



CHRIS CRISMAN

SIGNING ON

The Whigs — once known as America's greatest label-less band — proclaim 'Mission' accomplished

BY MICHAEL GILTZ

Performing on the "Late Show With David Letterman" is an important spot for any band, with national exposure and a hipness cachet that is not to be denied. But when the Whigs perform Jan. 28 on Letterman, lead singer Parker Gispert says it'll be his equivalent of playing the Garden or Carnegie Hall.

"I've always been a nerd about late-night TV performances," says the 25-year-old Gispert, whose band will also be performing at the Music Hall of Williamsburg in Brooklyn on Feb. 1.

"I actually have a giant VHS collection of different people playing on late-night television. Growing up, if anybody was coming on that I liked, I would tape it and watch it over and over again. So it's pretty cool that I get to go on now. I'm pretty pumped up about it."

The Whigs (a name chosen because it sounds vague and interesting, not because they have any particular affinity for the 19th-century political group that was a precursor to the Republican Party) are promoting their second album — and ma-

don't want to do that." Gispert's own drummer and creative partner is Julian Dorio, along with bassist Tim Deaux as the third leg in their power trio. Both Gispert and Dorio played drums in high school in Atlanta. But Gispert was in a lot of bands and "sucked," while Dorio stayed at home, playing along with CDs and was generally acknowledged for his skills by being dubbed "freak drummer guy."

They headed to Athens for college, when Gispert was waylaid by a series of major illnesses, including shingles and mono. "I was in the hospital for 35 days," says Gispert. But Dorio kept visiting during Gispert's recovery over the next six months; they bonded, and soon after the Whigs were formed.

In a story perfect for the Internet age, they and original bassist Hank Sullivant bought recording equipment on eBay, recorded an album over a summer at Sullivant's frat house, then re-sold the equipment on eBay for just about the

same amount. That self-produced CD caught the eye of Rolling Stone; endless touring at every opportunity honed the band even further, and they simply waited until a label approached them with the right attitude.

The Whigs signed with ATO (the only one that didn't immediately have a dozen ideas about what to change about the band and their music). The artist-friendly indie launched by Dave Matthews also features Ben Kweller and My Morning Jacket, among others.

Gispert knows that YouTube may have brought his obsessive taping days to an end, but he still watches late-night TV, and his band can now be a part of his collection.

"I feel like we're fortunate," says Gispert. "A lot of people who end up on those shows had a song they recorded in the studio and got on the radio or MTV. But the way we've grown as a band is as a live band playing in bars. So giving a performance on late-night television is just doing what you do every night." ♦

They waited for a record company to come to them.