

bass. He takes his cues from Monte "Calhoun" Cohen. Calhoun is playing what seems to be an oversized hollow-body Gretsch with an odd finish that makes it look orange. Whatever the color of the finish, Calhoun's Gretsch has a huge sound, with an amazing clarity.

The singer Teddy Boy Roy leans back in a chair facing the others, holding a microphone gingerly in his right hand. This leisurely posture is uncharacteristic for him. If he were onstage, he'd be moving, twirling, leaving on his toes and shaking.

The Billy Boys have been together for only two months and already they're making a dent in the Eugene bar scene. Their first gig was opening for The Milkmen at B.J. Kelly's. Since then they've played Max's, Old Taylor's and some disreputable bars out-of-town. The Billy Boys will be playing the beer garden this afternoon.

When asked about the evolution of the band, they're reluctant to say much. The brief career of Arms Akimbo is the only band they're ready to recall.

"We've all been in previous bands," Calhoun says, "but nothing as good as this."

The Billy Boys style is rockabilly — but not without a taint of roadhouse raucous rock'n'roll. They have a fast-paced, infectious danceable guitar sound that loses nothing when Calhoun trades off the hollow body Gretsch for his Gibson Les Paul '55.

Calhoun met Roy at a private party at the Hilton, where they both expressed their affinity for rockabilly — but not the homogenized revivalists blend. It took a few months, but they soon had a band together and were playing.

Anyone who caught their first gig at B.J. Kelly's saw they were rough, but was impressed by their potential. Since that gig the band has steadily improved but hasn't even neared its potential. The Billy Boys play a tight eclectic set consisting of rockabilly tunes, the almost mandatory cover songs and four or five Roy originals.

It's only been two months but they already have some stories to tell.

When they played the Blue River Tavern ("We country it up," Calhoun says) a wizen country gentleman shuffled up to Calhoun while he was tuning. "You don't want to play too loud so we can't hear the music," the gent says. Calhoun just gave him a quizzical look.

The Billy Boys are constantly adding to and polishing their repertoire. Tonight they're trying out "Get So Excited (When I Rock'n'Roll)" by Levi. The process is interesting. Silver thumps along, picking up the bass line, as they listen to the song. Calhoun strums in time, occasionally breaking into a lead. Becker taps time on his high-hat. Every so often they break into the song, then pause to listen. They puzzle out their various parts.

"So it's verse, bridge, solo, bridge," Silver says. "What kind of riffs you want?" Becker asks, doing some. "I can do basic shit..."

"Yeah," Calhoun says, "boom, pata pata pata, boom..."

"Shit, let's just play the song," Roy says.

Becker counts and they jump into the song. Roy sings the lyrics from a sheet. Calhoun is hesitant on the lead, but goes on. Silver looks away, concentrating on the bass line. Still, the song sounds sharp and they end it satisfied. Now the perfecting begins. They play it over and over again until they are more than just satisfied — until they can almost call it their own.

Rough Mix

Rough Mix fits the classic definition of a bar band a respectable bar band. Their two guitars, bass and drums line-up — also classic — is well-suited to the type of music they play.

Like so many bands, the members of Rough Mix are all but camped out in drummer Stephen Perry's living room rehearsing. Perry's drums are backed up against the front window. Amplifiers are stacked on chairs. Mike Winn, rhythm guitarist, is over by the

couch. Lead guitarist John Sullivan is right in front of Perry's bass drum. Kevin Winn, bass guitarist, is sitting on a stool with his back to a cupboard, sandwiched in between the dining room table and the door to the kitchen.

Not only is their rehearsal space tight, so is their version of The (English) BEAT's "Save It for Later."

According to Kevin Winn, Rough Mix's style leans to "danceable music... but it's got to be fun."

"We try to play types of music they (the audience) aren't familiar with... broaden their horizons," Perry says, then adds with a laugh, "But when they're on their second beer, they don't care."

Rough Mix's style is less a raucous, guitar-dominated one than a powerful, but balanced sound. It's evident in the songs in their repertoire. Their play list is full of Rolling Stones, Who, and Beatles' songs, with a few Ramones, Cure and Cars' songs for good measure.

Probably Rough Mix's greatest strength is its rhythm section of Winn and Perry. Perry's drumming is taut, with crisp riffs and sharp fills. Rather than being the instrument carrying the tempo, Perry's drumming counterpoints the guitars.

Kevin Winn's bass playing isn't what could even casually be called the usual style. He tends to play his bass loud, and more than providing the bottom, he often adds a few runs. Winn is also notorious for his theatrics while performing. It's unusual for a bass player to be windmilling a la Pete Townshend, or leaping from the drum platform to the stage.

Winn has also received dubious notoriety for a cut on his finger. The last time they played Max's, Winn opened a cut on his middle finger and subsequently bled all over his bass. It's a joke among the band members. They ask him if he's cleaned off his strings yet. Apparently he does this often.

"If he doesn't (bleed), then we don't have a good night," Perry remarks as the others laugh.

Kevin Winn and Perry are alumni of the Graphics, a Eugene band that gained a reputation as a solid rock'n'roll band two years ago. Bill Preib of the Cashiers was also a member of the Graphics. That band paid its dues in bars all over town, eventually getting to open for Los Explorers at their W.O.W. Hall farewell gig.

Perry and both of the Winns go back farther than the Graphics.

"It all started in 1979, on a rainy day at the McDonald's in Medford, Oregon..." Perry says bemusedly.

Rough Mix (a recording studio term for the mix on the master tape) "describes our sound," Winn says. "We knew the sound we wanted, coming out of the Graphics."

That sound is straight forward, classic bar band rock'n'roll, with its emphasis on danceability, but still a little rude around the edges.

Rough Mix will be playing The Lost Dutchman in Springfield Sunday, then B.J. Kelly's and maybe Max's later in the month. Gail Perry is the band's manager and she's found it difficult to get Rough Mix gigs, let alone a hearing.

"It's tight in Eugene, because there's a lot of R&B, and blues bands," she says. To find the band gigs she takes a tape they made to bar owners. But she's found most, unlike B.J. Kelly's or The Lost Dutchman, are reluctant to book a new band.

Rough Mix is always refining and adding to their repertoire. Tonight they're learning Cars' "Party Doll" and Nick Lowe's "Switchboard Susie." They don't really like the synth-pop stuff. "We like a guitar sound," says Mike Winn.

"We have to like it," Sullivan says. "We have to play it night after night."

The Commotions

Does the name Commotions ring a bell? Probably not — but you might know this band as the Evolutionary Dance Band. That does ring a bell, although the Commotions would like to dispel forever their

association from that band.

"We got negative reaction (about the name) from a lot of people," says David Meyer, "including some of us."

"We had to change the name," he adds. "Bar owners reacted to the name."

The name change followed some switches in the band's line-up. David Meyer, drummer Bob Beisser and rhythm guitarist Ron Kleim still remain from the original Evolutionary Dance Band, but they've added Jane Hart Meyer on keyboards and Pete Weinberger on bass guitar. And thus are the Commotions.

"Jane and Pete joined two months ago. Ron and I played together for about a year," says David Meyer.

The Commotions show a lot of versatility and musical know-how. They have a very fresh, very modern sound and a contagiously hip attitude to what they play.

They also have an excellent ear for tunes to play. "We do a lot of '60s stuff... upbeat," he says.

Normally they rehearse in Beisser's garage, but this week they were set up in the Meyer's living room. (On one wall are multi-colored posters from previous gigs, with their previous name, at the Black Forest Tavern, Taylor's and other venues.) They started off with "It's My Party," the Lesley Gore song. Jane Meyer's vocals were particularly sharp. She can hit and sustain high notes with strength.

There's a trace of raggae in many of their arrangements, like "Under the Boardwalk" and "Party."

And just fooling around, they jump into "Ready Teddy" with Kleim doing the vocals.

In addition to the 1960s tunes, the Commotions also have their "Surf set," consisting of Dick Dale and the Delltones and Ventures classics like "Walk, Don't Run" and "Pipeline." The surf set is a favorite of the fraternity parties they've played.

"They always request 'Louie Louie,'" Jane Meyer says.

The Commotions repertoire all but spans the three decades of rock'n'roll. They play the "British invasion stuff" and lots of the new music — from Elvis P. to Elvis C.

But the Commotions aren't content to play covers. A good part of their set consists of originals. "We're the only band in town that does our set list on an Apple Lisa," David Meyer says.

David Meyer and Kleim do most of the writing. Kleim's "Got To Have Heart" is an uptempo number, with Kleim exchanging rhythm guitar for lead guitar.

There's a lot of instrument exchanging between songs as the three guitarists have the versatility to play bass on one number and lead on the next.

But, getting gigs has been something of a problem.

"Eugene has more good bands than places to play," Jane Meyer says.

"We play mostly the 'Gravy Circuit' — as The Billy Boys dubbed it — Dexter, Oakridge, Blue River Tavern," David Meyer says. They get paid more at these places than they would for a gig in Eugene.

They like playing The Pump House in Junction City. Wienberger says "it's a good place" partly because of the unique clientele.

"There are the under 25s, the 30-to-50 group, and they all dance," David Meyer says.

"You can play all kinds of songs there," David Meyer says.

"Old Taylor's is the best place to play in town," Kleim says. That's because of the crowd and the ambiance, he adds.

The Commotions haven't overlooked the contemporary fusion of music and video; they have two half-hour videos airing on cable access channel 11. They did one for "The Paul Burnett Show" and the second for "Potluck." Both were taped under the Evolutionary Dance Band moniker.

What separates The Commotions from other Eugene bands is their versatility, the hipness of their music and a thoroughly modern attitude.

A name is a name is a name - or is it

Editor's Note: A band not only makes a name for itself by the music it plays, but it gives itself an image by the name it chooses. Whether we hear the music or not, the sound of the name strikes a curious chord. You can bet these local groups didn't consult a PR firm to come up with an appropriate tag.

"The Milkmen," says member Randy Jack Haines, "play revved-up '50s and '60s music, semi-obscure r&b, rock and roll, songs by popular old artists, plus a small percentage of originals."

The name, Haines adds, came from two band members, Boyd Small and Henry Cooper. Surprisingly, Small and Cooper arrived at the same name at the same time without each other's knowledge. "What I like about it is that you can paint your own picture," Haines says. "We wanted

something that was different. It works because it doesn't pin us down too much."

The sound of Bete Noire, according to member Skip Moses, is described as funk rock, soul, rock'n'roll and borderline new wave. The name, he says, apparently came from Sylvan Duplant's wife. (Duplant is the group's bassist and vocalist who was born in France.)

"The name is French," Moses says, "and it means 'my pet aversion.' I think it has a slightly negative connotation, but on the other hand, it's something that bothers you a little and you like at the same time. There are some people who know what it means, people who don't, and people who translate it literally." (Bete Noire translates literally into *black beast*).

"To most people," Moses adds, "it just

has a nice, modern, new wave ring to it."

Teddy Boy Roy of The Billy Boys describes his band's sound as "toughed up rockabilly." Still, he doesn't want to be known as a 'rockabilly' band.

"We play anything with a kind of a raw edge," Teddy says. "We take old songs and beef them up."

Roy says that when bassist Billy Silver left town for a few days this fall, the rest of the band snuck the name in as a joke on him. "Silver sings one song and I sing the rest," says Teddy.

"The name has sort of an English derivative, like something out of 'A Clockwork Orange.' It's sort of futuristic, like a gang. That's the way all bands are, like a gang. The name leaves itself open to interpretations."

Louis Samora of The Jackals says his

band plays — simply — rock and roll.

"The band's name," Samora says, "is concise. It's only one word. The word itself means business. It means 'little yellow dog.' I thought of it because we're all dogs in the band, every member, and we're out for one purpose only. That's to rock."

Vocalist Jorge Navarro of Whatsisname (and a bunch of other guys) says his band plays a combination of funk, r&b with horns and Latin music.

According to Navarro, 'Whatsisname' is pianist Mike van Liew and the people who play with him. The rest of the line-up occasionally changes, but van Liew is the group's focal point. "The name," Navarro adds, "leaves kind of a cool image. Relax and have a good time."

Marty Schwarzbauer