at all. All there was music and it was refreshing.

Lead singer Jyrki 69 and his bandmates find inspiration in classic rock bands, and they’ve often been compared to the legendary band HIM. Very apparent is the love that Jyrki 69 has for Elvis, he himself employing a muted gothic-Elvis style wardrobe and dancing which brought the performance to another level. Women

jeered for Jyrki’s hip shaking and dancing as women did for Elvis in the 1960s and ‘70s. He’s also developed a very Elvis-esque lip curl when singing. Performing their popular single “Perfect Skin,” Jyrki 69 sang the chorus “You can’t keep me waiting forever, baby/ It’s getting hot/ Who’s going to rescue me?” unzipping his leather jacket bit by bit and from the crowd, even above the bass, you could distinctly hear the ladies’ voices explode. He might be 50 this year, but Jyrki 69 still looks as good as he did in the videos his fans know and love from the early 2000’s

Making their way down the 18-song set list, the crowd only kept getting louder, shouting lyrics back to them and clapping along to the beat. At song 15 the band walked off, waving, leaving the rest of the crowd (who hadn’t read the set list,) begging for more – they still hadn’t played their most popular song. A roadie came on stage, amping us up and encouraging us to shout for the band’s return. Shout we did. And stomp. And jump.

The 69 Eyes returned for the final three songs of the evening and the crowd, already bursting at the seams, came completely undone. Dancing, laughing, screaming and singing, the crowd devoured the last leg of the set and finally, the one song we all waited for began. The beginning of the end, “Lost Boys” ignited a new fire in us all. People pushed forward one last time and those of us up front reached toward the stage, trying our hardest to cling to the last few notes.

Just like that, it was all over. The lights went up. The band left after giving us their love and we all stood still for a fraction of a second as the lights came up. We were dazed, deaf, sweating violently and we were happy.

Filing out of the venue, tired, disheveled goths poured from the doors and onto the sidewalk for their Ubers and rides. Many concert-goers leaned on the bricks outside, removing the platform boots and heels they’d donned earlier, and hobbled down the streets to their cars barefoot. I walked up the sidewalk through the cool breeze and felt like I was underwater, unable to even hear myself speak. The ringing in my ears sang a pitch that I can only imagine is what dogs hear when humans blow dog whistles, my chest continued to vibrate as my heart thudded at an unnatural speed.

Hopping in the car I brushed my feet off and put on the comfy shoes I’d left in the trunk. Closing the door to the night and getting ready to go home, I reached my hand in my pocket for my phone – once again I found the now-squishy cheese stick and I was glad. Exhausted, elated and starving I gladly ate it and took off toward home as The 69 Eyes left for Sacramento.

Nothing beat the bittersweetness in my mouth as I drove, knowing that I’d just seen the best show of my life and not knowing when the “Helsinki Vampires” would be back in the United States again.