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MUSIC NOISE ▾

LOUD: Sin City meets music city

Vegas bands invade South by Southwest

By [Cathe Jones](#)

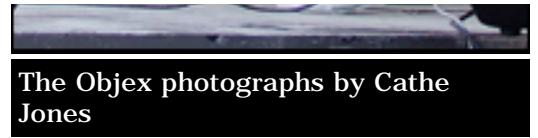
Local piano wiz Mike Jones (Las Vegas Weekly, September 21, 2006) participated in the prestigious South by Southwest Music Conference this year. His wife, musician and writer Cathe Jones, went along and filed this dispatch.

Austin, Texas, is the self-proclaimed live music capital of the world. One of the first shows I got to hear was Las Vegas' own The Pandas (myspace.com/the pandas). Although they got put in a club 15 blocks from the convention center, they did manage to bring in some appreciative listeners.

The Pandas sound a lot like early Jefferson Airplane, but with more heart. There's a soothing, Donovan feel to the music, and yet there is an edge under it. Maybe it's the beautiful woman, Jade, tapping at the tambourine, making no attempt to do anything but remain stunningly enchanting. Maybe it's the warmth of the earthy bass guitarist and vocalist, Louise, or Bobby, the lead guitarist and vocalist in his gothic, Manchester-meets-punk look.

They deserved a bigger crowd. Instead, at the start there were a few confused white boys, a couple of reporters and supportive friends from other bands and places The Pandas have toured. But by midset, women started to pour in from the other side of Sixth Street, as if summoned by the strength of Louise's cry during "Baby Come Home". Throughout the sensual "Alone", the voices onstage were joined by those off. I wish I had made it to their second show, which was during my husband's set. I understand it was amazing. They'll be household names someday, and I'm sure my friends will be talking about seeing them in LA and in other venues around the country.





The Objex photographs by Cathe Jones

My husband, Mike (jonesjazz.com), began playing his 40-minute set in the Elephant Room, just off of the main Sixth Street action. I'm not really able to review him, since I'm married to the man, but I will say by the third song the room was packed. By the fourth song, we had a record label sitting at our table offering him a contract. That, to me, seemed like a successful set. As soon as he was done, he headed back home to the Rio, where he works his regular gig, opening for Penn & Teller.

I didn't get much time to miss him--soon it was time to hear The Objex (myspace.com/theobjex). They weren't officially on the SXSW schedule; it seems that for all their talent, personality and charisma, they were just too new a band to get in under the deadline. So, they did something better--they booked in venues around SXSW events, from a place called Bikinis to a record store to a bar called Fuel, which was a noon show on Saturday, just off of Sixth Street. That's where I met them.

Joe Perv ran up to me, bouncing with energy from an encounter the night before. They'd run into music hero, former MTV VJ and diehard audiophile Matt Pinfield. He'd caught sight of the bubbling, bouncing band standing around near a TV shoot--"it's hard to miss Felony Melanie, a black woman sporting an 18-inch mohawk and a corset, surrounded by spiked-haired, cherub-faced guitarist Jim Nasty, drummer Joe Perv and coyly cute, ass-kicking, bass-playing Aly Two Times. Pinfield finished his taping and grabbed their CD, opening it right there and listening.

The Objex are infectious like that, luring everyone into their punk-fundom. The crowd, as sparse as it was for a sleepy Saturday, was roused by Melanie, who raced up and down streets in her tightest of miniskirts, telling people, "Come up to Fuel, we're going to kick some punk ass! Come on up, the show is about to *start*." And people started coming by, all kinds and colors.

Her energy and *here-I-am* attitude reminded me of Wendy O. Williams. It was as if I was back in Boston in 1977, going to the Rat--that same love for music that involved expressing all your emotions with every ounce of your being. That's the kind of energy put out by The Objex. There isn't a camera that can take a single shot of it. Melanie is a living can of Red Bull--at one point, she jumped down into the dirt, off the stage, and played with audience members. Some bands make this a frightening or schmaltzy experience. The Objex make the interaction a grateful release.

Too soon it was time for the closing number: Tina Turner's version of "Proud Mary".-- Only more powerful. If Ms. T. had 45 cups of Turkish coffee the morning she recorded, she might have put out the effort that exploded on the platform stage outside of that club in Austin. There was almost a fire, I swear. When Sin City comes to town, it doesn't come quietly.