

## **An Original Music Star is Born : Bay Area Rockers Zen Vendetta Win \$10,000 Make A Star Web-to-TV Competition**

*Make A Star, the first Web-to-TV music and talent competition, concluded its debut season Saturday with members of Fools & Horses and Zen Vendetta performing in person. Legendary music executive Russ Regan announced the winning band.*

Orange, CA ([PRWEB](#)) March 23, 2009 -- Reality television seems to thrive on the worst kind of drama - unnecessary conflict by people so obnoxious it's hard to find anyone you think deserves to be seen on TV. Then along came Make A Star, a new show syndicated on FUSE Saturday mornings for a 13 episode season that turned that stereotype around - exposing a wealth of unsigned American bands and solo artists to a national TV audience, and finishing it all off with two finalists competing for a \$10,000 cash prize where the only shame was that one of them had to lose.

Make A Star's concept was simple, but entirely unique in streamlining the Internet with TV - upload a music video for free to [MakeAStar.com](#), compete for fan votes and the scores of music industry judges, and hope your video gets broadcast on the weekly show. Hundreds of acts in everything from hip-hop, country, electro, punk, pop, and metal entered, but at the end of the Hollywood Phase bracket only two bands were left - Fools & Horses and Zen Vendetta.

Fools & Horses formed in 2002 and have built up a huge fan base in the Baltimore / Washington D.C. area with a tireless schedule of gigs. This live excellence comes through on their Make A Star contest song "Selfish." Singer/guitarist Matt Hutchison and band mates Kent Warren (bass), Steve Herrera (guitar) and Tim Hutchison (drums) blend layers of riffs, tempos and melodies into an euphoric energy that can set a wide range of dance floors on fire with ease. Fools & Horses make divisions within alternative rock seem to disappear, with influences from Britpop to American classic rock filling the stellar landscape of their critically acclaimed album I Am The Ghost. These guys are going to be big.

Make A Star flew Matt Hutchison out from Baltimore to Southern California on short notice for the final show, where he met up with Zen Vendetta singer Scott Eckardt and bassist Josh Wolfer, who hopped aboard the much shorter flight from Oakland to Orange County.

The show featured extended artist interviews, behind-the-scenes footage of both bands on the plane and arriving at their hotels, and special joint performances of each band's contest song with the opponent joining in on each other's songs.

Then came the winning announcement, as Russ Regan, the A&R legend who helped launch Elton John's American success, signed Neil Diamond and gave Brian Wilson the idea to name his band The Beach Boys, stepped out to open the envelope. While both bands had huge fan turnouts and high judge scores, Zen Vendetta came out on top, taking home the \$10,000 cash prize.

Matt Hutchison gracefully accepted the surprise \$1,000 runners-up check, and his reflection on the whole process revealed a rising band with a refreshingly positive and mature disposition. "I can't tell you how much fun the band and I had with Make A Star. Even though we were runners up, I left Orange County feeling very much a champion. From the production staff to the hosts and producer, I witnessed a class act unfold on camera. I foresee great things from Make A Star and was excited to be a part of it!"

For Zen Vendetta's Scott Eckardt, it was a time to shine. The lead singer has shared the stage with several major hard rock acts over the course of his career, but has still remained mostly a well-kept secret outside the east bay town of Livermore, California, where he began his musical journey as vocalist for the band Us in the 1980s and still calls home today.

Livermore is of course just minutes away from the Altamont Speedway, site of the 1969 Rolling Stones free concert that holds some of rock and roll's darkest memories. But Eckardt's lyrics for their Make A Star contest song "I'm Alive" are a world removed from those ghosts - emotional, honest, and socially poignant, the song paints a reflective, positive image of love and courageous self-belief that makes it an emboldening anthem for the zeitgeist of 2009 America, yet delivered with a sense of poetic metaphor that will stand the test of time.

Musically, the song blends elements of classic rock and modern alternative rock cohesively, and the band sees the mix of "a veteran soul with modern blood" as a key to their success. Josh Wolfer (bass), Ben Sairin (guitar), & Chris Mabry (drums) can rock hard, strum softly and craft tight and catchy hooks, but what makes the band special is a sense that they all have slightly different tastes in music and revel in that diversity. There are hints of 1960s summer of love, of Led Zeppelin thundering in a stadium, of early U2 and Guns N' Roses hanging out and enjoying each other's music, of Pearl Jam's finest moments, and it all begins to feel that a mini-history of rock and roll is weaved amongst the song's textures.

Winning the Make A Star Original Music Contest is a huge step for the young band (who formed in 2006 with the final lineup set just last year), paving the way for their debut full length CD *Out On The West Coast* due in stores this month. Zen Vendetta have the ambitious goal to "create the rock sound of the future" and by winning the Make A Star contest, they've received a loud roar of approval that they're well on their way - and the future looks bright, as Scott says "with all the negativity in the world, Zen Vendetta gives a glimpse of the sun shining through the rain."

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**Contact Information**

**IMAN FOROUTAN**

Contest Factory

<http://www.MakeAStar.com>

714-221-0070

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