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Guitar bums play Jack Singer

Last Updated: February 24, 2010 11:23pm



Musicians, from left, Pavlo, Rik Emmett and Oscar Lopez pose in the lobby of the Palliser Hotel in Calgary. The trio were recording in town and are joining forces for a wonderful sound. (Jim Wells/CalgarySun)

A South American musician, a Mediterranean-style guitarist and a former Canadian rock god walk into a bar ...

It could be the beginning of a good joke. One that either Oscar Lopez, Pavlo Simtikidis or Rik Emmett would crack as they sit in the plush chairs of the Fairmont Palliser's upscale lounge.

The trio of musicians — who are in town rehearsing for a string of shows to promote their debut CD, *Trifecta* — act as if they've been good pals for years.

Jokes, slams and good-natured ribbing abound.

"Look at this guy," says Lopez, pointing an accusatory finger at Emmett.

"He's the rock 'n' roll guy and look at how he dresses. He's the most conservative one in the group."

Clad in a smart jacket, button-up shirt and dress pants, Emmett — who found success in the late '70s as frontman for power rock trio *Triumph* — does look more like a political science professor than a rock star.

"We can all agree that Rik is the balance," says the Chilean-born Lopez, who has called Calgary home for the past 30 years.

"He's the guy who put the foundation down, which gives us and me the ability to fly with these beautiful melodies."

To be fair, Emmett is actually a music professor at Toronto's Humber College, but says collaborating with Lopez and Simtikidis

(known professionally as Pavlo) has been one of the more challenging and rewarding experiences of his career.

"When we first started, I hadn't met Oscar at all," he recalls.

"I didn't know how we would get along. But we're all guitar bums. We said, 'Let's just leave all our egos on the outside.' When you come into a collaborative effort you can't bring a lot of your ego or expectations in and you have to wait and see how it develops. And so far, the chemistry has been great."

It's been a two-year process to bring the Pavlo/Emmett/Lopez project to the stage. The original idea came from Pavlo, who was inspired by the jazz fusion collaborations between guitarists Al Di Meola, John McLaughlin and Paco de Lucia.

"It's always been a dream of mine to do something like that," says Pavlo.

"Oscar was interested in the idea and then Rik Emmett came up. It wasn't easy getting together because of our schedules.

"But when we did meet in one room and started playing our guitars, we knew instantly it was going to work. It was very natural to work together."

The trio performs Sunday night at the Jack Singer Concert Hall and in addition to playing tracks from *Trifecta*, the group will also do its own world-fusion take on a medley of Beatles classics and maybe a *Triumph* song or two.

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