

The players hold the cards

By: GLENN GAMBOA /staff correspondent

March 22, 2004

Austin, Texas -- In recent years, the South by Southwest Music Conference transformed the streets of Austin into the set of a musical star wars - with thousands of industry types and media folk searching for the next artist who would be transformed into a multi-platinum blockbuster.....Not this year.

New-garage leaders The Hives and The Von Bondies, playing back-to-back at the ever-hip Spin private party, showed the range that genre has. The '80s-influenced bands, from New York standouts such as stellastarr* and The Walkmen to newcomers The Killers, The Hiss and Franz Ferdinand - the closest thing to a festival must-see-were also out in force adding their tweaks and updates to the music that has, so far, been underappreciated. Few bands were more potent than The Dears and Stars, a pair of Canadian bands that took the '80s delicate, pretty sound and toughened it up to today's standards.

Throughout South by Southwest, it became clear that there's nothing wrong with looking back as long as you add something when you bring it forward.

A growing number of music legends are relearning how to tap into that power as well, heading to South by Southwest to remind fans that they still are viable artists, even if only the indie labels are interested in them. Gary U.S. Bonds, Kris Kristofferson, Toots and the Maytals, Mission of Burma and Joan Jett all took their places with the young up-and-comers to show that artists of all ages and styles can demand a place in the new music industry. Bonds looked especially fit and trim when showcasing his star-studded comeback album, Back In 20, dropping June 1 on MC Records.

Little Richard reminded fans that it takes all types of artists to keep the music industry vibrant..... *And Gary U.S. Bonds is one of those Artists proving it true...*

Copyright © 2004, Newsday, Inc.