

Concert preview: Edmonton's Fuzz Kings release new EP

Garage rock new phase for vocalist Fat Dave Johnston

BY TOM MURRAY, EDMONTON JOURNAL MARCH 14, 2013



The Fuzz Kings playing March 16 at the Artery.

Photograph by: Sasha Matic, Sasha Matic

PREVIEW

The Fuzz Kings

With: The Frolics and Wafer Thin Mints

When: Saturday, March 16 at 8 p.m.

Where: [The Artery](#), 9535 Jasper Ave.

Tickets: \$10 in advance from [yeqlive.ca](#) or at the door

EDMONTON - Fat Dave Johnston just wants you to have a good time.

He really does, and in the process, the 30-year-old guitarist/vocalist for Edmonton's [Fuzz Kings](#) also

wants to have a good time. Fun is, after all, an integral component for music that was originally meant to be as ephemeral as comic books, and Johnston is a man who likes to see a party come unhinged, especially when he's leading the charge. As he sees it, Edmonton has been suffering from a serious lack of fun for a few years, and it worries him.

"It comes and goes in waves in this city," he observes. "Don't get me wrong — there are people making music for fun. Then there are those who go out to see these bands and think, 'Wow, there are lots of people at this gig, we should start a band like this.'"

As you can see, careerism as the be-all and end-all of making rock music is a bit of an issue with Johnston.

"The point for them is to be famous, not so much have fun; they sacrifice the art in the process. There are flagship examples here like Stereos, where the intention is to get big as fast as possible by any means necessary. I think it's coming back around again to the point where people are making music because they want to, not to make it big, not just to become famous."

Johnston has certainly been around long enough to see the cycles repeat. As a young, skinny pup with an ironic nickname in Black Market Inc. and The Fat Dave Crime Wave, he scorched a lot of earth with his guitar, primed on punk, southern rock and electric blues. When the Crime Wave slowed to a halt in 2009, he began digging around in acoustic blues, jazz, country and folk music as a sideman with Jake Ian & the Haymakers as well as Sherry-Lee Wisor. Johnston kept up with the hard rock in various short-lived combos, but began to feel a change in himself that likely could be traced to becoming a father.

"The Crime Wave was a tough-guy rock band and we came from a subculture of punk rockers who almost hated it when things went well," he chuckles. "It was a faux pas if you had a good childhood, a healthy relationship or a good job. If you brought home a good paycheque, well, that wasn't very punk rock of you. I figured I had to change my mind about that."

The change began to manifest itself with the Fuzz Kings, which Johnston formed in early 2012 with bassist Alex Thurgood and drummer Nathan Oullette. You can hear a lot of the music Johnston has been playing over the last decade and a half in the trio's amped-up '50s garage-rock, but mostly you can hear the sound of a man in love with life and music again.

"Things are going pretty good right now, so all of the songs I have are about my girlfriend and my little girl. I'm even doing OK with my ex-wife these days. Rock music is kind of about documenting these small things, these little things that might only take seconds in real life, and were written in 15 minutes. Mike McDonald (of Jr. Gone Wild) has written songs about sitting in traffic, waiting for a green light. That's what it's about."

The band's six-song EP, *Accentuate Everything*, is available on coloured vinyl for the release on Saturday night. It comes in a short run of 250, which is exactly how Johnston wants it.

“I don't want to lug around a thousand copies of the thing. I just want a few of them so I can show them to my kid in years to come and say ‘This is what I did, and it is possible to do it.’”

© Copyright (c) The Edmonton Journal