



an interview with...

the riverboat gamblers

by Travis Gatsull

Freddy Castro (Fadi El-Assad), guitarist for The Riverboat Gamblers, shows up several hours late for our interview and with good reason. Their practice space flooded after a fire leveled a hip-hop club next door. "I've been wading through water all day. We moved our instruments into the street, reporters showed up and we've been searching for a place to put our gear all day. We loaded up our trailer and just left it there," Freddy says as he sits down to a drink. Minutes into the conversation Freddy's cell phone rings and it's his mother telling him he's on the 9 o'clock news. I ask him if he plugged the band. "They asked us who we were and all our gear has our name stenciled on it. It won't be hard to tell who we are."

Generally, things haven't been this unlucky for The Riverboat Gamblers. They spent most of 2005 touring and playing on The Warped Tour and this year is already heavily booked with dates and destinations, including Europe in the fall. The Riverboat Gamblers have been very busy. It's taken nine years of dedication and constant touring to put them into the position they are now, and they aren't doing bad at all. They've recently inked a deal with Volcom Entertainment, got sponsored by Puma, have a song on the new Tony Hawk game and are set to release their fourth album, *To the Confusion of Our Enemies* (a line lifted from a Sinatra toast) in April.

The Crutch: So I've gotta ask. Is music your full time job now? I mean, are you making enough money to simply play music?

Freddy Castro: No, but if we could eat skateboards and shoes, we'd be fine. We got a little money from the Tony Hawk deal and do alright when we're touring, but when we stop and come back to Austin we have to get jobs like everyone else. I don't even have a car. They take care of us on The Warped Tour though.

How is the Warped Tour?

FC: It's good. At first it seemed the crowd was either completely into us or we were just there as a background band. As the tour went on people became more familiar with us and kids actually knew our songs. The best thing is that we get to share the stage with bands we love. Last year we played with Valient Thorr from North Carolina. They're great, they actually make me excited about music again.

What other bands have you been listening to? Or if you had a radio show who would you play?

FC: Oh, that's easy. I'd start with Dillinger 4, then The Breifs, Valient Thorr and go into some Complete Control. I really like Complete Control.

No Turbonegro? I understand you guys were really influenced by them.

FC: Completely, and yeah, I'd play them too. When I was 19, Turbonegro released *Apocalypse Dudes* and I listened to it 12 times the first day. It was definitely an influence.

At your last show you played a song off the new album called, *The Curse of the Ivory Coast*,

and you dedicated it to your father. I understand he recently passed away. Do you feel like telling me about that?

FC: Well, I grew up all over, and at one point we were living on the Ivory Coast in West Africa, and my father had an altercation with a man. The man said he was going to put a curse on my father, and even though we moved, it was always in the back of our minds. 20 years later my father, dies suddenly, and that's the only thing I can attribute it to. It's very strange. So yeah, the song is about that.

Other than that, how is this album gonna be different?

FC: Well, this time we went into the studio to make a studio record. We're more confident, the lyrics are more honest and we haven't toned down our language or sound like a lot of bands would. Personally, I always try to make a record that leaves a mark. I want us to be a band that people refer to and draw from. I mean don't get me wrong, I want to sell records. I'm just like everyone in that I need to put food on the table.

Is *To the Confusion of Our Enemies* that album?

FC: I hope so, but really, you'll have to tell me.

The Riverboat Gamblers will be touring the west coast with The Horrorpops starting February 23rd in Tempe. 🎵

theriverboatgamblers.com