

Indecision's Great Road

jam pioneers return with a new album

Back in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Virginia's Indecision was at the forefront of a movement that hadn't really started moving yet.

Along with Widespread Panic, Beanland, the Grapes and others, Indecision blazed across the east coast and the South with a sound that focused on grooves and improvisation while ignoring the souless pop that was big on the airwaves.

Though many of their counterparts relied on blues based rock 'n' roll as their springboard, Indecision had a decidedly jazz-like bent, with strong songwriting smoothed over by easy harmonies and delicate grooves. With this melodic, Steely Dan-styled sound, Indecision helped define the Virginia Rock sound that was later, and more famously, tread by folks like The Dave Matthews Band.

The band—including guitarist Aaron Evans, guitarist David Ibbeken, bassist Shawn McCrystal and drummer Craig Dougald—had been playing together since high school. They officially became Indecision in 1983 in Charlottesville, Va. Indecision released their self-titled debut album (on vinyl only) in 1986.

Built on the strength of guitarist Evans' songwriting they quickly gained notariety. It was their follow-up, *Ponder Yonder*, (released in that brand-spanking-new format-for-the-future called compact disc) that served as the catalyst for greater things. "She Ain't No Betty," "Song of the Itinerant Bible Salesman" and the instrumental title track became the standards that helped the Indecision fan base swell in the late 1980s and into the '90s.

Following the success of *Ponder Yonder*, the band added acoustic guitarist, vocalist and songwriter Chris White.



Indecision, Bonnaroo 2003: Aaron Evans (Guitar, Vocals); Chris White (Acoustic Guitar, Vocals); David Ibbeken (Guitar, Vocals); Craig Dougald (Drums); Doug Wanamaker (Keyboards); Shawn McCrystal (Bass).

They released *Reservoir* in 1993, followed by their biggest tour ever.

Then they called it quits.

By 1993 the HORDE (Horizons of Rock Developing Everywhere) tour was in its second year. It had begun as a way for Widespread Panic, Phish and Blues Traveler to join together in order to play amphitheaters. In its second year, the list of participants was enlarged and included folks like Athens' Allgood and a little band from Charlottesville, Va. called the The Dave Matthews Band. Alas, Indecision had called it quits just as the flashpoint was flashing.

Partly it was because the band couldn't find a record deal. "We had been sharing the stage with acts like Phish, Widespread Panic and Dave Matthews and thought things were going pretty well," says Ibbeken. "But we were really having a tough time getting any record A&R guys to bite at a time when these other groups were being signed. We had some frustration and it became less fun to go out on the road for two to four weeks at a time."

Since that time, the band has per-

formed a few dates a year, including a performance at Bonnaroo in 2003. In 1996, they released a live CD called *Live From the Chameleon Club*. During those intervening years, more songs bubbled up. Some of those, and more, are captured on the bands' new CD *The Great Road*. It's their first studio release since *Reservoir* in 1993...more than 10 years ago.

It finds the band in vintage form, as if they never paused at all; a classic blast from the past that sounds fresh for the future.

Says Ibbeken: "I think the silver lining was that we were able to part as friends thereby enabling us to come back together as friends and continue what we started....Playing less than full time takes some of the pressure off, which can definitely help with creativity and the overall level of fun. Chemistry is everything. I think we are better musicians now and playing together is second nature. We hit our 20-year anniversary in 2004 and we intend to play as long as we can stay alive."

—Tom Speed