

# Viva Pearlene!

by Lindsay Caron



Viva La Foxx's vocals are occasionally sung, and typically screamed by Amy Combs.

**AS:** So, last summer you boys toured Europe. Tell me more.

**Bassist, Jesse:** Well, Hazen got deported ...

**AS:** (with a statement that seemed to dominate my interaction with the guys, especially moments with Hazen): What!?!

**Drummer, Hazen Frick:** Yeah. They discovered my affiliation with Al Qaeda.

**AS:** (my brow is furrowed f): What!?! Okay, so you're completely fucking with me, right?

**Jesse:** No, he was deported.

**Hazen:** For affiliation with Al Qaeda.

Okay, now my eyebrow is raised.

**Jesse:** Man, I don't think you should really put that in print, though.

**Hazen:** Two other band members are guilty of the same, but I'm the only one the feds were really on to....

I'm laughing.  
**Hazen:** It's true.  
And now my jaw is hitting the floor.

This is, after all, a band that claims on their web-site "Pearlene is not clever .... Pearlene are utterly useless as members of society." Oh yeah! And the most relevant Web site quote: "There's a story inside, some of it's even true ...." They have fun bullshitting gullible me for awhile. Eventually we get passed it.

Hazen really was deported. Something about claiming himself a musician instead of a tourist on his passport and not having a work visa ....

**AS:** So he's deported after your third gig?! What'd you guys do? Apparently, they managed to find a fill-in drummer named Nidge in a bar in Dublin.

**Jesse:** The first thing he said to me is [insert Irish accent] "I'll play drums for your band; I'm really



Photos courtesy of Viva La Foxx

Double-decker guitar action as a guest musician rides the shoulders of a friend amidst the scattered fallen mic stands, tossed beer bottles and other chaotic debris. A chick in high-heeled boots and short skirt crawling on all fours, blindly grasping random audience members as she screams, then murmurs and pants into the microphone. One bad-ass hottie rocking out on the bass wearing fishnets and four-inch heels. These visions are indicative of what you'll see - and feel - at a Pearlene/Viva La Foxx show.

Granted, this is only the second time the two have played together, and their sounds are very different from one another, yet somehow they evoke the same raucous party atmosphere. And considering the incestuous band member situation and enduring friendships of the various members, I'd bet these two will duo locally more often.

Aside from sharing a talented lead guitarist, Reuben Glaser, who additionally serves as lead vocalist/frontman for Pearlene, a history of romance and friendship bond the two musical groups. Viva La Foxx's vocals are occasionally sung, typically screamed by Glaser's long time girlfriend, Amy Combs. Viva's bassist, Danielle Bell first started plucking at the instrument while dating Pearlene's bassist, Jesse Ebaugh a few years ago. Thus, the two girls met while hanging with their respective boyfriends.

Thus, my inclination to believe that Viva La Foxx might be a lot of fluff.

They're anything but.

In particular, I expected Danielle's bass lines to be simplistic, having only played for four years, and I expected both girls to seem, well ... like Virgins to the stage, if you will. Hell no. They definitely personify the dominatrix of the stage. Danielle especially impressed with fingers flying fast and furious up her bass' neck, all the while rocking hard and heavy. Plus, her voice is fantastic. Though Amy certainly dominates vocally and controls the lyrical structure, on the (too rare) occasion when both girls hop on the mic, it's a thrill.

Then there's Pearlene's dual vocals: more like screaming in tandem. I bet they can actually harmonize - they're talented musicians. I just wish they'd intersperse proof of such ability with their unique brand of untimely, dissident, random blabber into a microphone. Let me clarify - it's a very cool technique and quite indicative of the mood they're creating, I'm just unsure if that was they're intent or if harmonies just take too much work.

Of course the greatest difference between the bands has nothing to do with gender, energy or vibe - it's strictly sound-based. Viva La Foxx is hard, edgy, structured, angry, frustrated rock, while Pearlene is hard, jammng, free-flowing, bluesy, dirty fun rock. Generally, they both rock - hard.

The last two songs of Viva's set were completely improvised. It ended with some psychedelic swirly shit from Reuben's guitar, with Amy crawling on the ground intermittently screaming/panting take me, help me down, and Danielle slamming bass strings and grabbing a drum stick to randomly strike hard at the kit, finally finding her way to the mic to repeatedly utter "what she said."

I had the pleasure of talking to the members of Viva before and after the set: the energy difference was remarkable. Two bands, seven people, interview in a very loud bar over the course of several hours as the filtered in and out, setting up, tearing down from a show. Whew! Performing is a drug and the post-show high has them spewing thoughts in my direction.

Drummer Blane Fisher on Viva, post show: *It's a fun, healthy musical project. It feels like we're reinvented every show. We'll be playing a song, and we may have rehearsed it a certain way eight million times and then we'll get up on stage and something will happen and we just go with it and take it in a totally different direction. The structure becomes totally different. Some bands you get along great with everyone and it's fun, but there's something missing. This band, it feels like the whole package. Great stage presence, good music, played well, and original songs that I love doing. They're a little punchy and hard-hitting ... I enjoy it, a lot.*



Photos

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**Reuben:** Though I have to say I've been happily surprised in this town, people really do want to go out and have a good time. That's been one good thing with this band - when we're good, people are genuinely having a good time. They're not thinking about how are we being perceived or how does this relate to me and others. Not to say that we're strictly a party band, but it's good to see that.

**AS:** Several of you seem very socially/politically aware, does this manifest much in your music, in your lyrics?

**Jessie:** There are some tracks on our second record that are political. We all have strong opinions on the way we want the world to work. I don't think our music is necessarily politically motivated, but those sorts of issues need to be addressed and music is a powerful medium for that.

That second record, by the way, is titled *Murder Blues and Prayer* on Dim-Mac Records out of LA, while their initial, self-titled release is on the Sympathy for the Record Industry label.

**AS:** So the CEAs (Cincinnati Entertainment Awards) - you guys perform, have three nominations and score the award for artist of the year. Wow!?

They don't seem as impressed as I was with their achievements that night.

**Jesse:** Yeah that was fun. It's great to be appreciated and we got to play a much different show. Playing with Jared McKinney sitting in and back-up singers ...

**Reuben:** Yeah - and my long braids. I looked like a damn butch Heidi.

The guys enjoy the comparison.  
Straight from the Web site: Pearlene hates 12 bar I-IV-V blues. Pearlene fully understands that Black Sabbath was the only white blues band that ever really mattered.  
Oh yeah.