

**Four Stroke Baron only played Reno, Los Angeles and Oregon before its run of February shows in Europe. The bandmates played in Norway, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and Finland.**

years, but I was starting to get kind of bored with it," Watt said. "One day, we just hit on the idea to play this weird, really sludgy stuff, just fun and easy-to-play metal."

From there, the band released a self-titled EP in 2014 and an album, *King Radio*, in 2015. By this time, they had to find a new bassist. Watt knew Ferrari and asked him to jam with the band in 2016.

"We still didn't have any plans to do some crazy live thing," Vallarino said. "We just wanted to put our music up for free online so more people could hear it."

The folks at Prosthetic Records did hear it on Bandcamp, which is known for its cadre of committed music fans. They liked the band enough to give them a shot at a national release for their next record, *Planet Silver Screen*. The results have been great, as rock and metal playlists on streaming services like Spotify and Apple Music have led Four Stroke Baron to a much wider audience than just their pals in Reno.

"We have also been published in a bunch of magazines now, and the reviews have been

fairly positive," Ferrari said. "There's been nothing that's overwhelmingly bad. Some just say, 'This is a band that's just starting out, but I think they can go somewhere.'"

## WORK IN PROGRESS

Here's where explaining what Four Stroke Baron does gets tricky. Yes, they are on a label with metal bands, but they instead write songs that cross genre lines like bootleggers cross county lines with the cops on their tails. UK post-punk, '90s noise rock, straight-up classic rock and pop, and stoner/doom metal all get a place at the table for a heady mix that gets its hooks into you once you get acclimated.

Plus, they don't write conventional metal lyrics, although they did point out that there is a lot of death at the end of their songs. Written collectively and often coming to the group in the form of wacky dreams or crazy ideas, they include songs about a kid who is struck by lightning, a cop who is really happy about a new pair of shoes, and a professional bear wrestler who meets a gruesome, ignoble ending. (That last one, "A Matter of Seconds," will be the band's next video.)

The band knows it's in a weird genre spot, but it isn't going to change, either.

"I think we'd be better marketed as an alternative rock band, if we were to set up the best expectations," Watt said. "I just like metal production, but on pop songs."

"Since our sound is so different, we get labeled as progressive metal, but then you can see where we're probably not progressive enough for some people," Ferrari said. "There's no shredding or 18-minute songs. So they may start with a notion that isn't correct and then grade it on that."

"I think one of the coolest complements we got on tour was from this guy who said, 'We know you guys aren't a metal band—you're a pop band that plays heavy-ass music,'" Vallarino said. "That's a good way to explain it." □



DURING THEIR TOUR, FOUR STROKE BARON PLAYED A PROGRESSIVE METAL EVENT CALLED COMPLEXITY FEST IN HAARLEM IN THE NETHERLANDS. PHOTO BY HUGHES VANHOUCKE, COURTESY FOUR STROKE BARON

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