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Local band aims to involve listeners

■ Cyrus Grape blends a mixture of jazz and psychedelic rock, featuring long guitar solos

By Courtney Sweet
for the Emerald

Local band Cyrus Grape is all about the music.

Together for just less than a year, the band consists of guitarist and lead vocalist Nate Bech, keyboardist and back-up vocalist John Kelley and drummer Ryan Davis.

Bech and Kelley met while living in the University residence halls, and they also had classes together in the School of Music. The two played together for about three years before Davis, whom they had met previously, joined them last spring.

"Nate and John had gone through several drummers. Then they called me," Davis said.

Bech, who has played guitar for about 10 years, is the driving force behind Cyrus Grape. He not only acts as the group's spokesman, but also writes the majority of its music.

"I write out the main ideas, melody and harmony. The band fills in the rest," he said.

Their sound features lengthy guitar solos and often swings between laid-back jazz and psychedelic rock in the same song. Although the band's major influence is Pink Floyd, Bech said Miles Davis and Mahavishnu Orchestra have had an impact on them as well.

Cyrus Grape, whose next live appearance is scheduled for Feb. 23 at Cafe Paradiso, performs songs that usually last well into the eight-minute range and are vocally sparse. Rather, they tend to focus on Bech's guitar stylings and the various talents of the other band members. "Our songs can be kind of long and arduous," Bech said. "Have patience."

"We ask the listener to be involved," Kelley added.

Kelley has played the piano since third grade. He has written a few songs for the band, citing "a lot of classical music" as an influence, along with Argentinean tango musician Astor Piazzolla

While the rest of the band tends to overpower his music, Kelley plays a significant role in filling out the band's sound. Without a bass player in the band, his keyboard adds another dimension to the music.

Davis, a junior at the University, has played drums for six years. During the more powerful sections of Cyrus Grape's music, Davis provides a pounding back beat to Bech's guitar.

His influence, when brought to the forefront, brings the band's music from fairly mellow jazz to a



Jonathan House Emerald

Cyrus Grape, a local band whose influences range from Pink Floyd to tango musician Astor Piazzolla, will perform at Cafe Paradiso on Feb. 23.

much more rock-influenced sound.

Cyrus Grape also occasionally features cellist Matt Wilkinson, who Bech said is "kind of a constant guest performer," but may join the band later.

Wilkinson met the band members through music classes at the University, and has played with Cyrus Grape about three times in live shows.

Their collaboration began when Bech wrote some music for Wilkinson to play with the band.

"He wrote a piece for me and it went from there," Wilkinson said. "He's starting to write a lot more music for me."

Like Kelley, Wilkinson is occasionally drowned out by the pow-

er of the guitar and drums. When his music does shine through, however, it mellows the band's sound and lends it a more classical air.

Student Juliana Baseman enjoys Cyrus Grape's sound.

"You can hear their music," she said at their Feb. 7 show at Cafe Paradiso. "Especially in a live show, you can see they enjoy it, they enjoy what they're doing."

Cyrus Grape, whose name, Bech said, comes from a children's book, hopes to finish recording and pressing an album by summer. Currently, they only have a demo CD available at their shows.

Courtney Sweet is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

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News brief

PFC budget cuts continue next week

The ASUO Programs Finance Committee will decide next week whether to make cuts in 10 more previously approved program budgets.

Full budget recall hearings will be held for Programs and Assessments, the Black Law Student Association, the Associated Students for Historic Preservation, the American Institute of Architecture Students, Recreation and Intramurals, Sexual Assault Support Services and Lane Transit District.

PFC will also recall one line item within the ASUO Women's Center budget, and two line items in both the Forensics Association budget and the Student Insurgent budget.

A hearing schedule has not yet been set.

— Kara Cogswell

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