

Center Stage

grubspoon

By Dominique Agnew

The age-old question, unanswered for centuries, finally solved: What came first, the band or the name? After plaguing philosophers great and inconsequential for centuries, the answer is: grubspoon, the name definitely came first. As Matt Raschka (guitars, vocals) tells it, an ESPN fishing show was the inspiration (yes, all great guitarists watch fishing shows). The bass master, an experienced fisherman, held up his catch for the camera, and in a voice particular to bass masters, as impersonated by Matt, said, "Y' kin ketch this fish with a grubspoon worm."

Obviously, grubspoon worm not only makes terrific bait, it is the perfect name for a theoretical rock band, in this case, the worm is now silent. Says Matt, "It was a fictional name for the longest time." He and Poolesville native, Andy Swick (vocals, guitars), founded the band three years ago (at this point, it would be nice if they were all from Poolesville, so you could read, "The four lads from Liverp...ahem, from Poolesville—"). They were soon joined by Dave "Turbo" Gertz who had to be the drummer because he was the only one who could play drums. Fortunately, the original bassist left a year and a half ago allowing Dave to move up to bass, and Jeff Stitely came on as drummer. "Just in time to record the album," he adds. Jeff was a former drummer for another band with whom grubspoon periodically shared a billing, so when the opening came available, the first call went to Jeff.

For all the members, this is not their first experience performing music, and they bring with them many years of experience. They all began studying music in their elementary schools (keep instrumental music in the schools!) followed by a variety of musical pursuits through college including high school marching bands and college cover bands. They concur that their varied backgrounds and

influences contribute to their creativity and their particular style.

In the spring of 2004, the band recorded an EP (a short CD), "the anger, the edge, and the joke behind it," that sold moderately well online and garnered some air time on the local radio stations, even a station in Florida. Encouraged, grubspoon went into the studio, Studio Unknown in Baltimore, to record a full-length album last fall and winter entitled "happy accidents." The title of the album reflects something of what they learned while recording in the studio and what they perceive as a positive development in how they plan on working on the



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next album. Initially, they had entered the studio with a predetermined idea of how the songs would sound when complete. As the recordings progressed, there would occur some unplanned effects which ended up being "happy accidents—things that happened in the studio that we now do live," Matt comments. For the next CD, due out next year, they plan on entering the studio with a slightly different mindset. "We'll be open-minded for change," says Dave. The band members are enthusiastic about the collaborative effort that goes into the creating of an album, with everyone contributing to the composition of the various songs. Dave explains how special a group grubspoon is: "I've played before with people, and there's something here that's completely different than anything I've ever had. We have something."

When not in the studio, grubspoon is playing live performances in clubs throughout the Baltimore-D.C. area and beyond (including New York and Richmond), trying to get their name out there, building a follow-

ing. They are finding success, but the same old artists' refrain fits here, as well: don't quit the day job. By weekday, the members are mild-mannered professionals. By weekend, they're rocking the clubs. "We're having the most fun we've ever had in our lives," says Andy. The only way they could have more fun, adds Matt, "is if we got paid a million dollars to do this." Of course, they would like to make it big, but at the same time, they keep everything in perspective. "We take it all with a grain of salt," says Jeff. Dave agrees, "We've seen other bands that were very, very serious—almost to the point where they're not having fun."

While grubspoon continues to gain notoriety throughout the area, they are quick to point out that they couldn't be doing this without a good support network. "That makes a lot of difference," says Matt. Their wife and girlfriends are grubspoon's biggest fans and are always willing to help by recruiting other people and bringing other fans to the shows. Matt adds the familiar adage, "Behind every

good man is a good woman."

All of the members presently live in the Baltimore-Washington corridor but prefer to call themselves a Washington, D.C. band. "We fit the D.C. sound better than the Baltimore sound," says Andy. Matt clarifies further, "Our sound is more in line with what has been coming out of D.C. for the last twenty years." Perhaps Jeff puts it the most succinctly, "We just say we're from D.C. because it's fun." Their sound can definitely be considered compelling. Unrelenting rhythm and insistent bass lines (no, not fishing bass lines) compounded with edgy vocals and guitars provide a cohesive style that is a hallmark of their latest CD.

Some of their upcoming dates are in the area and can be found on their website, www.grubspoon.com. In particular, they are organizing a hurricane benefit show with other bands on October 6 at Sonar in Baltimore and are excited to be able to do that. All proceeds will go to the Red Cross.