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# Valentine's weekend starts with 'putting out the love'

■ Groove Juice Special headlines a funk concert that tries to capture a festival-like atmosphere

By Lisa Toth  
 for the Emerald

To start off the Valentine's weekend with a beat and maybe some dress-up fun as well, make plans to attend "Late Night Friday Funk" on Feb. 11 at John Henry's. Silver People Presents and local band Groove Juice Special are combining efforts for a night of real emotion.

"Our animation lets people feel the energy," Groove Juice Special's lead vocalist Ben Thomas says. "We put out the love."

Opening the show is Freedom Funk Ensemble, with the celebration beginning at 9 p.m. John Henry's is located at 136 E. 11th Ave. and event organizers say that costumes are encouraged to promote a festival-like atmosphere.

Groove Juice Special always sets out with the intent to produce the most entertaining dance party possible, Thomas says, and he adds that this Friday night will be no exception. The band's music fuses unadulterated funk and relentlessly catchy melodies with elements of soul, blues, reggae, and salsa.

Thomas, in addition to being lead vocalist, also composes lyrics and has experience on the conga drums. Guitarist Brandon Beebe admits to a passion for blues and likes to counter that sound with a jazzy finesse. Vincent Stoffer is a classically trained pianist, but he



Courtesy Hollister Marketing

Groove Juice Special is the headliner for 'Late Night Friday Funk' at John Henry's.

applies his skill to various keyboards for the band.

The rhythm section that generates the backbeat for Groove Juice Special's hip-shaking arrangements includes drummer John Foord and bassist Sean Potts. Mike Thompson on saxophone and John Polese on trumpet round out the ensemble.

Except for Polese and Thompson, who is a graduate student, the band members are all seniors at the University. Thomas, Beebe and Potts started out in the school's gospel choir, before Beebe approached Thomas with the idea of forming an orchestrated band. The group's meager beginnings in Potts' basement set the foundation for the goal's realization.

"Music became our hobby, and we practiced all the time," Potts says. "We just have fun affecting and moving people. Our goal is to inspire people to enjoy each other's company and build a community."

The band's stage show spread quickly by word of mouth.

"Everyone goes to see the Groove Juice Special to have a good time," fan Jessica Langer says. "They have a great reputation."

The ingenious musical works of Stevie Wonder, James Brown and The Beatles have served as inspiration for Groove Juice Special, and the band has in turn devel-

oped its own distinctive and creative style.

"We love the direct interaction between the band and the crowd," Potts says. He adds that Friday's environment will be set up to further the audience.

Adding to the funky elixir of music, the promotion team of Silver People Presents will highlight the show with Valentine's Day decorations, lights, face paint, tapestry and the utilization of a new sound system.

"We are a family that desires to give back to the community what we have received for so many incredible years of partaking in the live music experience," says Stephen Vogt of SPP. The promoters say they are expecting more than 300 people to be in attendance for the show.

Freedom Funk Ensemble describes their music as a combination of fusion, funk, jazz and Latin to create an instrumental, jungle-gypsy groove.

As the lyrics to one of Groove Juice Special's songs, "Funky Paradise," describe, sweethearts and singles alike will want to "join the party, feel the groove all over your body and let the music set your mind and spirit free."

Tickets for the show are \$10 and available at The Record Exchange and the EMU Ticket Office.

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