

The Dirty Knobs at SOhO

By Ryan
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Musical Powerhouses Bring Side Project to Town May 23

This weekend you won't have to look far to find a killer band. On Saturday, May 23, SOhO will be hosting The Dirty Knobs, a band formed by some of the most well-respected, prolific musicians of the past 40 years, including Mike Campbell, lead guitarist for Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers. The Dirty Knobs tend to keep an illusive profile, but The Independent was fortunate enough to interview the Campbell, who is the group's guitarist and vocalist, about his ripping band and their upcoming show.

Campbell had a very down to earth and resolute tone about him. It was evident that his years of playing as one of the best had given him some ultimate wisdom. Campbell stressed that The Dirty Knobs play their music for pure musical experimentation and spiritual enjoyment, he elaborated: "The band is definitely family because it's about having fun together...We love to do it, so we've gotten really close."

The band's under the radar vibe and familial comradery even extends to their swampy nicknames. "In the Knobs we kind of use nicknames. They call me Gator; we call Jason Sinay, Ape; the drummer's name is [Matt Laug] Swampbox; and the bass player, Lance, we call him Crawdaddy," said Campbell. "These are really great musician's; they do other things outside the Knobs." Campbell and his band mates have played separately with other projects that pack stadiums across the world, but playing in more personal spaces with the Dirty Knobs brings them back to their roots, Campbell said. "The music is why we play in intimate spaces, there is an intimacy in the small venues where you're real close to the people and everybody can hear the same thing at the same time. It's just really fun for me to be in that setting, with no pressure to play any hits or anything like that—we just have a ball with it, it's a total joy really, it brings me back to why I started to be a musician.

"The cool thing about the Knobs is that every gig, things happen that weren't scripted, musically, we were just tuned into this moment and we did it together and its very rewarding...You know, I always give 100 percent and we love it. For us it's like our church, it's where we worship whatever higher power there might be, with our music and sharing it with each other and a room with people listening, it's the best thing there is."

Campbell's impeccable guitar skills never relinquish from perfection in its tone and flow. And his eclectic guitar collection combined with a minimal, but elite pedal board and his stacked vintage fender amps achieve clean and distorted sounds that have supreme body and warmth. "We're a bit grungy, we have a lot of guitar stretching out and we're a bit spontaneous and there is some improvisation here and there," Campbell said. "If I had to compare the Knobs to something else its kind of like the Yardbirds, bluesy based sound."

Santa Barbara is blessed that these rock legends have chosen this city as their safe haven from larger venues and SOhO happens to be one of the band's favorite places to vibe out. "I don't know what it was but we just had a really magic groove the last night we played there...SOhO is the first club we ever played. We wanted to get away from L.A.; it's kind of like our home in a way, we always have a good audience and it's a really good sounding room, nice people that run it, too."

Come see the undercover idols this Saturday. Their unparalleled tone and groove is something that you don't want to miss.

411: The Dirty Knobs play Saturday, May 23, at SOhO (1221 State St.) Call 962-7776 for more information.

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