

STREET SCENE

Domestic Problems, Knee Deep Shag, Rooster win contest

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With names that conjure up images of farm life, family fights and plush carpeting, the 2000 Opening Act Contest winners will make themselves heard as they gear up as openers for at least one show each during Pine Knob Music Theatre's summer season.

Rooster, Knee Deep Shag and Domestic Problems were the judges' choices out of eight worthy contenders Tuesday, May 23 at Meadowbrook Music Festival. In it's second year, the Palace Sports and Entertainment Inc. sponsored Opening Act to recognize up-and-coming musical talent from around the Detroit area. The remaining finalists included punk-pop three-piece Molly, of Grand Rapids, power-pop quartet Southfield hailing from Grose Pointe, soulful Scott Fab, blues pioneers The King Snakes from Westland, and the melodic groove of Kalamazoo's Blue Dahlia.

Rochester-based Americana-rockers Rooster took the win to heart. Ken Katacak, drummer and former Rochester resident, said he "can't wait to see who we're opening up for." Though the band's not on the summer schedule, Karasek said it would be a dream to open for the Foo Fighters.

Knee Deep Shag's five members tossed out big names like

Dave Matthews Band, The Black Crowes and Paul Simon as their own personal "dream gigs," but it doesn't truly matter which show the band opens. Singer Matt Gross looks forward to "the thrill of playing Pine Knob with a professional sound system, in front of a huge crowd."

The band that hails from Kalamazoo and has roots in Troy dazzled the crowd and 10 judges performing its recent single 3 p.m. from their 1999 release *Good Disguise*. Bassist Mike Feurst said the contest "provides up and coming bands to-play in front of a crowd that might not necessarily see the show."

Agreeing, Gross added: "It keeps the hope alive. We've been at this for a long time."

Also deep-seated in the Michigan music scene, Grand Rapids' Domestic Problems were honored to be named winners. Singer Andy Holgruive said the contest placed his band one step closer to its goal - getting more recognition and playing before larger crowds. The band is currently working on a new album, to be recorded in Grand Rapids with Jon Praser this summer.

Members of all three bands showed great support for one another, as they have all performed together at one time or another.

The question on each of their minds these days remains the same: how will each band be asked to open for this season? The decision is yet to be made.



Anticipation: Above, members of The Kingnakes, a Westland rock outfit, (from left), Daniel Ross, Thomas Mann, Steven Pelloni, K.R. Broderdorf, and Tommy Diaz relax backstage prior to their performance.



Face of a winner: Left, Job Grotzki, saxophonist and half of the horn duo in Domestic Problems out of Grand Rapids, gets down during their winning performance.



STAFF PHOTOS BY MATTHEW TAPLINSON

Soul: Matt Gross, lead vocalist of Kalamazoo's Knee Deep Shag, sings his heart out at the Opening Act Contest May 23 at Meadowbrook Music Festival. His band was one of three winners, along with Rooster and Domestic Problems.

The Workhorse Movement lives up to its name



STEPHANIE A. CASOLA

Walking into a room at the Avenue Brewery in Ferndale, I peeked around for a glimpse of the two musicians I'd come to meet. Spotting Jeff Piper quickly, I gave an unsure glance - I'd never seen any members of The Workhorse Movement, not in real life anyway. And I was counting on recognizing Lake Orion native and drummer Joe Mackie - the one with the most tattoos. But I was early, he was on time and Jeff was quietly sipping a beverage at the bar when he called my name.

Fresh off tour with Canada's hard-core answer to girl bands, Kittie, the local boys who formed The Workhorse Movement while attending Central Michigan University had an air of relaxation surrounding them - or were they just enjoying the chips and salsa? I'll never really know, but for all their gravel-edged image, Piper and Mackie proved to be a truly genuine pair.

Mackie's love for music stretches back to childhood, his involvement in church and in high school choir - although you might not expect it at first glance. He knew he was meant to play drums because he was

always banging on things with his pencil. "I used to figure out drum beats to commercials," he said, naming a Honda slogan as one of his favorites.

For Piper, the sounds of music came first from his father's barbershop singing. He knew he had to have a quiet after watching a Quiet Riot video. From his metal past to a growing interest in jazz during high school, Piper - who also goes by the name Freedom - uses a wide variety of guitar styles to his advantage.

In 1994 those pasts converged - along with singer Myron - to start a band that would test the boundaries of heavy rock and raunchy roll. Somewhere down the line, the band incorporated friend and general wildcat Cornbread into the line-up. "He was always at shows," said Mackie.

"We took him out on the road with us because he's such a good dancer," said Piper. "We never thought it would turn into him being a second for a vocalist."

But like all unexpected changes affecting The Workhorse Movement, the band rolled along with it. By 1997, bassist Pete Bever joined in and the band relocated to Detroit, in effect coming even closer to a Ooroon Records, which released a five-song self-titled EP the following year.

Influences like Elvis, Led Zepplin and various '80s rock



Hard at work: Cornbread, Pete Bever, Joe Mackie, Freedom (aka Joe Piper) and Myron are The Workhorse Movement.

bands filter into the raucous sound of The Workhorse Movement, one that also incorporates elements of soul and hip hop. The latest album released by Roadrunner Records *Sons of the Pioneers* will hit record store shelves June 6, but those who caught the recent Harpo's show with Kittie have gotten a taste of it already. Producer Scott Santos had a hand in the technical elements of the record, but the songs are distinctly Workhorse.

Since securing the deal with Roadrunner Records last year, Piper said everything's taken on a bigger scale. "It became a career when Roadrunner stepped into the game," he said.

The Workhorse Movement's dedication to that career is denoted in the band name - a name that represents putting 100 percent into everything it does. Mackie came up with the moniker after reading Tom Wolf's novel *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*. "The whole thing that inspired me was the way people were trying to break out of societal norms," he said. Workhorse was a recurring concept.

Breaking rock-music norms, the band welcomed Esham on their latest release with an appearance on *Traffic*. "He's the coolest rapper out, the most prolific, sapper. He's a rock guy too."

The next step, you may be wondering? The band will be shooting a video for its first single, *Keep The Sabbath Dream Alive*, in and around the Detroit area and releasing the song in Europe and Japan first. For now, fans can catch them at an energy-powered live show.

Catch The Workhorse Movement with *Factory 81*, 7 p.m. Saturday, June 3, at St. Andrews Hall in Detroit. \$7. (313) 961-4617.

Check out www.workhorse-movement.com.

Stephanie Angelyn Casola writes about popular music for the Observer & Eccentric News-papers. She can be reached at (734) 953-2130.

CD RELEASE



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