





**Vancouver Island's Hottest  
Rock'n Roll Dance Machine!**

Hot in the Shade wasn't consciously named after the Kiss album, but the handle stuck in 1992 when Ron and Lawry Rugg formed the group with Don Peterson. The band wasn't their first association - Peterson and the Rugg brothers played together as early members of the Timebenders, and in the country group Ropin' the Wind. Peterson, well known as a guitarist's guitarist with a firm grip of the blues, country and rock, was considered by many to be the first call for a gig in any of those genres, no small feat in a city known for its great guitar players.

None of this fell into Peterson's lap. He honed his natural talent with years of dedication and practice. While working with Ken Tahouney in Ropin' the Wind, he spent countless hours woodshedding the guitar riffs of Brent Mason, Pete Anderson and Vince Gill, perfecting a demanding guitar adaptation of the pedal steel style calling for a unique skill - playing multi notes but bending only one or two. Peterson's dedication, combined with a virtuosity rivaling the top names in the biz, fine-tuned an all round excellent musician.

Like many great players, what you hear at the show is only part of the musician. In the 80's, Peterson was part of the heavy rock group Messenger. Largely a recording project, the Foreigner influenced guitar rock band played live, but opportunities for original groups were fewer then. Peterson penned all the songs on their first album, which went on to receive significant acclaim and airplay in Germany, Sweden and the UK, where they know good rock when they hear it.

They recorded a follow up album, more of a group writing effort that lacked the full effect of the Peterson input. Sadly, the album lacked the raw energy and focus of the first - and tanked. End of Messenger story. Some of the old tracks still spin

on underground radio in Europe. One enthusiastic reviewer advised readers that if they were able to find copies of the cd, "get as many as you can - it's awesome and very difficult to find."

In '92 when Hot in the Shade debuted, Steamers and other clubs had a classic rock format, and the band pumped out Clapton, ZZ Top and AC/DC to waves of adoration from appreciative crowds. Bands that followed, including the Timebenders and That 70's Band, did well taking a page from the Hot in the Shade book.

In its 10 plus years, the group has slugged out the party hits with an extensive list of players (Peterson has been known to call Hot in the Shade a home for wayward musicians), including Phil Wipper, Lou Bujdoso, Joe Kovacs and Gavin Dixon - all top-drawer artists who maintained a high level of musicianship within the group. The trend continues today, with long time member Mike Fraser on drums and Gord Miller playing bass and providing powerful vocals. Variations of the group's live show have come and gone.



In the early days, shows with backtracks could sound a little cheesy. Today, the line between live and recorded is more nebulous, and many groups have a laptop or two on stage. With the freedom to integrate tracks into a song requiring a second guitar part, Gord can switch off his bass, play the second part, and the piece flows seamlessly.

Still highly sought after in the rockin' get 'em up dance scene, Hot in the Shade continues to book months in advance for dances and parties. Peterson credits their success to a simple concept: Listen to the audience and play the tunes that make them move. Maybe that's why they're dubbed "Vancouver Island's hottest rock 'n roll dance machine."

What lies ahead for Hot in the Shade and Don Peterson? You can count on the band to serve up party tunes for a while yet - there's plenty of rock 'n' roll left in these guys. Watch for upcoming solo appearances from Peterson, where he reaches back to his original influences in a blues/rock format. With influences from Jeff Beck, Billy Gibbons, Jimi Hendrix and his years in the trenches, Don forges a new sound that promises to be stronger than ever.

**by Raymond Mitchell**

a freelance music and entertainment writer.

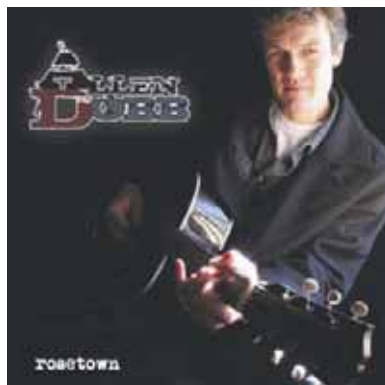
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