

As summer winds down, West Beach Music & Arts Festival heats up

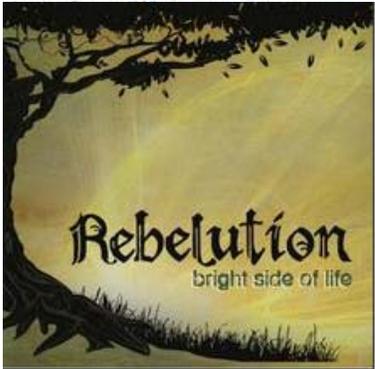
By Bill Locey □ Friday, September 18, 2009



Rebelution, to perform Sunday at the West Beach Music & Arts Festival, got their start in 2004 playing parties in Isla Vista. From left are Wesley Finley, Eric Rachmany, Marley D. Williams and Rory Carey.



Rebelution have a big following in, of all



Rebelution's latest CD, "Bright Side of Life," is purposely upbeat. "We felt it was kind of like our duty to put out a positive message," frontman Eric Rachmany says.

More than 10 bands a day for three days and it's not that far away — it's the summer-ender party that is the reggae-friendly West Beach Music & Arts Festival this weekend in Santa Barbara. Famous rock stars to perform include Steel Pulse, Ozomatli, G. Love & Special Sauce, Ben Harper, Slightly Stoopid and plenty more, including former locals Rebelution playing an increasingly rare home-game gig.

Rebelution are four former UC Santa Barbara students on the upward spiral due to incessant touring. Their second album, "Bright Side of Life," is just out and is a collection of upbeat reggae songs — pleasant enough to make Pato Banton smile. Since forming in 2004, they put in their time playing all those parties in Isla Vista — the ones that cops are never invited to, but always find out about — then graduated to the bar scene on State Street. Now they're touring the nation and, get this, they're popular in Guam.

At the West Beach festival, the band will be playing on Sunday. Frontman and guitar player Eric Rachmany discussed the latest from the Bay Area last weekend.

Hey, Eric. Where are you, man?

I'm actually driving to the Bay Area to see my family while I have the chance.

You're from up there?

Yeah. I'm from San Francisco.

How's the Rebelution business?



Been good. We just got off a five-week tour and now we're back for a couple of weeks. Then we hit the road again for another five weeks.

This beach-party thing is a home-game gig for you guys.

Right, right. We got started, you know, in Isla Vista. That's where we all went to college. This gig'll be pretty cool, playing for the hometown crowd.

Why is reggae so popular in SoCal?

I think it's actually been popular for a while. That's probably because of the beach atmosphere. Reggae's been popular on a lot of the island places, too. Places like Hawaii, Guam and Aruba play our music and, somewhere, there's a connection with the beach atmosphere.

When you guys play in Kansas or Ohio, not so many fans then?

The good part is that reggae is popular everywhere. I think the people that come out to our shows have something in common with people in Ohio.

What did you learn at UCSB?

I studied religious studies. Wesley (Finley), our drummer, took anthropology and Marley (Williams), our bass player, did film studies. Rory (Carey), the keyboard player, did accounting.

None of you guys were music majors?

No. None of us were music majors, but we all had music classes. A few of us were going to become music majors, but we never actually went through with it.

How did you guys survive the Isla Vista party and not become professional students?

I was pretty fortunate. My last year we were playing every weekend and we already had some recognition. I kind of knew that Rebelution was going to go somewhere after I was done.

Do you remember your first gig?

I do. It was a backyard show out in Isla Vista.

Did the cops come?

They didn't come to that one, no, but we did have several that did get shut down.



What's your take on the new album, "Bright Side of Life"?

I think the songwriting has progressed a little bit on this album, compared to the last one. This one deals with encouragement and motivation, and I think once we realized we had a good Rebelution community coming out to the shows, we had to be positive role models. We felt it was kind of like our duty to put out a positive message. Right now, it's kind of a tough time in the world, and this country specifically. If we try to look on the bright side of things, maybe we can make this a better place.

What's your take on Guam?

Guam is kind of connected to Hawaii as to the music scene. It's weird. You fly all the way out to Guam and you get off the plane and it says, "Welcome to the United States." Guam is pretty cool and, obviously, whoever is on the radio there is pretty popular. We had a lot of really awesome radio play and, when we went there, we were the hottest band on the island. We played for five or six thousand people. It was incredible. There's a nightlife there, but we didn't really go out to the bar scene. We mostly went looking around the island, just sort of getting in touch with the nature out there. It's a really beautiful spot, but half the island is an Army base.

Did they dance or stare?

They definitely dance out there and, for the most part, everywhere else, too. We take pride in our high-energy shows, so it's hard not to move. There are some crowds that are really focused on the music, and they don't want to move while we're playing, which is cool, too, I guess.

Whatever people want to do is fine.

How does an indie band survive in the new and crazy music biz?

I think Rebelution is definitely an example of how an independent band can do this for a living. We just worked our butts off for five years. We played so many shows countless shows. That's the best way to do it.

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