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Pickett's charge is back with career-spanning retrospective

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Not everything that came out of Miami in the '80s was sleek, fast and painted in "Miami Vice" pastels. The music wasn't all Gloria Estefan, either.

Charlie Pickett and the Eggs was a rowdy, raunchy band out of Miami that sounded like it had crawled out of a black-water mangrove swamp off I-95. Pickett sang songs about unfaithful lovers, sex, failed romance, drugs, American wanderers, the bad parts of town and the lower realms. He had more in common with Johnny Thunders than Don Johnson, for sure.

"Frankly, we just tried to plumb the depths," Pickett said. "(Our music) wasn't wide. There was no big vista."

Thanks to a new, career-spanning retrospective CD from Bloodshot Records called "Bar Band Americanus: The Best of Charlie Pickett And" — which comes out Tuesday — fans can revisit some of the darkest music to ever come out of the Sunshine State.

If you'd like a dose while you wait for the CD release, Pickett and his new band, The Super Models of Propriety, will be headlining a special concert called "Interstellar Overdrive: An Autumnal Convocation" on Saturday night at Lake Ella. The free shindig, which is being presented by Tallahassee musician-impresario Mick Buchanan on the trucker-friendly date of 10-4, also will feature The Secret Spaceship and Young Neils, which turns up the feedback with covers of songs by Neil Young and Crazy Horse.

"Tallahassee has always been one of our favorite places to play, and I'm not just saying that to blow smoke," Pickett said. "We've had some great shows up there."

True.

In the mid-'80s, Pickett held court at Smitty's, an old-school roadhouse on Bradfordville Road, with legendary Tallahassee rock band The Slut Boys on the same bill.

"When people would dance, you could feel the floor move," Pickett said. "It was great."

"I remember him using one of the bar stools at Smitty's as a slide on his guitar," ex-Slut Boys member Ben Wilcox said.

While critics raved about Charlie Pickett and the Eggs, the band had a hard time connecting with a mass audience during the days when MTV and big record companies ruled the music world. Like other hard-hitting rock bands of the era — The Replacements, The Gun Club, The Pixies, etc. — Pickett and the Eggs never broke through in a major way. By 1988, it took its toll on Pickett.

"All that L.A. thrash was killing me," Pickett said. "All these sweaty guys knocking each other around and throwing elbows on the dance floor. That's not the audience I wanted to reach."

What other choice did an underground rock hero have but quit music and go to law school? Pickett has been working as an attorney in South Florida since 1994 and playing an occasional gig around Dade County on the side. But with "Bar Band Americanus" on the horizon, the world may hear a lot more from Pickett. Hey, most of the world missed it the first time around.

"Like a handful of other bands from that era, whose underappreciated and underknown work continues to resonate in strange and unexampled ways, they worked without a net, without a blueprint, without direct forebears and with little regard for the musical bones they picked," Bloodshot Records co-founder Rob Miller writes in the liner notes of "Bar Band Americanus."

Yep. That about sums it up.
