



In The Jungle, Baby

BY: SHAWNTÉ SALABERT

G N R Lies: Charleston's answer to the antics, music, and hair of Guns N Roses

G N' R Lies

Fri. July 22

10 p.m.

Free

Music Farm

32 Ann St.

853-3276

Cullen Baney starts to fuzzi a little looky after two shots of whiskey and a couple beers. The Upper Deck Tavern barkeep is explaining the history and strip club-filled escapades of Charleston's only Guns N' Roses tribute band, G N' R Lies, and it seems that his stories come out a bit funnier if everyone present gargles with Jack Daniels between anecdotes.

Baney is G N' R Lies' Axl Rose, complete with long wig and bandana, megawatt vocal chords and spandex — although Baney's pants have a little more real estate to cover than those of the original Axl. "You can tell my religion when I wear those pants," he laughs, as his brand-new fiancée, Molly, rolls her eyes. It's gonna be a long night.

Playing the straight guy to Baney's beer-soaked, nail-biting rambler is Aaron Levy, G N' R Lies' aptly-follicled Slash and longtime Charleston troubadour. After Baney answered a challenge from a patron at the now-defunct Horse & Cart who suggested the karaoke-hound couldn't sing, the tribute band was born and Levy wanted in. "The stuff that Slash does is so intricate," he says, while Baney smirks. "It's not easy by any means."

Over the years, the duo have been joined by a host of local musicians including Stan Gray (Grayman), Rachel Pardieck (Little Pieces), George Baerreis (Matter), and Will Eskridge (Ex-Lovers). Besides Baney and Levy, the current lineup includes Jamez Inman (Fist of Mez) as bassist Duff McKagan, Eric Rickert (ex-Skintight) as drummer Steven Adler, and Jackie Hunter (ex-Skintight) as guitarist Izzy Stradlin.

While discussing the band's lineup changes, Cullen says that he's been the only steady player and Levy can't help but interject, "I got fed up with them for a while." Turns out that this extremely low-key version of Slash made a short-lived, but dramatic leave of absence from the band after some hotel room hijinks got out of hand on a road trip.

"Aaron's unpleasant on the road," explains Baney, after puncturing a can of PBR and doing what can only be described as suckling it. In retort, Levy explains that after someone started flinging around a plunger that had been in an "occupied" toilet, he had to hightail it to the van. "I don't drink much on the road," says Levy. Baney, finished with his can in record time, mumbles, "Fuckin' prima donna."

For all of their playful bickering, the two have a lot of respect for each other and the band. "I don't know how Cullen does it," muses Levy. "He knew every Guns N' Roses song from the get-go." G N' R Lies have a set

list of close to 40 songs culled from *Appetite for Destruction*, *G N' R Lies*, and *Use Your Illusion I and II*. They try to do some pretty faithful renditions — with a few surprises.

One of those surprises walks up mid-conversation and is introduced as “Jammin’ Jacky Homegirl,” one of the band’s rotating crew of backup singers. “Last time, Axl here let me drink out of his Jack Daniels bottle,” she says, whipping out a quick anecdote. “I mean, how much more rock star can you go?”

“Yeah, then me and the audience killed it together,” Baney recalls. One of his favorite parts of performing is connecting with the audience through all available avenues. “I personally play to the front three rows,” he says. “I’m singing to them, I’m spitting on them, I’m drinking with them.”

Levy agrees that between Baney’s rock star attitude, improvising (he’ll rap on occasion, with the Fresh Prince classic “Parents Just Don’t Understand” making a brief appearance at the last show), and the band’s energy as a whole, the crowd is getting their money’s worth. “I mean, we sometimes play a full three hours and manage to keep them engaged the whole time,” he says. Baney laughs, “Yeah, but it’s funny, because we’re not really that good!”

Baney’s just being humble. After a recent performance on 98X, where DJ Amy Hutto introduced the two as Slash and Axl before they performed “Sweet Child O’ Mine,” two people later asked for ticket refunds at the *G N’ R Lies* show at the Music Farm, believing they were there to see the real thing after hearing the radio performance.

“I have people yelling my real name, but there’s more people yelling, ‘Axl!’” says a pretty-pleased Baney. Levy offers his own near-rock star encounter. “I had a guy ask me to sign a drumstick one time — and I don’t even play drums.”

Guns n Roses	vs	GNR Lies
Favored head gear:		
Giant top hat, bandana		Wig, Citadel cap
Appetite for:		
Destruction		Jack Daniels
Favorite symbols:		
Guns, roses		Sabian, Zildjian (“oh... <i>symbols</i> ”)
Bad hair move:		
Axl’s tiny braids		Eric Rickert’s mullet
Spend most days:		
Hungover, recording songs		Drinking, golfing
Key visual:		
Stephanie Seymour		Cullen Baney’s crotch in spandex