

Expect the unexpected with 'Groove Juice'

Local funk band "The Groove Juice Special" will rock the WOW Hall tomorrow night

By Joe Walsh
Oregon Daily Emerald

There's something funky in the air this weekend, and it has nothing to do with old socks or moldy Burrito Boy leftovers.

No, it's The Groove Juice Special, Eugene's very own masters of funk, who are playing tomorrow night at the WOW Hall.

Fresh off their first tour, the eight-piece funk band members said they should be primed to heat up the WOW Hall.

"We'll take our audience back to the roots of funk and soul," said lead singer Ben Thomas in a press release. "Our live shows are a fire-pit of funky grooves, crazy outfits, original tunes and covers with tongue placed firmly planted in cheek."

When The Groove Juice Special comes to town, expect the unexpected.

"There's no telling what kind of craziness is gonna happen and

what kind of theme we're gonna have," said guitarist Brandon Beebe in a phone interview, "but we always have something going on."

The Groove Juice Special fuses unadulterated funk with elements of soul, disco, blues, reggae and salsa. The result is an infectious sound and enticing aura that often lures the audience right up to the stage to groove and shake with the carefree musicians.

It's this energetic, free-spirited atmosphere that keeps fans coming back for more.

"I saw them three times in the last year, and they're fun," said Groove Juice Special fan Trina Gomez, a junior education major. "They're fun and funky, and everybody always has a good time and dances, and they always play a really, really long show. I'll go see them whenever I can."

Another draw of the band is that it is not like most modern music.

"We're kind of disenchanted with a lot of modern music, so that's why we bring in a lot of influences from the old days," Beebe said. "Our music is very roots oriented. It drives on the dance music of the past ... on reggae, salsa and mostly funk rhythms, and we combine them with our own modern day twist. It's a hodge-podge. You can't really define it."

Although The Groove Juice Special performs often in Eugene, tomorrow night will be only their second time playing at the WOW Hall. The all-ages show is something the band is not accustomed to.

According to Molly Hollister, the band's booking agent, they are trying to reach a different audience by playing in different venues and touring the West Coast, but it hasn't been easy.

"They went down for just a four-date tour, just kind of a mini-tour on spring break," Hollister said. "This is the first time we ever really got [a tour] together, and it's hard because there's seven people in the band, so it's really, really hard to get them all on the same

page as far as going anywhere much further than Portland."

The main problem is that seven of the eight members of the band are seniors at the University. But with most of them graduating in June, there will soon be more time for their band.

"They'll be playing a few dates in April in the Seattle area," Hollister said, "so we'll start getting them to take four or five days straight."

The Groove Juice Special played in three venues in California during spring break, including an HIV fundraiser in Mount Shasta. They finished their tour at Ashland Creek Bar and Grill in Ashland last Friday before returning to Eugene.

Special guests The McKenzie Project, also from Eugene, will complement The Groove Juice Special with its similar dance-inducing, 70s-inspired, funky sounds.

"We are now a funk-soul band," said bassist Justin Siewert. "We play Stevie Wonder covers, Parliament Funkadelic covers, Maceo Parker and James Brown ... that kind of stuff ... the mid-70s soul-

Gettin' Funky

What: The Groove Juice Special and The McKenzie Project, two Eugene-based funk-soul bands

Where: The WOW Hall, located at 291 W. 8th St. in Eugene

When: Friday night; doors open at 9 p.m., showtime at 9:30 p.m.

Admission: \$7 at the door, all-ages show

Information: Call the WOW Hall at 687-2746

funk stuff."

The McKenzie Project formed in Eugene while attending the University and have been together for about five years. Most of the band's eight members have either graduated or still attend the University.

Concert-goers can expect "some good dancing — the booty-shaking stuff ... and just a good time," Siewert said.

Admission for Friday night's all-ages show is \$7 at the door. Doors open at 9 p.m. and showtime is at 9:30 p.m.

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