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NEWSPAPER OF THE TWIN CITIES

Now hear this!

The Auto Body Experience / The Cabooze

Erik Fratzke/ bass, vocals
Tom Hambleton/ keyboards, vocals
Matt Jacobs/ drums
Scott Yoho/ guitar, vocals



BACKGROUND/ Brainerd native Yoho received a degree from the Musicians Institute of Technology in Los Angeles in 1984, then returned to Minneapolis to earn a degree in creative writing from the University of Minnesota. After the breakup of his eclectic quintet the Crops in 1990, he formed the Auto Body Experience with Hambleton, who has worked mostly in film and commercial soundtracks. Fratzke also plays in the rock band Love Kit. Yoho still tours nationally with the Gene Pitney Band, and Jacobs has gigged with the Groove Merchants and Peter Noone of Herman's Hermits.

Recently, one of the ABE's songs was played on "The Dr. Demento Show," a nationally syndicated radio show of comical music.

CONCEPT/ Yoho formed this group because there weren't many bands around that combined his appreciation for good pop songwriting, witty but meaningful lyrics and tight playing. Guitar wizard Adrian Belew and the quirky duo They Might Be Giants come closest to Yoho's ideal. "I like funny music," said Yoho. "But I also like songs that are coming about something, whether it's a character study or just a comic idea. That's my preference over people who write music by finding a nice chord progression and poetic words, but leave the meaning up for grabs."

One reason the group is misperceived as comic more than musical may be that its humor is pervasive — not used just for its own sake, but also to put a sidespin on the band's serious statements. Said Yoho: "I think many of my heroes make important points through humor. To have somebody telling jokes and making political points that way is far more powerful than someone just saying bad things. And I've never been a fan of dark music because my life can be pretty dark. So rather than just trying to

Photo / Scott Goihl

Members of the Auto Body Experience are, from left, Matt Jacobs, Tom Hambleton, Scott Yoho and Erik Fratzke. Witty lyrics are the band's forte. "I like funny music," said Yoho. "But I also like songs that are about something, whether it's a character study or just a comic idea."

share badness with other people, I enjoy trying to find a funny side to the bad things that happen — without sounding like the band that did "Feelin' Groovy."

RECORDINGS/ Earlier this year, the ABE released a self-titled CD on its own label, Dental Records.

REVIEW/ In a local bar scene tolerant of loud, fast rock, boogie and blues, the Auto Body Experience's triple threat of "hot chops," intelligent humor and songwriting craft makes it too good to be popular. In fact, they're too good to be true.

Underneath all the broad humor and a few really bad jokes lies a top-flight band. Yoho and Fratzke (who have been written up in *Guitar Player* magazine) are both exceptional players. Yoho plays up-tempo rock with a meticulous tone, and with grace worthy of the best jazz guitarists. Equally crisp and versatile drummer Jacobs can swing the band through whatever style or weird time signature pops up.

NEXT GIGS/ Saturday at the Cabooze (with Tequila Mockingbird and Human Radio), 917 Cedar Av., Minneapolis (338-6425); Oct. 28 through Nov. 1, Mr. Elk and Mr. Seal's Cavalcade of Excitement at the Padded Cellar in St. Anthony East, Minneapolis; Nov. 19 at the Cabooze, Minneapolis.

— Jim Meyer

Jim Meyer is a freelance music reviewer from Minneapolis.