

# CRYSTAL ANTLERS

FIVE HOWLING PSYCH-ROCKERS WHO LOVE TO SHRED

Hell hath no fury like a rock band from Long Beach. The oft-forgotten south coast cousin to Los Angeles, Long Beach's musical claims to fame tend to lean towards commercial hip hop (Snoop Dogg being its most notorious local hero) and suburban pop punk. Crystal Antlers are not so quietly bucking expectation by embracing neither of these genres. Instead, they blend dirty 60s psych, early punk grit and epic symphonic swells into relentless, utterly overpowering rock 'n' roll – music that screams like a banshee and roars like a demon spurned.

Taking inspiration from their stoner rock predecessors, bands like Comets On Fire, Crystal Antlers have kept droning melodic guitar meditation alive, first lulling listeners into a sweaty, headbanger trance and then tearing them out by the roots with waves of piercing distortion and primal screams.

"We were bored with modern punk and wanted to try to play it in a new way," explains Crystal Antlers' bassist and singer-songwriter Jonny Bell, and it only takes a brief listen to get a sense of the band's originality and daring. Somehow, Crystal Antlers take elements of early metal, prog rock and garage riffs and warp them into something weirdly palatable – a sound that embraces the likeability of pop while avoiding the maudlin.

An upcoming full-length debut *Touch and Go* will undoubtedly elicit a cult-like devotion from the newly initiated, but it's Crystal Antlers' live act that will spark total religious fervor. This is a band that plays each show as if they are flinging themselves over a high cliff, and it is both exhausting and exhilarating to witness their commitment. Crystal Antlers provide a true spectacle, not with visual glitz or costumed antics, but rather with pure and unadulterated dedication. Each song is held aloft by chunky, deeply satisfying electric guitar shredding – the kind of howl and wail that has too long been missing from modern rock 'n' roll. The addition of a second frontman/cheerleader/percussionist/dancefreak – a man dubbed "Sexual Chocolate" – only serves to push Crystal Antlers's live performances further out into the blue beyond – creating, as Bell colorfully describes it, a sound like "blown-out amps screeching their final dying breaths."

There is something thrilling about a band that leaps so willingly over the edge like this. You have no reservations about joining them in their long fall into darkness, holding your breath until you hit ground. "We try to marry the cerebral and emotional aspects of art with as much focus and energy as possible," says Bell. "Sometimes beyond our own abilities." *Jessica Hundley*

[myspace.com/crystalantlers](http://myspace.com/crystalantlers) / Photography Grant Peterson

(l-r) Andrew King (guitar), Kevin Stuart (drums), Jonny Bell (bass/vocals), Damian Edwards (percussion), Victor Rodriguez (organ)

