

G. Love slowly singing way back from injury

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By Dan Mayfield

Journal Staff Writer

The average career for a pro football player is just three seasons. NBA players fare slightly better, playing about five seasons before an injury usually sidelines them.

But singers don't usually have to stare down a career-ending injury. So when singer G. Love's vocal cords started bothering him, "it was scary stuff," he said.

When he was diagnosed with severe strain on his vocal cords last summer — the musical equivalent of a herniated disk or a torn ACL — he was sweating it.

"It's a career-ending injury," G. Love told the Journal.

"This was a real wake-up call for me," he said. "I'm not a trained singer. The singing style that I do, it puts a lot of wear and tear on the vocal cords, and being on the road for 15 years and performing five nights a week in smoky nightclubs and not having the best habits during a show myself, it all added up."

His smoking and his drinking, along with his strained voice, had to all be put on hold for a while as he recovered from vocal surgery.

"I had a rough year. I couldn't do anything. I couldn't grunt. I couldn't talk, whisper. No sex," he said.

G. Love, with his band Special Sauce, rose to stardom in the early 1990s when MTV started playing his song "Cold

Beverage," a rap-and-blues hybrid of a song that seemed to channel both the Beastie Boys and R.L. Burnside.

But it was that style, which emphasized the growling blues, that tore up his vocal cords over the years, he said. So, now, instead of taking the rock-star lifestyle to the extremes he did in the past, he's been forced to mellow out. He doesn't smoke, and his ever-present glass of whiskey when he performed is gone.

"I've got to pay my dues," he said.

G. Love and Special Sauce saw success in the late 1990s with several records that hit the Top 40, but since then he's found more of a cult audience that digs his hybridized rock. Though the group has put out a new record, "Superhero Brother," it hasn't done what G. Love has hoped — so far.

"This record has been out for a minute now. It hasn't done well commercially," he said. "It's harder than ever this year, with my voice, and the record business going to (expletive)."

Sure, he said, his voice is better, but he's feeling the weight of a band and a crew on his back as this year's spring tour kicks off.

"We have 10 or 15 people that make money, and eat, off my ability to sing songs and go on the road," he said. "Do I make a good record so my bass player will eat? There's two sides: I'm doing it for the music, and now 10, 15 years down the line, this is my lifestyle and a career as well, and I have to immerse myself into it. I certainly do consider our band and crew, and we take good care of our people and ask everybody involved to put as much into it as we do."

G. Love and Special Sauce

The Eric Hutchinson Band opens

WHEN: 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 3

WHERE: El Rey Theater, 620 Central SW

HOW MUCH: \$22 in advance, \$25 at the door. Tickets available at GetTix.net, Birdland, Encore, Bookworks, all Zone locations