

# 'Rock & Roll Mayor' still cranking tunes

Former Pomona mayoral candidate still promoting band around the Inland Empire.

Joshua Pelzer  
Claremont-Upland Voice

POMONA — Kevin Ausmus' rock band, Desperation Squad, has failed to make it big after 20 years of performing, and he couldn't care less. "We just keep at it because we just don't know any better," said Ausmus, the group's lead vocalist. "Twenty years is a long way to go without doing anything significant and I think that is sort of the charm of the band."

As a matter of fact, Ausmus and his band of middle-aged rockers identify so much with their limited success, they will take it on the road next year with their "Twenty Years of Going Nowhere" tour.

"That is kind of the theme," Ausmus said. "Why would we ever bother to do this at all unless we thought we were the greatest rock band of all time?"

But, in fact, they played all over the country with the national Warped Tour in 2001, which helped them refine the shocking and burlesque style that has been their trademark since their first gig in a basement in 1980. Not bad publicity for a group that uses food in their act and sometimes runs around nude or in giant

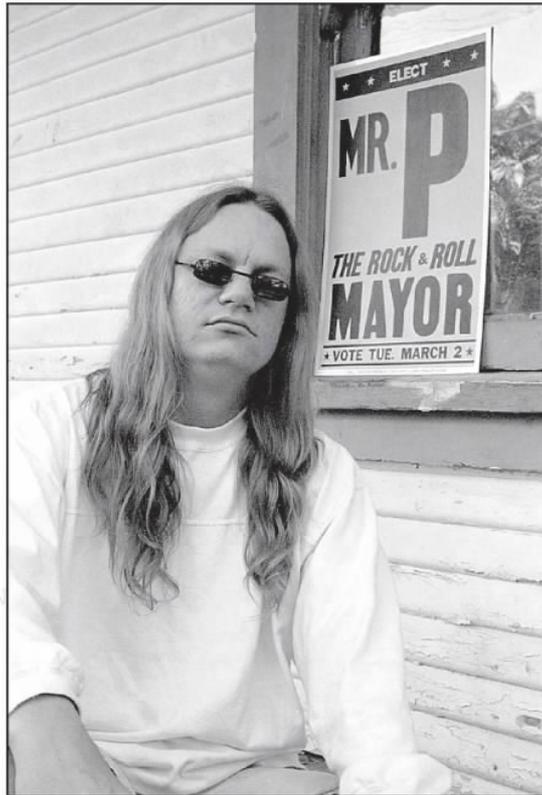
**IF YOU GO**  
 ■ **WHO:** Desperation Squad.  
 ■ **WHEN:** 10 p.m. Saturday.  
 ■ **WHERE:** 51 Buckingham, 301 W. 2nd St., Pomona.  
 ■ **INFO:** 629-0051 or [www.51buckingham.com](http://www.51buckingham.com).

panda costumes. Performing primarily around the Inland Empire, Ausmus, guitarist and vocalist Jeff Nixon, guitarist Robert Jones, drummer Ian Carlson and bass guitarist Laura Kovach have since put out three CDs featuring such songs as "Taco Truck" and "Welcome to the Drunkfest." Although their crowds do not usually leave standing room only, Ausmus has not stopped the publicity push.

The group recently launched its Web site, [desperationsquad.com](http://desperationsquad.com), to sell CDs and T-shirts, promote upcoming shows and document the band's history, which includes a 1993 campaign for mayor of Pomona by Ausmus who ran his campaign as a promotional stunt for the band.

His promise to put a "boom-box" in the mayor's office and crank tunes all day was enough to place him seventh out of eight candidates with 1.4% of the vote. It also produced the song "Rock & Roll Mayor," which the band used to storm the steps of City Hall and perform while the ballots were counted inside.

Ausmus, also known as Mr. P — a nickname he said he picked up as a deejay at Mt. San



Kevin Ausmus is the lead vocalist of Desperation Squad.

Antonio College but did not explain further — said his campaign was the model for all the wacky fringe candidates that he said characterized the California recall election.

He will also tell you that big-name rock bands are dying out in an industry obsessed with revenues and lawsuits over online file-sharing and music pirating, and that his group is just the thing to "light a fire up their butts."

"We're nuts; we're completely wacko," he said. "For me, it's a constant creative challenge. Even if [our style is] not on

somebody's map, it's still good and people still want us to play . . . We're geezers especially in this business, so we've got no hope, but we play like we do."

That is good for business, said Rolo Castillo, owner of 51 Buckingham in Pomona, where the group plays the fourth Saturday of every month.

"The group is amazing," he said. "I'd say it's one of the top great punk rock bands that ever played. At the [one] show, there were some people there who were unfamiliar with the group and they kind of put them in a trance."