

SHOWCASE

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Stevie sober for life

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Those visiting in Texas recently might have caught the TV commercial featuring guitarist Stevie Ray Vaughan.

No, it's not an ad for Bud Lite. Far from it. It's a public service announcement advising Texas residents to abstain from taking drugs and driving.

"I never heard of another one like it," said Vaughan in a phone interview from Joplin, Mo., where he was performing a concert in his current tour. "It was, 'Don't do drugs and drive,' instead of 'Don't drink and drive.'"

(Vaughan will be performing tonight in the Redman Grandstand at the Antelope Valley Fair.)

The ad depicts a car accident with Vaughan's song, "Life Without You" playing in the background.

"There's not a big crash-bang," he said. "It's just that the headlights go into the camera. And the line: 'If you do drugs, you've got a problem. If you do drugs and drive, you've got death. Think about it.'"

Vaughan understands the problem firsthand. He's recently battled alcohol and drug addiction himself — and conquered it.

More than 10 months later, he's still sober.

"And it's something that was needed for a lot longer than that," he said. "I was definitely hooked and I couldn't stop."

"I couldn't get as high as I wanted to and I couldn't stop trying."

The turning point came when he collapsed "and found I had nothing to pull from. I was spiritually, mentally, physically bankrupt."

"I didn't have a chance to keep going."

The music is much clearer now, said Vaughan.

"My playing is better," he said. "I think my timing is better. You can understand what I'm saying. My eyes aren't rolling around in my head."

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"And more often than not, I can remember to care."

Vaughan began to care about music — and especially the blues — when he was a kid growing up in Dallas. His big brother Jimmie Vaughan, of Fabulous Thunderbirds fame, inspired him more than anyone else.

"When I was first starting, he was about three years ahead of me," he said. "He was already the big guy everybody learned from around there. And what he was doing was it."

Blues makes up the cornerstone of both guitarists' sound. Stevie and Jimmie listened to Buddy Guy, Freddie King, B.B. King, Albert King, Muddy Waters and Lonnie Mack, among others.

In 1984, Stevie Ray Vaughan produced Mack's comeback LP, *Strike Like Lightning*.

And although he'd like do

more production, Vaughan is already booked up for a year in advance. Some of his upcoming projects include recording a studio LP this fall, and perhaps putting together a record with his brother.

Besides making concert appearances, Vaughan also makes a cameo appearance in the movie, "Back to the Beach," which stars Annette Funicello and Frankie Avalon.

"I had a lot of fun doing it," Vaughan admitted.

However, it's a far cry from winning a Grammy award for best traditional blues recording for his version of Jimi Hendrix's "Voodoo Chile (Slight Return)."

That a white guy won in a blues category can only be viewed as positive, said Vaughan.

"There's a lot of folks trying to

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take the color out of the blues — and I'm glad. Because it doesn't have to be that you're a black guy to be able to play and like blues music.

"It doesn't hurt anything," he said with a chuckle.

But roots music such as the blues has a universal appeal.

"There's a lot to the music and there's a lot of emotion to it and with it. And people relate to it

because they can identify with the storyline," he said. "It's a soothing kind of music."

At his show tonight, Vaughan and his band Double Trouble will draw on older material such as his version of Stevie Wonder's "Superstition" from the group's Epic LP, *Live Alive*, as well as performing new and unrecorded songs.

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