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2/13/07, 3:36 pm EST

All Fillers, No Killers: A Novice's Guide to Tribute Bands



We blame Elvis.

The inimitable King was, well, imitated thousands of times, creating a cottage industry of Elvis impersonators who paved the way for faux Marilyn Monroes, fake Barbra Streisands, etc. ad infinitum. Now we can add the Killers to the list of musicians deemed worthy of mimicry. That's right, folks... coming to Jesus College in sunny Cambridge U.K., we present you with ... [the Fillers!](#) These simu-Killers have actually recorded Brandon Flowers and Co.'s songs in the studio, creating what may well be the least original demo tape ever. Still, there is an art to the practice of aping other people's music.

First, a distinction must be made between a "covers" band and a "tribute" band. A covers band is an outfit that is, in general, responsible for filling your local tavern with the sweet strains of

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"Livin' on a Prayer" and "Pour Some Sugar on Me" every Friday night. It has one job: to play other bands' songs and keep the party going. Quality is not the primary consideration here. There are some cover bands that break the mold, like Nouvelle Vague and lounge lizard Richard Cheese, but in general, cover bands tend to entertain delusions of grandeur, relying on the tried-and-true musical stylings of Foreigner and the like to break into the music biz. Then there are the tribute bands. In essence, tribute bands have the utmost respect for the groups they decide to cover and believe faithful renderings of their chosen artists' catalogues to be the most reverential form of worship. These bands think that bringing the music of, say, Dokken, to a small venue in towns like Urbandale, Iowa is tantamount to a public service. Sure, there may be some hidden dreams of fame and fortune buried beneath the barrel chests of these grizzled brave hearts, but that certainly isn't their goal.

And then there's a sub-set of tribute band that aims to interpret the music of its forerunners with an infusion of panache and downright kitsch, thereby earning a following all its own. Throughout the years, these particular types of tribute bands have multiplied like Tribbles. Among our favorites:

THE MACHINE — This Pink Floyd tribute band earned the right to use all caps when spelling out its name, and in the tribute band netherworld, that means something, dammit! These guys take the true PF live sound (which has been extinct for 25 years) and reinterprets it, often improvising lengthy soundscapes in trademark Floyd style. Even *The Wall* producer Bob Ezrin has said, "These guys are great."

Mini Kiss — True to their name, the members of this KISS tribute band are comprised entirely of "little people." So they don't play their own instruments and they perform over pre-recorded tracks. But who cares? Like the band that inspired it, Mini Kiss is more about [the spectacle](#) than the music itself.

Mandonna and Lez Zeppelin — Break out your Women's Studies notes. The basic idea here is that members of the tribute band reverse the sex of the original performers to give the music a perspective from the opposite gender. Other bands worth mentioning are Cheap Chick (Cheap Trick), AC/DShe (AC/DC), and that band that plays "Total Eclipse of the Heart" in the film *Old School*. They rock.

Gabba — This band merges the melodies of ABBA with the garage aesthetics of the Ramones. Their approach to ABBA's music is so unique, they've actually cut three studio albums that capture their live offerings.

The Dark Star Orchestra — Quite possibly the most talented and accomplished tribute band out there, these Grateful Dead fanatics take actual Dead set lists from any given year and perform the exact set onstage, but with their own improvisation and technique. They're so good, half of Phish performed with them for a show in 1998. DSO plays roughly 200 shows a year, so they've definitely mastered their inspiration's vagabond nature.

There are hundreds more, so tell us which one you guys love. While you're at it, let us know about the bands that haven't yet been covered (or, uh, tributed), but deserve to be. If you ask us, we'd love to see a Little Feat cover band with all the members over seven feet tall, or Ryan Adams playing the Strokes. Oh wait...

-- Daniel Kreps

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Comments

Mike T. | 3/10/2007, 12:36 am EST

Itchy Fish - are they still around? I went and saw them 10+ times they rocked in New England!

floydianslip | 2/28/2007, 1:01 pm EST

THE MACHINE!!!!No argument.

Chef M. | 2/25/2007, 1:58 pm EST

Have Band, Will Travel...Daniel, believe it or not, we're Dixie Chicken (A Tribute to Little Feat), and we just played the Pitcher House in Hermosa Beach, CA(www.pitcherhouse.com). We're not 7 feet tall though!

Mary J D | 2/18/2007, 2:24 am EST

Smiths/Morrissey tribute band SWEET AND TENDER HOOLIGANS

DomL | 2/15/2007, 4:40 pm EST

I have been to see the Machine like 50 times and never get tired of them. Aussie Floyd is great but the machine is more intimate the really touch your soul.

John Cleoni | 2/15/2007, 1:30 pm EST

Brain Damage - Pink Floyd tribute out of New Jersey...amazing. If you get chance to see them I highly recommend it.

<http://www.braindamageband.com>

<http://www.myspace.com/braindamage>

Andy | 2/15/2007, 5:46 am EST

The Toxic Twins: Aerosmith Tribute

Bons Balls: AC/DC tribute

UK Guns N' Roses

Loose your illusion (UK Gnr Tribute)

Gunz N' Rozes

Stereotronics

Letz zep

Limehouse Lizzy: Thin lizzy tribute, absolutly awesome!

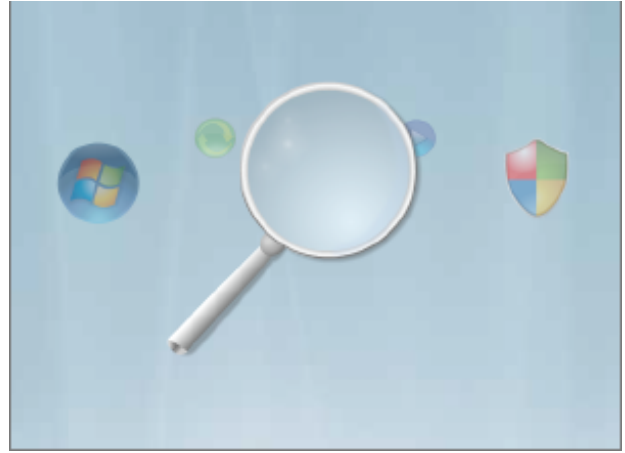
Chollins | 2/15/2007, 3:34 am EST

Bjorn Again - an Aussie ABBA tribute band that not only perform perfectly on stage but even fake the accents and rivalries in the band when doing press interviews.

BabaO'Really. | 2/14/2007, 7:47 pm EST

in LOUISVILLE KENTUCKY, every MemorialDay Weekend, a little thing called "ABBEY ROAD ON THE RIVER" (.com and yer there).. Me wife and I were absolutely stunned.(HER: we were stunned).. 55 Beatles tribute bands of every stripe. My fav was the YELLOW SUBMORONS a freakin RUTLES TRIBUTE BAND!!!! YES, they did "Cheese and Onions". Neil Innes would be smacked proud. ...and who was the chick with the "Blame Yoko" T-shirt? She was WAY HOT but, WRONG.

beatallibanger | 2/14/2007, 5:02 pm EST



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Check out beatallica...Milwaukee's Beatles/Metallica hybrid
www.beatallica.org

phil | 2/14/2007, 3:56 pm EST

The Iron Maidens (all chick Iron Maiden T.B.)
www.theironmaidens.com/

Izorpo | 2/14/2007, 2:54 pm EST

No mention of Me First and the Gimie Gimmes?!

Taltos1667 | 2/14/2007, 1:21 pm EST

Kingston, Ontario, home of The Tragically Hip, had a great Stones cover band in the late 1970s called the Blushing Brides. They later had a minor hit with What You Talkin' About.

Jimmy | 2/14/2007, 1:09 pm EST

ZOSO - a really good Led Zeppelin Tribute band

blah | 2/14/2007, 12:19 pm EST

Mr. Brownstone-G n R cover band that broke up in 2006. Sean Greenhalgh, the drummer from Clap Your Hands Say Yeah, was Axl. Dead on sound.

MelvinVanNebula | 2/14/2007, 12:04 pm EST

Zepparella
Atomic Punks with old guitar player

Mike | 2/14/2007, 11:52 am EST

Itchy Fish.

Unbelievable Pearl Jam cover band. Close your eyes and you'd swear you were listening to Eddie Vedder.

DeadHorse (to Tyson) | 2/14/2007, 11:43 am EST

I have seen them twice in concert Tyson, 02' Cleveland and Columbus. They are talented musicians with a circus clown as their ringleader. I'll take the original lineup anyway

music_guru | 2/14/2007, 11:40 am EST

Atomic Punks, the Van Halen tribute band- does VH better than Eddie.

Strutter, Kiss tribute- Gene dead on look-a-like and Paul, dead on voice even when talking to the crowd. (keep the make up on though they're getting older)

zeberifo | 2/14/2007, 10:01 am EST

The Surrogate Band is a 7 piece Pink Floyd tribute based out of Michigan.
They pride themselves on deep cuts and performances of actual setlists from Floyd's live days (much like the concept of DSO). Authenticity in sound effects, instruments, tones, vocals, etc are emphasized.
www.thesurrogateband.com

RickStark79 | 2/14/2007, 8:42 am EST

Wingsband! A fantastic McCartney & Wings cover band out of Cali. Horn section and everything.

Atom Heart Father | 2/14/2007, 8:41 am EST

I have been to lots of tribute shows, most being very talented.

Pink Floyd tribute bands that I have seen;

1-The Machine

2-The Australian Pink Floyd Show

3-Several Species

4-The Pink Floyd Experience

5-Brain Damage

Genesis tribute bands that I have seen;

1-The Musical Box (incredible)

2-The Waiting Room

there are tons more. Go to www.tribute-band.com and plug in the band you want to see

~Zig~ | 2/14/2007, 2:58 am EST

1964:The Tribute-The number one Beatles tribute band in the world formed in Ohio.

Briguy | 2/14/2007, 12:29 am EST

Well, maybe this isn't quite in the same category, but what about the five or so bands that do tributes to Star Trek? The No Kill I, NKI: The Next Generation, NKI: Deep Space Nine, Stovokor (a Klingon heavy-metal band, of course), and the almighty Warp 11. Of the bunch, Warp 11 are the most successful and, IMHO, the best.

Brian | 2/14/2007, 12:23 am EST

The Australian Pink Floyd show was absolutely spectacular. They do an awesome job of covering the songs but also add their own elements during long improvisations. The gigantic inflatable pink kangaroo was also a plus. I saw Badfish the other week and they were also pretty solid and gave a good show.

Evan | 2/14/2007, 12:17 am EST

What about The Musical Box? They recreate Gabriel era Genesis exactly the way it was performed 30 years ago. Amazing. That band is the only consolation I have since hearing Peter Gabriel is not participating in the reunion.

Joe | 2/13/2007, 10:48 pm EST

Licensed to Kill--3 guys dressed as 007 turning the Beastie's classic LP into a rap opera....thats my dream.

floydfreak | 2/13/2007, 10:29 pm EST

I've heard THE MACHINE, FANTASTIC, like the article says! (www.TheMachineLive.com)

Jesusfisher | 2/13/2007, 10:28 pm EST

Johnny Vatos is a killer Oingo Boingo tribute band, they tie together the theatrical Mystic Knights of the Oingo Boingo of the seventies with the Oingo Boingo of the eighties. Also they throw in some Nightmare Before Christmas and the Corpse Bride numbers too, not to mention the inside Boingoloid jokes.

gilly | 2/13/2007, 10:16 pm EST

Hayseed Dixie -AC/DC played as Bluegrass

Chalk | 2/13/2007, 10:15 pm EST

I can't believe Beatallica wasn't mentioned.

brazmonky | 2/13/2007, 9:53 pm EST

dread zeppelin. end of argument.

shane arbor | 2/13/2007, 8:33 pm EST

bad fish!!

latearthurdent | 2/13/2007, 8:27 pm EST

W.W.L.D. (What Would Lemmy Do?)
Motorhead tribute band from New London, CT. Awesome.

fuck tupac | 2/13/2007, 8:07 pm EST

nickleback, playing nirvana and pearl jame rip offs.
hinder, playing eighties metal ripoffs.

DT | 2/13/2007, 7:18 pm EST

Left unmentioned-Hells Belles(an all woman AC/DC tribute band).
Bands worthy of tribute bands:

Television
The Melvins
Nirvana
Aerosmith

and a good idea I'm willing to give away (but a few guest passes and drink tickets anytime they're in Seattle would be nice) a non-electronica Chemical Brothers tribute band. I always thought their first 2 discs would sound great reinterpreted with loud noisy guitars. Think Thurston Moore with a funky rhythm section

Led Zep Fanaddict | 2/13/2007, 6:49 pm EST

Lez Zeppelin is worth seeing. Amazing musicianship and great looking. Takes the genre to another level.

jill hives | 2/13/2007, 6:48 pm EST

when i lived in Berkeley, i saw another all-female ac/dc tribute group called 'ac/dshe'. they were really good. and the one from Seattle is actually spelled 'hells belles' (cute!), but i haven't seen them yet. the funniest though is one time at this bar i saw a Rolling Stones tribute band (name??? i was tossed) and the guitar of the dude playing Keith Richards wasn't even plugged in - he just looked like a retarded junkie lol.
oh yeah, and a friend told me that 'the bootleg Beatles' are fun to see, assuming you like the Beatles of course.

Tyson | 2/13/2007, 6:13 pm EST

DeadHorse, if you have ever seen the new Guns N Roses live, you would know that they are anything but posers. They happen to be an amazing band that is going to put out a classic album.

seyff | 2/13/2007, 6:07 pm EST

Creed, playing Pearl Jam rip offs

sc | 2/13/2007, 5:58 pm EST

2U is a great U2 cover band. the guitar player is the brother of Anthony, from the popular syndicated morning zoo show Opie and Anthony .

DeadHorse | 2/13/2007, 5:55 pm EST

Guns n Roses (Axl featuring a bunch of impostors) covering Guns N' Roses (Axl [without botox], Duff, Slash, Steven, and Izzy

MR JONES... | 2/13/2007, 5:12 pm EST

MALICE COOPER from Canada...

Fronted by a woman, they rock.

Bob | 2/13/2007, 5:01 pm EST

I haven't heard of The Machine, but I was absolutely blown away by seeing the Australian Pink Floyd show (www.aussiefloyd.com). I don't see how any tribute band could be more accurate or good. This band even played David Gilmour's own birthday party some years back!

darthwilson | 2/13/2007, 4:55 pm EST

the austrialian pink floyd show blows away the Machine

The Ruse Is Worse Than..... | 2/13/2007, 4:47 pm EST

a cover band

Eh? | 2/13/2007, 4:31 pm EST

The Misfats!
Portland, OR area (I think) Misfits tribute band made up entirely of Fat guys.
Super!

not you | 2/13/2007, 4:29 pm EST

Petty Theft - cover Tom Petty

Buster C | 2/13/2007, 4:25 pm EST

The High Lonesome Hot Pocket Boys, they cover the Flying Burrito Brothers.

PS | 2/13/2007, 4:07 pm EST

Hells Bells - All Female AC/DC Tribute Band in Seattle area

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RS MUSIC STORE: Top 10 Songs For 49¢

1. "Don't Matter"	Akon
2. "Nothing Left..."	Mat Kearney
3. "Under The Influence"	James Morrison
4. "Forever"	Papa Roach
5. "Henrietta"	The Fratellis

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