The Fags prove there's more to power pop than you've heard?

I wasn't the first to question the motivo behind a name like The Fags. And I won't be the last.

"It's British slang for eigarette," said a friend, of the power pop trio soon to headline Ferndale's Magic Bag.

I was still curious. I headed to Woodward Avenue Browers last November to see this spectacle for myself. The place was flooded with curious scenesters doing the same. And what enveloped that pint-sized stage looked like nothing less than Detroit rock history-in-the-making.

John Speck (vocals, guitars), Jimmy Paluzzi (drums, vocals) strutted to the stage wearing white shirts and black ties as the audience looked on in eager anticipation. And it turned out to be one of those nights you talk about endlessly.

I couldn't guess that this supergroup came together practically by accident.

Speck and Paluzzi were members of Hoarse, and gained national attention in the mid '90s signing to RCA. Meanwhile, Patalan made a name for himself as a producer and met Paluzzi while working with Sponge.

Paluzzi while working with sponge. "I was working on songs I was writing after Hoarse," said Speck, an Ann Arbor resident. He drew in Paluzzi and Patalan and the project just snowballed. "Tim became the bass player by default."

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"I'm kind of a fan of these guys,"
he said with a smile.
The trio debuted in Ohio in
January 2000. They later played



Supergroup: Featuring former members of Hoarse and Sponge, The Fags will headline with openers Dirty Americans and Mind Candy, 8 p.m. Friday, Feb. 15, Magic Bag, 22920 Woodward Ave., Ferndalc.

an opening slot at Jacoby's under the suggested moniker Smokin Faga and it stuck. Whatever you call it, it all comes down to the music. While Speck pens most lyrics, the band works on music collectively. "We kind of gravitate toward what we like," he said first toward what we like," he said frailings we all have in common. Those 'things' tend to fall somewhere between genres of rock, where between genres of rack, punk and pop. Think Steely Dan or The Cars, and hooks you can't get out of your head.

U B/NGI(D) Fingeral) BC (cmp) on Friday February 15th Doors Open 7:30 Showtime 8:30

Each bandmate traces his interest in music back to child-hood. They all grew up surrounded by music. For Speck, it's summed up best in a snapshot. He remembers sitting on his father's lap, in the back yard,

just 3 years old. They both strum aguitar.

Similarly, Paluzzi remembers his father singing songs to him when he was little. "They were songs he would make up, like Mr. Moon," he said, offering a few lyries. "He used to sing songs and play harmonica."

And Patalan's home was always filled with music. His earliest memory of music involved "running around the house while some strange overture was playing, trying to tackle my brother."

As different as these musicians might seem, they share a common ground and respect for one another. And it all comes out onstage.

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"If you're going to go to a show ... you go to have a good time," said Paluzzi, who lives in Detroit. "It's called entertainment. It's a social event." That might be one reason you'ne' find him playing a drum solo. And the band tends to stick to shorter sets. Paluzzi said they perform for just 40 minutes. Don't expect a fancy light show, a choreographed routine. They'll never be mistaken for a boy band.

"There's no flash," Paluzzi

Their own way

The Fags aren't doing what most other bands are – fervently chasing down a record deal. They tend to choose gigs carefully. They remain focused on the music moment by moment.

In March, their E.P. Five Songs will be released on a Dallas-based indie labet called Idol Records. It wasn't shopped around, just picked up by a friend eager to release it.

"If you have songs, you will sell records," said Speck. "It's not about what the outcome is."

Patalan assured me the band has 15 songs ready for release; they're just holding back. Apparently, it's all part of the plan.

Past experience has changed the way they look at their work. "The reality of the music busi-

clever hooks of List, The Fags' songs draw enough on reality to make them easy to relate to and hard to forget.

Their own way

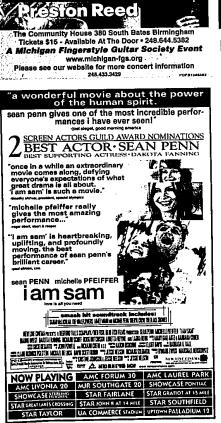
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Don't miss The Fags with Dirty Americans and Mind Candy, 8 p.m. Friday, Feb. 15, Magic Bag, 22920 Woodward Aee., Ferndale, Cover \$6, Call (248) 544-3030.

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Open 7:00 Showtime 8:00

