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Hi John

Here's the Last Drive article. As of this morning, the band has not sent me the photos. I'll try to have them later today. I'm including the file as a backup. We'll talk later today. Yr bud, P

Last Drive: Athens's Own Cult Superstars Score with *Heavy Liquid*

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First, Some snappy blah-blah about our national music situation

Greece has piles of obligatory history one must digest in the course of a lifetime in order not to seem socially geeked-out or scholastically dispossessed. Its glorious past practically bursts with an endless array of world-beater philosophers, mathematicians, politicians and statesmen. If you can't at least drop a reference or two about the *Symposium* or Aristotle's square of opposition at a business lunch or your trendy neighbor's cocktail party, it is easy to become labeled as culturally devoid of funk and a social Quasimodo.

Greece also features some of the world's most beautiful touristic islands, eye-popping mountains and a practically infinite amount of mouth-watering traditional cuisine, delicious wines, jaw-dropping churches, ornately decorated monasteries and has important archeological sites up the wazoo. As far as the beaux arts department goes, painters like Dimitris Mitaras and Fassianos are represented in every modern art museum in the world. Musicians such as Mikis Theodorakis and Manos Hadzidakis are known and respected around the globe.

However, and it is a big however, when the subject of rock music comes into play, Greece is, unfortunately, critically cited near the bottom of the international slag heap.

Guys like Yanni, Demis Roussos and Vangelis Papathanassiou are not classified as rock. I'm talking about guitar-string noshing, four-on-the-floor, bone-crushing, barre chord songs played by obsessed monomaniacs that shake one's vertebrae like a handful of poker

chips and leave the listener spent after a concert. Last Drive is one of the few bands who have given Greece a reason to be proud of their own fine rock musicians.

Secret Information for Those Uninitiated with the Band

From 1983 to 1995, and since their reunion in 2007, Last Drive has been the centerpiece of the Greek rock scene, especially in the underground clubs of the Exarchia area of the city. From their beginning, they toured constantly, cut some of the best albums ever recorded in the country, and slowly developed fan club bases in Europe, the United States and Australia. Their current shows in Athens are three-hour plus extravaganzas which draw hordes of die hard rock fans to the mammoth Gagarin 205 club every Spring for several, wildly anticipated, sold-out performances.

But it's not enough to say that they're a great band and you should check them out. Every once in a while a band comes along that gives people hope. Not in the U2/Sting/Bruce Springsteen ersatz "we've all got to get together and save the planet from greedheads and snarly tyrannical despots" sense. But in the sense that you're seeing and hearing a band that simply couldn't be another kind of band; while watching them play, you understand that there is something actually *genuine* out there in the world. Bob Marley could not have been in another kind of band. Neither could the New York Dolls, Johnny Cash, Stevie Ray Vaughn or Bauhaus. Bruce Springsteen, despite his great talents, could easily play in a pricey, society wedding band. Ditto Sting, ditto U2. Maybe they do. I don't know.

The Old Scene

I come from America. I grew up listening to the radio, during a golden age when some of finest rock music ever made was everyday fare on the airwaves. From Elvis to Aerosmith, American rock music set the standard for the world. I moved to Greece in the year 2000. I soon discovered that Athens is primarily a bouzoukia town, with popular night club singers dominating the radio's airplay. Rock has always played second fiddle to bouzoukia-pop in the country. Sometimes third fiddle if you count the crowd who follow the more traditional Laikh (folk) sound.

Around 2002-2003 I began to hang out in the Exarchia area of the city and met a good number of the Athens rock crowd at places like Eight-ball tattoos, An club and After Dark club. They almost seemed like a splinter terrorist group who huddled in shadowed places and spoke in hushed tones about local bands and concerts. Rock has never been looked upon as a completely socially acceptable art form in the country. To be an open rock enthusiast was, and to a certain extent still is, like being something of a cultural outlaw.

But all the kids I talked to and became friends with agreed on one thing: Last Drive had been the savior of Greece's rock scene when they were together. Of course there were other bands around, as practically every city in the western world has a local rock scene. But Last Drive were the ones who really knew how to tear a place down, how to make people get out of themselves and shake, dance and vibrate like there's no tomorrow. The band's vinyl records were like holy relics to the kids I knew. They gathered in each other's apartments and

played them at terrifying volumes, relishing every note. When the band announced a reunion in 2007, it was nothing short of the Second Coming to the diehard local rock enthusiasts.

Heavy Liquid

In 2009 the band released their 12-song CD, *Heavy Liquid*, on their own Happy Crasher label. They still bear the standard as the country's top rock band. It is not merely that they are fine musicians, but their songwriting skills have been honed to near perfection. There are too many influences to be named in one article, but one can hear snips of James Gang, Todd Rundgren's Nazz years, early Steppenwolf, *Exile on Main Street* period Rolling Stones and Grand Funk Railroad all over the disc.

Low end, chiming background strings and tasteful power chord progressions make the introductory song "Glass of Broken Dreams," one of the best CD openers in recent memory. "Mountains" is a grinding distortion romp which features an unforgettable, pointillist, Dick Dale-esque lead played through a rolling wah-wah pedal. "Headlong to the Edge" reminds one of Grand Funk's epic "Closer to Home," while album closer, "Alabama Blues" is an epic psychedelic blowout worthy of MC5 or the legendary Stooges. All songs on the CD are winners; they never get samey or are played in the same style twice.

The New Scene

In my chat with George, Last Drive's very approachable guitarist, he told me about the current rock music situation in Athens and his band's current plans.

How do you see the Greek rock scene now?

Now is actually a good time. Young bands like Bazooka and Acid Baby Jesus are not just copying old classic rock sounds, but putting their own, new ones out there. I definitely see the scene improving.

Where do you see Last Drive's direction and sound going in the future?

Our sound, in my opinion, is currently becoming more psychedelic, and we have a new EP coming out in March, 2011. Also, we're doing a tour of Greece in the month of August, 2010. With our new label, Happy Crasher, we hope to help the current Greek scene by doing hands-on promoting and recording local bands ourselves.

How can people hear your songs or get in touch with the band?

For sure, the best way is over the Internet on our MySpace page. The address is www.myspace.com/theofficiallastdrive.