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Thieves steal evening away from Holy Moleys

For a Vegas music writer, nothing is more awkward than witnessing out-of-town bands blow our local talent (such as it is) out of the water. A few weeks ago, L.A. garage-pop quartet Tsar made the Pervz look like puke. More recently, I observed Oxford, England trio the Thieves pickpocket the room with a lethal mix of AC/DC, the Who and the MC5, causing the Holy Moleys to resemble an inflamed mole on the ass cheek of Jello Biafra.

Why didn't anyone tell me the first-rate Thieves were coming to town? Where was the news release, fanfare of trumpets, avalanche of swag? Google them, and you'll discover that plenty of alt-weeklies have known about these shaggy-haired blokes for some time. Hell, they even got written up in Cleveland.

Despite suffering a broken foot (reportedly earned in a desperate bid to evade hotel security after an L.A. show last month), singer/guitarist Hal Stokes perched himself on a stool and tore into white-hot numbers like "Tales from the White Line" and "You Get It Easy," from the band's new *The White Line EP* (Liquor and Poker Music). He and his lock-stock-and-smoking rhythm section (bassist Sam Stokes, drummer Jamie Dawson) made it look effortless, because they're musicians who happen to play rock -- not weekend warriors looking for an excuse to drink shitty beer in a dive bar. The Thieves are perfectly named; they'll do anything (relocating to L.A.) and endure any setback (shattered limbs) in order to bring the rock. They're the real fucking deal. You can listen to parts of the band's blistering EP at www.thebaridofthieves.com.

The Holy Moleys, however, nearly brought to me my knees, begging God for a quicker death. Next to *Cute in the Face*, this is the worst band in Vegas. Only frontman Jonny Christ sticks with the religious motif (priest collar); the rest (members of Big Lizard bands Amber Halo and FFI) look like lawnmower repairmen and play even worse, barely managing the minimum three chords per song. Apparently, the Moleys have a political message. (Dubya stinks? How original.) Too bad songs like "Mission to Mars" inspired me to join the NRA.

After watching a combat-booted Amazon kick some dude's face in, I decided not to stick around for the Holy Smokes, the last band on the bill. Don't let the Double Down's "no cover" policy fool you. Everybody pays.

JARRET KEENE