

Desert Drummer

Bjork's stoner rock sludgifest.

For the first half of the '90s, Seattle grunge defined a generation's worth of rock. That's a given. The dreary skies, depressed economic conditions of old industry, and dense greenery were perfect fodder for this fresh face of rock with its new forms of guitar noise and youthful angst.

Simultaneously, yet culturally and geographically disconnected, a similar sounding music grew out of Southern California's palm desert area where cacti, Joshua trees and puffy clouds dominate the view. Stoner, or desert rock, as it was called, was as important to Southern California's music scene as Grunge was to Seattle's.

One man who helped pave the way for this sludgy, psychedelic down-tuned, riff-laden music was Brant Bjork. In 1987, Bjork, along with high school buddies Josh Homme, Nick Oliveri and John Garcia began KYUSS (pronounced Ka-Yuss), and the stoner's soundtrack was forever redefined.

Tad, Mudhoney and Nirvana were great bands, Bjork explains, but the guys from KYUSS were proud not to be from the Northwest. "After 10 years, people started to understand that KYUSS was the flipside to what was going on in Seattle," Bjork says.

That flipside involved thick, droney guitar riffs that enveloped entire songs; Guitars were tuned down to create Sabbath-like melodies. Stoner rock represented a new type of Americana, pulling from '60s psychedelia in the forms of The Jimi Hendrix Experience and Iron Butterfly, as well as the motorcycle freedom rock of the '70s ala bands like Steppenwolf. It infused the combined essence of rock with what was going on in Southern California at the time: Low-riders, punk music, surf and skate culture.

After leaving KYUSS in 1994, Bjork went on to work with surfer-stoner rock band



Brant Bjork and The Bros, Vic Du Monte's Idiot Prayer

John Henry's, 9 pm
Monday, March 14 / \$5
www.johnhenrysclub.com

Fu Manchu, Oliveri's band Mondo Generator, as well as former Hole bassist Melissa Auf der Maur's solo project. In '97 and '99, he collabo-

rated with Homme on the Desert Sessions project, which essentially laid the groundwork for Homme's band Queens of the Stone Age. Creating his own music seemed to soothe his restlessness as a musician and in 1997 he released his first solo album, *Jalamanta*. In his solo work, Bjork, a drummer in the other bands he'd played in, was free to experiment and recorded all the instrumental parts on his own.

He says he doesn't regret leaving KYUSS or not following Homme to found Queens of the Stone Age. There are no hard feelings between Bjork and the other band members. But, as he explains, his solo career allows him to tap into the music that inspires him. "My solo shit is definitely my priority," he said.

Bjork will perform with his live band, The Bros. Labelmates Vic Du Monte's Idiot Prayer will open the show. **EW**

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