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### Is Prima Donna the Best Garage Band of All Time?

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[Dave Good](#), May 2, 2012

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Score one for the old school: Prima Donna, a five-piece from Los Angeles, may be the best garage band of all time, albeit 40 years after the fact. They started in 2003. What we call garage rock ended with the '60s. Most band comparisons are made to glam or Mott the Hoople, but I hear feral riffs in Prima Donna songs that were ancient even when Tony Valentino invented the guitar lead for the Standells' "Dirty Water" in 1966.

When it was still new, garage rock had the fundamental power to incite lust and riots, a lesson not lost on Prima Donna. Shirtless and in front of much louder modern amplifiers, singer/guitarist Kevin Preston stacks up favorably against the far bigger stars of the British Invasion. For example, Prima Donna's "I Don't Want You to Love Me" fits comfortably in the footprint of "Glad All Over," a 1964 song from British hit-makers the Dave Clark Five. Why the Invasion comparison? Because I don't think we had garage bands in the U.S. until after they had come and gone.

Prima Donna is essentially Preston's band. He writes much of the material. His songs are tight, supported by '60s keyboards and sax, and are grounded by a bluesy bottom end. It is this combination of all things hip and primeval in rock that has gained Prima Donna many friends. Little Steven (Steven Van Zandt of the E Street Band) once said that "Demented" was the #2 coolest song in the world, and Green Day took them out on the European leg of their 2009 tour. But the real garage era was populated by costumed one-hit wonders. They sold millions of records, yet failed to survive their own gimmicks. After all, garage was only meant as a step in the development and, by plundering such limited history, I fear that Prima Donna has possibly left itself with nowhere to go.

Hey! Ho! Let's Go! and the Paper Hearts also perform.

**PRIMA DONNA:** The Shakedown Bar, Friday May 4, 9 p.m. 619-804-9523. \$5.

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