

Pistolita takes nation with bang

By Natalie Sanchez

THE EAST COUNTY CALIFORNIAN

The East County Californian caught up with rising band Pistolita on their way to Chicago's Beat Kitchen where they are beginning the first leg of their national tour in support of rock band, Say Anything. For the last three years the piano rock band has been performing in various local venues while waiting to graduate Granite Hills High School in El Cajon to go on tour, and signing a record deal leading to the release of their debut album.

"It's awesome we just got off tour with Saves the Day and we are starting up with Say Anything. The shows have been great. The Say Anything tour is great - smaller venues packed every night with kids," said guitarist and vocalist Justin Shannon.

Forming in 2003, Pistolita, whose name comes from an early song written by the band called "Bang, Bang, Bang," played their first show in Escondido as a three-piece band with Shannon on guitars and vocals, pianist and vocalist Conor Meads and drummer Cory Stier on the throne. Adding bassist Alex Manos, Pistolita continued to play local shows at Soma, Ground Zero and Epicentre. "Corey, our drummer, booked us a bunch of shows and we did a few West Coast tours. We played at the Del Mar Fairgrounds



Courtesy photo

Pistolita, a piano rock band hailing from East County, returns to San Diego at Epicentre in Mira Mesa on April 21.

once ... with MXPX and that was sweet," Shannon said.

Signing with Montalban Hotel, a division of East West records in 2005, Pistolita recorded their first full-length album, "Oliver Under the Moon" in September 2005. Taking influences from The Beatles, Cursive, At the Drive In and The Pixies, Pistolita's album features 12 original songs, including Shannon's favorites, "The Pity Refrain" and "Oliver Under the Moon."

Not wanting to succumb to the

array of sub-genres that make up today's counter-culture turned pop culture "indie" or "emo" rock, Shannon explained, "We always incorporate that we are a piano band just to separate us from the other bands. Just piano rock band. I know it sounds cheesy but ... I don't want to say that we are some Indie rock band because we are accessible. We try to make it so that everybody can listen to it."

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Uncertain about when Pistolita will be hitting the airwaves, Shannon guessed that "Age" or the album's self titled song, "Oliver Under the Moon" would be the first possible releases.

Having traveled much of the United States, Pistolita has found encouragement in support provided by local fans and other bands in San Diego. "It's [East County] a thing we've all grown up around. It's helped us, and it's where we are from," Shannon said. "The scene is pretty good. There are really cool local bands from San Diego that we've played with and kids

seem to be pretty supportive of local music in San Diego. We've played with bands that have records out and they go to their hometowns and still aren't that well supported. San Diego seems to be a pretty good place if you're a local band."

Coincidentally, as the band reminisces of home, their tour van explodes in noise from the band members shouting, which Shannon explained, "We just passed a burrito place. We miss Mexican food really bad. We were just talking about [looking forward to being back in San Diego]. We really miss home. It will be fun."

Pistolita will return to San Diego on April 21 playing with Say Anything at

Epicentre in Mira Mesa. Finishing their national tour in late May, Pistolita will return to East County briefly before joining the Van's Warped Tour scheduled to begin mid-June.

Thrilled with their rising success, Pistolita will be doing "just a bunch of touring. Whenever a band hooks up with us, or whatever our booking agent gives us, we'll be doing," Shannon said.

Tickets are available for Pistolita's show on Friday, April 21 at 7 p.m. at Epicentre, 8450 Mira Mesa Blvd., in Mira Mesa at www.epicentre.org or by calling (858) 271-4000. Tickets can be purchased in advanced for \$10 or at the door for \$12.