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His music's got soul

'Static Trampoline' has attracted attention to Chris Pierce

04:31 PM PST on Thursday, November 16, 2006

By **PAUL SAITOWITZ**
The Press-Enterprise

Chris Pierce had been slogging it out for a decade, playing every Southern California dive he could get into when serendipity finally dipped his way.

A friend had invited the musician to a party in Los Angeles and told him to bring his guitar along just for fun. He complied, and when he arrived the host asked him to break out his ax and play a few songs for the 20 or so people in attendance.

Pierce obliged, closed his eyes and doled out some numbers with the same verve he'd been accustomed to at his gigs. After a few songs, he looked up and noticed the crowd had grown to include pop singer



Special to The Press-Enterprise
Chris Pierce, who was raised in Claremont, has almost completed his follow-up to "Static Trampoline."

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Seal, who was grooving along and smiling from ear to ear.

"He came up to me when I was done playing and said he liked my songs and that maybe we could collaborate on something ... which was amazing," Pierce said. "Then, the next morning I get a call from my manager telling me Seal's manager had called him and wanted me to open up for him on his European tour a week later. It was the kind of thing I'd always heard happening to other people and now it was happening to me."

The Claremont-reared musician started writing songs as a child and studied music at USC, but what drives his debut, "Static Trampoline," is the unabashed soul in his voice.

Drawing heavily on gospel and jazz influences, it fluctuates from delicate falsettos to shrieks reminiscent of Ray Charles. Juxtaposed against the laid-back acoustic framework of his arrangements, it makes for an interesting listen. Think Jack Johnson with more of a Motown bent.

"I did take some voice lessons in the past, but I think the key to my singing is not really thinking about it too much," he said. "Once you know certain techniques, you have to let the rest just go on feel."

"Static Trampoline," which was tracked in just one day save for the backing vocals and some keyboard overdubs, adheres to the same philosophy. Pierce intentionally kept the session short in an attempt to capture the energy of his live performance on the 13-song effort.

The organic album has attracted heavy interest from advertisers. The lead single, "Are You Beautiful," was used in a Banana Republic ad campaign and was added to the soundtrack of the Oscar-winning film "Crash." Another track, "Wishbone," was used in the "Project Greenlight" horror film, "Feast."

"I kind of wrestled with the idea of being in a commercial at first, but Banana Republic put a link to my Web site on their site and I think a lot of people have discovered me that way," he said.

Pierce has penned most of the material for the follow-up to "Static Trampoline," but even with increased notoriety and an increased budget, he plans on keeping the recording process natural.

"I think I'll probably do it pretty live and fast again," he said.

"It'll take more than a day this time ... but not much more, maybe two weeks."

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