



Tampa Crossover Hardcore band Cold Steel performing their set, fronted by vocalist Jose

Cold Steel, Plague Spitter, and More bring Hardcore, Thrash, and Death to Tampa Bay

By Conner Andre
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Tampa, Florida is a world capital of extreme music. Most notably known for being the epicenter of the explosion of Death Metal in the 90s, with iconic legacy acts like Obituary, Deicide, and Morbid Angel still being active and playing shows to this day, the city has a flourishing scene of rock, metal and punk, and has a variety of well established venues hosting countless shows every week. This past Friday night was no exception, as an epic seven band gig took place at the Pegasus Lounge.

The Pegasus Lounge is a nightclub located on North Florida Avenue and a less than 30 minute drive from the University of Tampa's campus. It is the southernmost building as part of a larger complex, which includes a barber shop and a pizza and pasta joint. The parking lot is filled with a mix of showgoers conversing amongst themselves, and band members tuning, testing, and loading and unloading their equipment. Upon walking in, you are greeted by an admissions booth to your left, a massive bar that takes up a good half of the space, and a stage occupying the back right corner of the room. Past the bar, there are numerous tables and chairs to sit at, and a pool table, which is being used as a merch stand for t-shirts, hats, and the like. The musicians that will perform later in the night are chatting among the rest of those in attendance.

The headliner tonight is Dead Heat, a Crossover Thrash Metal band all the way from California, supported by Statement of Pride, a straight edge hardcore punk act from Pensacola, as well as Terminal Nation, a Death Metal/Hardcore band from Little Rock Arkansas. They are also joined by 4 other bands, all of which are based right here in Tampa: Plague Spitter, Resentment, Forever's Horizon, and Cold Steel. This lineup would not have been possible without Josh Howell, who, under the name Armageddon Records, routinely brings to Tampa some of the best hardcore bands America has to offer.

One of which is Plague Spitter, the first ones up. The band is fronted by Eliot, an active musician (also frontman of the band Vacancy) and show booker in the scene. Plague Spitter is a relatively new band, having played their first show this past June, and have since released a four track EP. The band's sound is chaotic, "unhinged" as they label themselves, metallic hardcore.

"I wasn't really sure what to expect, since we opened, but it filled out and the crowd went wild...it was stoked. Couldn't ask for a better set." Said Eliot, following their performance.

“Super appreciative to Josh at Armageddon for squeezing us on to it. I know there’s a lot of bands on the show...him letting us open up was a huge thing for us.”

Another act that was let loose on the Pegasus Lounge’s stage is Cold Steel, a local favorite. “Some people like to call us ‘Thrash Crossover’, some people say we are nothing like Thrash [Metal], so they call us ‘Hardcore Crossover’, some people say we’re not hardcore, so we just fit in our own little corner of the world”, said Jose, the vocalist. “I hope that people can feel my emotion, even if I am playing a character...Cold Steel represents freedom, and wanting to be free.” They have played with the likes of Obituary, Trivium, and countless other incredible bands. Jose’s loving long term girlfriend, Peri, enjoys seeing the appreciation that Cold Steel gets from the crowd. “Just seeing the love, and support that they get, everywhere they go. And people singing along which is really cool, because I got to see it firsthand. So to see people appreciate his words is very special to me.” As for the best part about getting to perform, Jose cites expression, relatability, camaraderie, understanding, and fun.

The seven bands on this past Friday’s lineup are far from the only promising groups to come out of Tampa and other Florida cities. Bands like Contention, Three Knee Deep, Seed of Pain and Tracheotomy are all making major strides in hardcore music, and are quickly becoming recognized names nationwide, while other bands like Stedfast, Dogmatic, Xcelerate, and Exit Strategy are Florida heavy music staples. Eliot of Plague Spitter personally drops names like Six Paths, Keep Reaching, and Deadset all of which are out of Tampa, as well as Beastplague, a South Florida act that just released an EP. On the other hand, Jose, Peri, and the rest of the Cold Steel crew have gotten close playing shows with bands Gaijin, and brand-new Latino hardcore band Migrant Fury. In fact, Cold Steel and Migrant Fury are leaving this week to embark on a tour across the state of Texas, starting in Houston and ending in San Antonio. This is an

opportunity that hits personally for the band, as their main influence comes from the sound that many Texas based bands have established, most notably, the modern Crossover Thrash legends known as Power Trip.

After the tour, the Cold Steel train is not stopping anytime soon. “More writing, definitely.” Said Jose. “There’s more stories to tell. There’s more tales to be told...the possibilities are endless. There’s always some level of lore or fantasy with our stories...they’re gonna get more aggressive and more visual, in hopes that people can really go to that place we’re trying to take them.” Plague Spitter is going full speed ahead as well, with an as of yet unannounced gig opening for a legendary and influential metal band from New Orleans, set to take place right here in Tampa this coming December. The other 5 bands that took part in this monumental gig at Pegasus are also very much active, playing shows and festivals regularly across the state, and country, as well as frequently releasing and recording new music.

With too many venues to name (some within walking/trolley distance from UT), an equal number of independent booking agencies, and ten times as many talented musicians, there is no shortage of fun, local, and dirt cheap concerts to see. To name a few, legendary New York Hardcore bands Madball and Gorilla Biscuits are both playing shows at the Brass Mug within 10 days of each other later this month, and Texas up-and-comers Ozone and Since My Beloved are bringing their brand of violence to the Born Free Pub and Grill, also later this month. There are so many options to choose from, and with talented and passionate musicians (like the ones that played Friday night) behind the music, it should make any rough and rowdy music lover proud to live in the city of Tampa.