

Get a Helmet.

When Oakland metal veterans Totimoshi step onstage at Slim's this week, they'll likely be sporting some long-deserved new threads from Southern California action-sports clothing label Volcom. The publicly traded clothier recently signed Totimoshi to a two-album deal. It also bought out the band's late-'06 album

**BY
DAVID
DOWNS**

Ladrón, which it plans to rerelease, and is providing monthly cash infusions to keep the ten-year-old trio on the road.

Looting the Volcom warehouse of skateboard hoodies, jackets, pants, and T-shirts sure beats the band's old way of doing business, says Totimoshi singer and guitarist Antonio Aguilar. Much of the band's career has involved quitting day jobs, piling into a soon-to-be-stolen van, and slogging it out on tour with nothing awaiting its return to the East Bay.

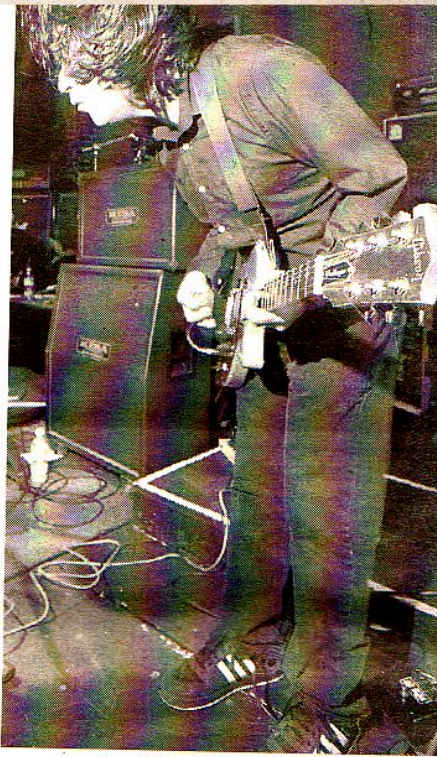
Though it sounds like Japanese psych, "Totimoshi" is family jargon, meaning "an attempt at communication, no matter how bad the tools at hand." When his Spanish-speaking grandmother tried to speak English, Aguilar's mom called it "Totimoshi."

This idea of communication by any means necessary, not to mention the Beat generation's ethos of life on the road, inspired the native of Tehachapi, California, to move up to the Bay Area in the early '90s. Aguilar met bassist and eventual wife Meg Castellanos while living in Oakland, and the two now live in Alameda after one too many burglaries and hassles from life around Telegraph and 43rd Street. With the help of eight different drummers, the band has released three pummeling albums in the vein of past tour partners Mastodon, the Melvins, High on Fire, and its current tour headliner Helmet.

"We're similar to the Melvins because of the heavy guitar sound and the tempo, and we're close to Mastodon in terms of their slant towards weird, progressive guitar vibe," Aguilar says. Totimoshi actually lived with High on Fire during that band's earlier days before hooking up with Helmet. Frontman Page Hamilton trimmed the fat, fixed the guitar tones, and took the marbles out of Aguilar's mouth as producer on *Ladrón*.

"Meg always said, 'You need to articulate better,'" the Totimoshi singer explains, "but Page actually came in and showed me physically a way of adjusting my mouth to articulate. It was hard to do at first, mechanically. It's not natural, but there is a method to it and I'm doing it way better."

The band's Volcom rerelease of *Ladrón* ("thief" in Spanish) will be sold



Totimoshi's Antonio Aguilar rocks out.

through the Alternative Distribution Alliance, and the scrappy Oakland band will enjoy a broader market through iTunes and other channels. The gearseller-slash-label also will release a seven-inch featuring *Ladrón's* instrumental hit "Viva Zapata," which hammers and squeals with the help of Aguilar's cheap '83 Gibson Challenger guitar and its ceramic humbucker pickups. Aguilar says Totimoshi already has three-quarters of a new album ready to record before its South by Southwest shows in March and follow-up appearance at the SXSW protest event, Fuck You.

Chris Irizarry, the band's eighth drummer, seems content with its latest stab at a career, even if his seven predecessors couldn't hang. "It's just tough touring, and it's rough living that lifestyle — coming home with no money and losing your job," Aguilar explains. "Sometimes people grow older and they just want a more solid foundation in their life. Me and Meg are just two peas in a pod. We love traveling. We love throwing our lives up in the air."

So we've got an innovative metal band with a Latin background and revolutionary themes. When are they going to tour with the Mars Volta? "Anytime they invite us," Aguilar replies. "We'll travel the seven seas with them."

Volta, make it so. ■

Totimoshi joins Helmet on Wednesday, January 17 at Slim's in SF. 9 p.m., \$17. The band returns to the East Bay on Sun., Feb. 3, playing 21 Grand with Triclops, Gracyeon, and Atomic Bomb Audition. Slims-SF.com and 21Grand.org

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