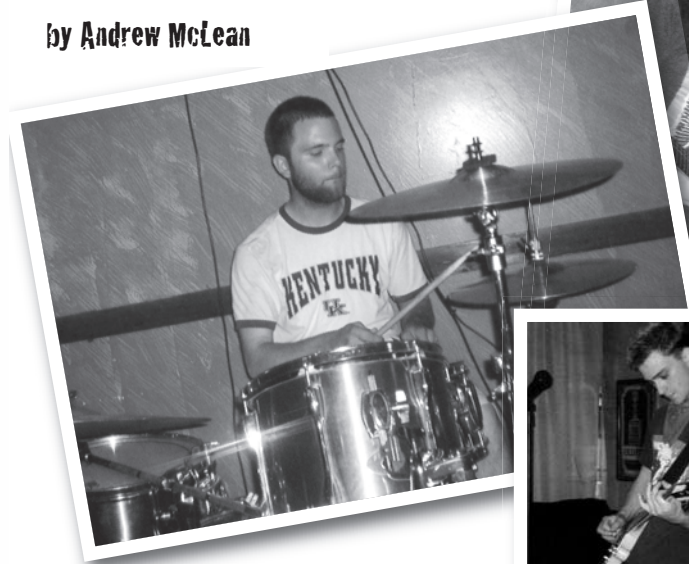


# The mini-famous tale of Alex Franklin and the Plasmatonics

by Andrew McLean



Of the three ingredients for success – natural born talent, hard work and luck – I think musicians particularly struggle with luck.

It is difficult, and often impossible, to get signed to a label.

Luck can be regarded as cruel and often is the cause for much jealousy.

Luck can change anybody's life around from struggling and poor to rich and famous. However, not all musicians seek famous and fortune.

Some write or play music just for fun. Some create music just to hear by themselves. And some, just want to express feelings that they were having.

If you have been to Alex Franklin's house, you

know exactly what I am talking about. Alex is the singer

and guitarist for a local rock band called the Plasmatonics. Other members are George and Mike.

The best way to describe the Plasmatonics is calling the group a band that neighbors hate. The guitar is run through several homemade or tweaked distortion pedals, one of which can catch the frequencies of Boeing 747 jets flying high in the air.

The sound of the guitar has been carefully crafted to Alex's exact specifications – all the treble and very little middle or bass, creating a very high-ended sound.

He plays a Gibson that he hand-picked to capture the ghosts of the rock and punk sounds of old.

George's bass thumps so hard that your heart hurts.

This is a fierce contrast to the guitar sound. The bass often takes over the basic integrity of the song as Alex plays a solo that he has been perfecting for



several years.

Mike often has to compete with the two on the drums, making an ear piercing "pop" sound making your ears ring for a week after hearing them.

The most unusual part of the band is the lyrics.

Nothing dark at all, almost all of it is about suburban living and the difficulties that entail of being in a suburban middle class neighborhood. Often about love, the written words of the band lead the music to often be described as pop or power-pop and upbeat rock music.

The Plasmatonics have not been signed to a label. Instead, they thrive on the ability to create music without having a record company's pressure to produce hits that will make everybody rich.

Band members don't have any shirts publicizing the bands name, but they do hand out demos for free if you ask for them.

They are "mini-famous," although it is difficult to come up with a specific definition for what is best left said as content with their own sound.

I remember in high school when the band was considered just a concept. Rumors spread about which bands were going to be playing in the battle of the bands hosted by Glenbard South High School.

Although Alex and I were not close in middle school, we walked around in gym class with a music catalog, and talked about the guitar. He is who convinced me to get my first one.

Alex was regarded around school as "the guy who plays guitar." To me he was a guitar legend.

After listening to him, you can only be amazed at the raw talent he shows in the quick movement and careful finger placement.

Plasmatonics got a quick following from playing in the battle of the bands. At the time I wanted to be a

professional music producer, so naturally I was glued to helping the band.

They gave me a shot at recording their second demo, regarded now as the "McLean Sessions." After two Saturdays and a complete mess of instrument cables and microphones, often called "trip-wire," the demo was finished, and the songs on their MySpace site were replaced by the "Sessions."

They played a few shows since then, including twice at the yearly high school party known as BradyPalooza located at the venue known as Brady's house.

They have played at Doug's Place, and recently at The Oasis. To this day, I have only missed two of their performances.

The mini-famous Plasmatonics enjoy the small amount of publicity soci-

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ety allows them. Their followers are fanatics but don't number in the thousands or even hundreds.

Regardless of whether their CD not found at Best Buy, the Plasmatonics are best friends who plan to grow old and play together a good long time. Their friends feel like rock stars just for being there.

Alex Franklin himself says, "We just want to continue making music that we love and enjoy, and hopefully we pick up a few fans along the way."