

## Better Than Ezra more than just 'Good'

**LINNIESARAH HELPERN**  
LIFESTYLES EDITOR

Underground favorite Better Than Ezra appeared at Myrtle Beach's House of Blues on Oct. 23. The band, who have maintained a cult like following since the release of their first single "Good" in 1995, are even more amazing than the single that made them famous.

Wilmington band Sycamore Grove was the opener for Better Than Ezra, and they definitely set the tone for the show. Having played multiple events with the likes of Collective Soul, Far Too Jones, and Athenaeum, Sycamore Grove is probably one of the best bands to come out of the area. Check their website, [www.sycamoregrove.net](http://www.sycamoregrove.net), for more information on the band and upcoming shows.

At almost ten o'clock, Better Than Ezra came to the stage after the completion of their trademark show-starter, "Fat Bottomed Girls" by Queen. What followed was an amazing performance from one of the best live bands in the last ten years.

Better Than Ezra is one of those rare groups that are even better in person than they are on their albums. While their original CD's (including "Deluxe," "Friction Baby,"

and "How Does Your Garden Grow?") were surprisingly exemplary models of 90s rock, the true laid-back New Orleans spirit of the band doesn't transcend as well through the stereo speakers.

Lead singer Kevin Griffin, bassist Tom Drummond, and drummer Travis Aaron McNabb all share a kind of easy kinship that washes over their audience and seems to invite them inside a private club for only the "cool" kids. The show at Myrtle Beach opened with "Recognize," a highly energetic guitar-driven assault from their fourth album "Closer."

Perhaps it is best to mention that unlike many other 90s bands that have struggled to stay afloat since their inception, Better Than Ezra knows their fans. They tailor each show's play list to make it a memorable experience for those who have stuck with them since the beginning. Of course they played the songs that casual Top 40 listeners would know ("Good," "Desperately Wanting" and "At the Stars") but they focused most of their show around the favorites of the audience. BTE classics like "In the Blood," "Rewind," and "Rosealia" were all played with typical exuberance, crafting an exhilarating show for everyone present.

Better Than Ezra is the kind of band that obviously isn't in it for the fame (they

haven't had a top forty album since 1995) or the fortune, they are in it for the love of the music. The band makes a point of including their fans in the show, bringing them up on stage, taking gifts and accepting requests. Those attending a Better Than Ezra show will never feel slighted; if anything, they might fall in

love. With the release of a greatest hits CD on Dec. 7 and an as-yet titled new album scheduled for March, members of the BTE



**Better Than Ezra** rocked the House of Blues in Myrtle Beach on Oct. 23. Their love of music makes each concert a memorable experience.

road crew expect the tour to extend at least through the middle of 2005. While it could be awhile before they return to NC, Better Than Ezra is one band that is definitely worth the wait.

## The Used flaunt their maturity in a new CD

**JUSTIN MCLEOD**  
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Didn't your mother tell you to be patient? If you fell in love with The Used's self-titled debut, then that patience has finally paid off. Since June 2002, there has been much anxiety over whether or not The Used would become a one-hit-wonder, all of which was augmented with "Maybe Memories" (a CD-DVD released in the winter of 2003). This little teaser was a compilation with one disc of live and unreleased songs, and another disc with video bios and concert footage.

In spite of everything it offered, the set let down many fans and made the already heavy anxiety even heavier. After more than two whole years, they have finally rewarded their patient fans with a brand-spanking new album, "In Love and Death." Even promotions for this CD were promising, but it appears that the band has truly outdone themselves.

The new release was produced by John Feldman (producer of their first release), who allowed them a wider breadth of experimentation and virtual free-reign. The evolution of the band is very evident, and why not? Before their debut album, The Used had only played in their hometown of Orem, Utah and they could barely finance their equipment, let alone a supply of drumsticks and strings. By

the time they released "In Love and Death," they had logged 600 tour dates on such ventures as "The Warped Tour" and "Ozzfest;" all this experience has brought out maturity the band lacked prior this release.

"In Love and Death" illustrates the bands growth. Bert's voice isn't quite as whiny, conveying lyrics that don't seem as helpless as in the previous album. In the first single "Take It Away," Bert (lead vocals) screams for shelter from the light (running from light in the video) and seems to shun the symbolic life and love. Yet through all the despair, his stronger voice clings to more hope

than he would have been able to convey in the last record. This album also proves Bert's

maturity as he plays the piano in "Cut up Angels" and handles the string arrangements that add true depth to these screamo-ballads.

What is left to be said about "In Love and Death?" Listeners may very well weep their way through the awesome love song "I Caught Fire" or form a one man mosh-pit to the power of the following track "Let it Bleed." With Bert's phenomenal ability to sing and scream powerful emotions while the band fires off evocative riffs, those who haven't

already bought the CD (the converted and the unconverted) can expect a euphoric experience that no other band has offered this year.



**The wait is over. The Used** have released their new album "In Love and Death." It is the band's first release since their self titled album in June 2002.

## Author Marc Spitz wonders, *How Soon Is Never?*

**LINNIESARAH HELPERN**  
LIFESTYLES EDITOR

In the simplest of terms, Cameron Crowe doesn't know what the hell he is talking about. Don't get me wrong, he is a fine film maker with decent ideas. But in his semi-biographical opus *Almost Famous*, he did quite a job of portraying the life of a music journalist as being mostly fun and games, where the writer's biggest problem is avoiding getting friendly with their subjects. Now, senior Spin writer Marc Spitz; he gets it, he understands the life of the music journalist.

Spitz' first novel, *How Soon Is Never?*, chronicles the life of a burned-out cynic of a writer, a man craving his lost childhood and using any means necessary to reclaim it. Spitz' main character, Joe Green (no, not that Joe Green,) is a shell of a human being. Through alcohol, drugs, and meaningless sex with extremely young girls, Green believes he can fill the void consuming him since he began working in the music business. Yet, in his heart (however injured it may be) he knows that there must be more to life. Suddenly, the answer to all of Green's

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