

# Sugar Ray, Spin Doctors band members talk about life in the limelight

## Bands will highlight Northern Highlands Music Festival

By P.J. Root  
of The Lakeland Times

While preparing for their upcoming shows as part of the Northern Highlands Music Festival to be held at the Indian Bowl in Lac du Flambeau this weekend, Sugar Ray lead guitarist Rodney Sheppard and The Spin Doctors' lead singer Chris Barron recently took time out of their schedule to talk about their life on the road, their influences and much more.

Their interviews are captured here starting with Sheppard of Sugar Ray

**Q:** You started out as a metal band called the Shrinky Dinx and ultimately came to a summer time tone of Sugar Ray – how did this come about?

**A:** One reason would be would be maturity with age, we have been a band for 22 years now, so it was a natural progression, but I would say it was one particular event that sort of inspired us in going that direction.

Our second release coming off of Atlantic Records, with a record called “floored,” we got a new producer, David Kahne, who had experience working with bands such as Sublime. He single-handedly gave Mark (McGrath, lead singer) the confidence to sing as opposed



Sugar Ray

to screaming that you do in the hard rock genre. We then stumbled across the song, “Fly,” and our producer helped us bring it around and coached Mark on how to relax and sort of sing in his vocal range.

It was kind of natural for us because we are all big Beach boys and Beatles fans so even though we were playing hard music we all had that melodic side to our music that our producer helped bring out.

**Q:** What was one of your favorite music videos to do and why?

**A:** It would have to be the song, “When it’s Over,” for a couple reasons. We filmed it with a childhood friend named McG, who is now a big movie director and stuff. So we got to do that with him and film on Malibu beach.

The premise of the video gave each guy an opportunity to film his own fantasy video. So it focuses on each band member and their dream sequence. I’ve always loved Bruce Lee, so for my fantasy I became Bruce Lee and re-enacted a scene where he fights Kareem Abdul-Jabbar in the “Game of Death.” So I was bold enough to put on the tight jumpsuit and we hired Kareem Abdul-Jabbar to star. So it was kind of an out of body experience for me.

**Q:** How much did living in Newport Beach, Calif., affect your sound?

**A:** Well, I think it comes through by giving us a southern California sound that you would associate with the beach and sunshine. Even though a lot of the times we are writing the songs in Holly-

wood or making the songs in L.A., our heart is in Newport and we all grew up in Newport so it naturally just comes through in our music.

**Q:** For someone who has not seen a Sugar Ray show, what should they come to expect?

**A:** Expect to hear any of our songs you heard on the radio, expect us to play them live. Expect also a good variety of styles of music, as opposed to one style of music.

For instance, we still play music off our first record so we will mix up – our hard stuff with our more melodic radio stuff. Also we have a D.J. in our band and we have points in every show where we bring two people from the audience and sort of have a freestyle contest between the two of them and our D.J. will spin some well known song and Mark will give the guy or girl a microphone so the audience gets a kick out of that and sometimes they turn out to be pretty good.

**Q:** You have a new record coming out on July 21 called “Music for Cougars,” what can fans expect from this new album?

**A:** A little more of the same, but perhaps better songwriting. We collaborated with some outside songwriters. Rivers Cuomo from Weezer gave a song; we collaborated with guy from Bermuda who is big in the reggae community, and

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