

# Station Wag meets rocking, rapid hometown success

The Eugene-based rock band, formed in 2002, is working on its first full-length studio album

By **Natasha Chilingirian**  
Pulse Reporter

The members of Station Wag, a Eugene rock band, have hit a positive streak lately. Last Sunday, they tied for first place at the first round of Battle of the Bands at the Downtown Lounge. Requests to play at local venues are rolling in, their first full-length album is in the works and they have found a style that works: playing hard.

"Sometimes one of us is bleeding by the end of the show," bassist Eric Merchant said.

Station Wag will compete with six other Battle of the Bands winners Sunday at 8 p.m. at Audio Liberation: Battle of the Bands. The event will take place at WOW Hall, located at 291 W. 8th Ave. On Halloween, they will headline a rock show at Samurai Duck, located at 980 Oak St., at 10 p.m. The five-member band plans to put on "a fun visual show" with the sounds of "a driving rock."

When Station Wag formed in the summer of 2002, there were only four members — lead vocalist Candice Kingrey, rhythm guitarist Ana Hewitt, lead guitarist Andy Dent and drummer Tom Newson. Newson came up with the name "Station Wag" during a long freeway drive.

"It means nothing, really," New-

son said.

But the name triggered a resolution within the group. A friend of Hewitt's was in a band that was headlining a show at a Portland club, and she invited Station Wag to open the show. Station Wag decided that if it was successful, they would keep the name. After just three rehearsals, they headed to Portland. After the show, the name became permanent.

In November 2002, the four members of Station Wag began to search for a bass player. Kingrey, a sign-language interpreter, was interpreting for a math course at the University when she met Merchant, a graduate teaching fellow at the University, and learned he was a bass player. Kingrey invited Merchant to a Halloween party where he met the other members and joined soon after.

Station Wag started sending demo tapes to bars in Eugene and performed one to two shows per month. Their first big success was a New Year's 2003 show at the Samurai Duck. In May they performed at the WOW Hall for Lesbopalooza.

"Things just took off from there," Kingrey said.

Now, the group plays five to seven shows per month. Kingrey said the members have reached a point where venues are asking them to perform instead of the other way around.

The members of Station Wag have a variety of performance backgrounds. All have been in at least one band before and some have experience in musical theater.

"Half of us have acting experience

and the other half has been in previous bands," Kingrey said. "These backgrounds are what give us our confidence on stage."

Hewitt said her tendency to start bands has been like a fixation.

"I've been in four or five bands before Station Wag, but they all broke up," she said. "I kept starting new bands because I just couldn't stop."

Kingrey said a big part of the band's success is their friendship.

"We all get along really well," she said. "A band has to have fun for it to be a success. Attitude is more important than anything."

Although Kingrey said every show is "wild and different," the members of Station Wag aspire to write new songs for their fans to hear.

"We'd like something new for people to listen to," Hewitt said.

The band previously released a three-song demo. Station Wag's new album will be for sale at shows as soon as artwork is completed. Aside from finishing their CD, writing new music and keeping up with playing, members hope to take their act to Portland.

"We'd like to play at the Ash Street Saloon or Berbat's (Pan) in Portland," Newson said.

As far as long-term goals, Kingrey said as long as Station Wag is playing, they'll be happy.

"This band has become an addiction for me," she said. "Whenever we take a break from playing, it's just so lousy."

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Courtesy

Station Wag will play on Sunday at WOW Hall. "Sometimes one of us is bleeding by the end of the show," bassist Eric Merchant said.

## SUNDBERG

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and played guitar again until the sun went down. I never got out of my pajamas.

For me, the guitar is more than just an instrument. It is a way of silencing my mind. It is a meditation of sorts. I can close off all thoughts and just let the energy of music sweep through my hands and resonate through the strings. I can sit and play for hours on end. It is beyond enjoyment — it is necessary. Without it, I have no peace.

The world outside is demanding. There is always something to think about. There is madness at every turn of the way. We all need something that quiets that crazed beast called reality.

I think it is important for people to find the kind of peace that I find in playing my guitar. It doesn't have to be playing guitar, obviously. I know plenty of people who say playing an instrument frustrates them to no end. That's quite all right. We all have our thing. I

chose the guitar.

It hasn't always been this way, though. I can think back to when I first started playing. It was difficult. My hands hurt; they became calloused. I hated it. I quit for a while because I was terrible. I saw no reason to continue. Plus, I was only 12. I just wanted to play "Sweet Child O' Mine" by Guns N' Roses. I learned that, and then I was done.

But then one day in high school, a couple of friends and I decided to start a band. I told them I could play "Sweet Child O' Mine," and it began.

We learned some simple covers and started playing shows. It was then that I found myself practicing for hours every day. I saw something deeper than I had before. There was infinity, right before me, in the form of six strings. I knew then that I would play guitar for the rest of my life.

I guess it depends on what you enjoy, but I believe we all have that moment in which we find the perfect element that completes us. That piece of Zen. That source of infinite power. Whatever it is.

If you like gardening, plant some seeds. If you like dancing, go to the clubs. If you like falling from great heights, jump from a plane.

I'm not here to tell you how to run your life. But if you're miserable, you're the only one that can change that. And quite often, the most amazing things are the things that have been there all along. We've either taken it for granted or we just don't see it. And sometimes, it just takes work and practice before this awakening occurs.

Look around. What sets you free? Where is the peace that makes you appreciate your life? Is it there? If it's not, maybe you need to reevaluate your situation. If you have that peace, smile and share what you have. Live it. The rest can wait. Joy is the most important thing in life.

And with that in mind, I'm going to go back downstairs to play my Les Paul.

Contact the Pulse columnist at [carlsundberg@dailyemerald.com](mailto:carlsundberg@dailyemerald.com). His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

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