

"I don't want to lose any authenticity with blues fans because I restore cars or surf. Authenticity comes from the life you live and how that comes through your music."

-Rod Piazza

with no makeup, planting in my garden listening to some old jazz. I would miss my wild night life, but I need the quiet time at home to bring out the best onstage."

In their life away from home, Rod and Honey front one of the most popular blues bands in the world. Whether they play at a tiny club for 50 people, a packed hot spot for 500, or a festival for 10,000, the Mighty Flyers share with the audience their passionate love of the blues in every show. But it can be a challenge to make each performance fresh.

"If you listen to my shows, you'll hear the home runs, but if you listen hard enough throughout the night, you're gonna hear some different tunes that you haven't heard before," said Rod. "There are spikes within that 90 minutes. Maybe I accentuated something really great — but maybe *that* wasn't what they remembered. Maybe they only remembered me walking on the bar playing harmonica. It's all relative to the ear of the person listening to you.

"That's why we have to make it palatable for the people who are listening, and you also have to keep yourself satisfied by playing what you began to play and what you love. What has made this band successful is learning to adjust to what the audience hears. What we mainly do is set the tempos, the groove, the type of beat the drums play to pace the show for each different audience. I would love to play nothing but old blues, but I don't want to disappoint the fans who've never seen us."

Honey compares the Flyers' show to a standard blues progression. "There is a I-IV-V pattern to the show just like the pattern in a blues song. The opening song, the piano boogie, and 'Southern Lady' are the three chords in our blues song. What you can play when you are playing those chords is infinite. That's the object of blues: to see how you play in this most simple art form. Not how much, but how beautiful, how touching, how you can combine what you know. It could be just one note, but it's how you hold that note."

"I'm trying to get to a level where I think that what I'm playing actually had some worthwhile validity to it," said Rod. "I'm 53; it ain't like I'm 18. When I started out, I had all this power and aggressiveness. Now I try to play as much as I can to satisfy myself."



"I've come to the enlightening realization about my life at this point," said Honey. "I finally discovered my purpose is not being a great blues player — it's being a great musician, a goodwill ambassador with music as my vehicle to spread joy. That's my purpose, to make people happy."

Honey recently received a letter from a fan whose father had died of cancer, thanking her for brightening his final days. The son would play Honey's signature song "The Stinger" on their drives to the hospital when his father, a huge fan of boogie and swing, asked for "a little Miss Honey."

"It's all the people I have met through this music and have gotten to know very deeply," she said. "When you play music and they love the music, it can touch them deeply, and they open up to you. It's the friends that I have made through the music that have given meaning to my life. All the other stuff that came is great, the icing on the cake, but the fans are the cake. They've given it back to me a hundredfold. I never expected that. In the beginning I thought, 'I'm gonna be a musician, people are gonna watch me onstage.' But I ended up discovering the human race. I discovered *people*." ❏

Select Discography

- File Under Rock* (1984) Takoma 7108
- Alphabet Blues* (1992) Black Top 1076
- Vintage Live: 1975* (1998) Tone-Cool 471170
- Here and Now* (1999) Tone-Cool 471172
- Beyond the Source* (2001) Tone-Cool 471181