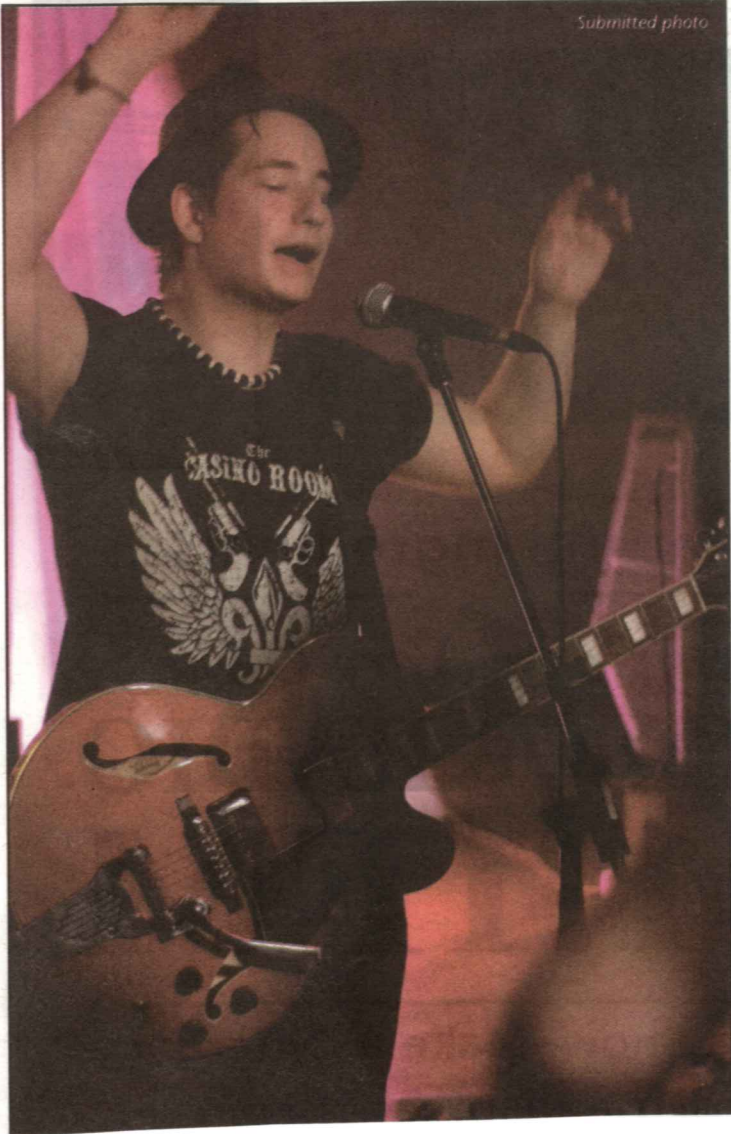


Submitted photo



Chris Naish

Dirty blues from the garage

By Hamish MacLean
SUMMIT UP STAFF

Chris Naish has earned a reputation as someone who works to get noticed. Calgary radio shows and TV stations have reported being swamped by emails from an active grassroots campaign to get him some airtime.

"In the past, the way you'd promote yourself was different," Naish said. "Now that everything's digitized, you've got to keep abreast."

And it's paid off: he is being heard.

"I was emailing people as they were coming through Alberta," Naish explained. "I emailed 'anybody' who was coming through — I even emailed Bob Dylan — I emailed the Pogues because they might be doing a tour as well and I emailed Henry Rollins about his spoken word tour and he said that he wasn't having any openers for it, but he thought it was really cool that I asked him. So, I said, 'You want to take a listen to 'Sleep When You're Dead' (a track of his recently released EP "Never Stop") and tell me what you think?'"

Getting words of support from a punk icon is one thing, the relentless promotion that Naish does for himself is the other. Persistence has paid off for Naish, getting music on commercial radio's indie play lists, getting airtime on TV, but it is something that he's used to.

Naish said that he is in a constant battle. Depression is something that he will face throughout life. And it is reflected in some of his songs, like "Sleep When You're Dead."

"Sometimes depression keeps you up at night: it's something that you've got to battle. That song is basically saying, 'I'm going to keep battling it and I'm going to relax when it's dead.'"

Naish draws inspiration from bluesmen. T-Model Ford is one that he said he admires, and really, so are many of the artists in the Fat Possum Records lineup. And Naish, with his newly formed band Chris Naish and the Wasted Nights, follows in the punk blues vein that that label has been championing for over a decade.

"I got started in high school playing punk and then I switched

over to blues," Naish said. "And you can either do blues or you can't and just straightforward blues isn't me. The main thing that we do is just garage punk — that's very heavily influenced by the blues."

The punk standard do-it-yourself attitude is also something that has been noticed over his three years as a folk artist and in his new incarnation with the Wasted Nights, but it's not something that Naish ever went looking for.

"If you're trying to do something super-polished on a low budget, it just sounds awful," he said. "I like it when you can hear the nuts and bolts of everything. You get an unvarnished thing."

The Calgary Herald called him a "lo-fi success" in December 2007, but Naish said that his lo-fi sound comes more from necessity than design. He said that the songs that he's writing now lend themselves to the rough sound that production on the cheap creates. But he's just in it to get it done. And it sounds like he won't stop until it is.

Chris Naish and the Wasted Nights play at the Rose & Crown in Banff, Sunday, Jan. 11.