

# Music



Louis XIV (clockwise from left): James Armbrust, Mark Malgaard, Jason Hill and Brian Karscig

## All That Glitters Isn't Glam

LOUIS XIV'S JASON HILL ON SEXED-UP SONGS AND CRANKED-UP CRITICS

BY BILL JENSEN

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A country in the clutches of a culture war, shameful Super Bowl breasts and 30-second broadcast delays. Lefty political correctness in an unlikely tongue kiss with rightly prudishness. Sex? Today? In America? Sex is dirty, dirty, dirty.

In swaggers a pasty-faced gent from San Diego who sings with a British accent.

Hand raised in a rock star salute. Pants tight in a rock star salute. Hot breath behind a firm drum beat. And the first lyrics out of his mouth?

"Ah chocolate girl, you look like something I want/And your little Asian friend? Well, she can come if she wants/I want all the self conscious girls who try to hide who

they are with make-up/You know it's the girl with the frown in the tight pants I really wanna shake up."

This laundry list of various ethnic and social varieties of girls the narrator would like to bed in the single "Finding Out True Love is Blind" represents the coming-out party for Jason Hill and Louis XIV.

"It is certainly un-PC in a way," says Hill from a cell phone in a Boston hotel, shaking off a bus trip from Toronto the night before. "There's all of these different girls mentioned—that makes it a problem for people to go on about."

Mick Jagger delivered similar sentiments in 1978 with the down, dirty and controversial "Some Girls." But Hill sees his tale as being a bit more wholesome.

"After I had written it, I thought more or less I had written more of a 'California Girls,'" he says. "You know, I'm a Beach Boys fan."

Last month in the middle of a sold-out Bowery Ballroom, a blonde girl in pigtails who looked like she could have come straight from the beach didn't seem to mind at all as she sang along with Hill—"Milkshake, milkshake, I love to feel your sweat/We don't have to go to the pool if you want me to make you wet," from "Pledge of Allegiance," another sexed-up song off the band's new album *The Best Little Secrets Are Kept*. Rock 'n' roll, which long ago passed the mantle of danger and excitement to hip-hop, has needed a band like this. And if Lil' Jon can get a room to shake with "Get Low," there's no reason why hipster boys and girls can't nod their heads and thrust their hips to a fleshy-faced lad with a Nigel Tufnel haircut from sunny San Diego who sings dirty and decadent lip-curling rock songs.

The principal songwriter of the band, Hill produced and even engineered the album, their first release on Atlantic records (their self-titled debut, recorded in France, was released on the band's own Pineapple Records). It is a short, lusty, wham-bam-thank-you-ma'am confection of three-minute rock songs with accessible guitar riffs and simple 4/4 beats. More than half of the songs spill over with overly confident libido, yet not one curse

word is ever uttered. (The explicit-content sticker on the cover is, ironically, in response to the cover itself, which features a list of the song titles Magic Markered on a woman's naked back, leading to the ensuing butt chasm.)

Musically, "Finding Out True Love is Blind" is the type of song that crawls inside your brain and stays there, forcing you to play it over and over again until you finally get sick of it. It has opened the doors to Conan O'Brien and David Letterman, as well as an opening slot for the Killers at Central Park Summerstage (June 4). But live, the song is actually the band's least rock 'n' roll number. On stage, Louis XIV turns bombastic, with larger-than-life guitar solos and crunchy chord progressions that can make a whole room shake.

It is that collection of chords, along with the hand-clapped beats and Hill's straight-out-of-Piccadilly vocal delivery (even though he's a born-and-bred Yank), that has led rock critics to claim the band is reviving a certain 1970s musical movement.

"I dare you to find an article that doesn't mention we're a glam band, which drives me f\*\*kin' crazy," says Hill, going off on a minor rant. "I didn't hear once ever that we were a glam band until *Rolling Stone* mentioned it three months ago. Now it's 'glam this, glam that.' Everybody mentions T. Rex. Nobody owns a T. Rex album, I bet you, who tries to claim we sound like T. Rex."

On the road for seven months now, Hill will eventually return to San Diego. Rather than live the girl-in-every-port life inhabited by the narrator of his songs, he will check back into his studio and get to work. Hill doesn't have a home, hasn't had one for years. He has a studio. And he'll go all night, every night, writing and recording, just as he did when he wrote a line like, "I said sing, sing me a song/and bang me like the girls in Hong Kong."

"My life was centered around going to the studio and going back to my girl's house for a little bit of softness and comfort," says Hill. "I would wake her up at 4 a.m. with a song and play her a recording and see if I could wake her up enough to get a smile.... My sex talk, or whatever you want to refer to it as, I just consider it honesty and directness. And I'm just really trying to make my girlfriend giggle." ●

Louis XIV will be appearing on June 2 at Warsaw, 261 Driggs Ave., Williamsburg, 718-387-0505, and on June 4 with the Killers at Central Park Summerstage @ Rumsey Playfield, 69th St. & Fifth Ave., NYC, [www.SummerStage.org](http://www.SummerStage.org).