



Interview: 'Heads are still bobbing'

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“Playing music you are able to tickle a part of the brain that doesn’t get tickled very often,” says Pam Barrett of the Motor Primitives. “That part needs to be pushed and tickled.”

This east side band is a band that will not bore you with cover tunes but enlighten you to good “proto pop punk.” The band consists of Pam Barrett, Vocals, Guitar; Robin Davies, Drums; Ed Feeny, Bass, Vocals; and Jeff Muendel, Organ and Vocals.

The Motor Primitives has an amazing ability “to turn a bad conversation into a good song,” says Feeny. Whether it is more about politics or more about hypocrisy, the band has the ability to write with the magic of melody. The changes that the band has been through in the last few years has turned out to inspire a kinetic energy that, as they say, “not drugs, sex or booze can beat it.”

The first concerts they ever went to included Head East, The Beach Boys and Pete Seeger. They were inspired to play 300 pound keyboards, a borrowed Thunder Ball 007 and \$47 guitars from Sears, to start their rock and roll careers. Most of them grew up playing music and taking lessons that they didn’t want. Those unwanted lessons eventually led to a long hiatus from music for each of them. Thankfully though, the Motor Primitives picked up the instruments again and developed a unique sound which gets right down to business. As Muendel proves, you can “get loud, dirty and nasty on the piano.”

The band found a way to get comfortable with one another and please their listeners. What I really liked about talking with this band was the fact that not only did they own their music, but they are able to release it and let the listener take it over. “Once you put it out there, it’s not yours anymore,” says Barrett. This attitude allows a metamorphosis to take place between them and the listener and their songwriting skills to take full effect.

Unlike the west side of Madison, it’s good to know that the East side of Madison consistently offers original music. When I asked them if they’ve ever played the west side, Feeny says, “We’ve talked about it.” Although they really have “not taken out their passports” to play on the west side, they admittedly have ventured as far as the 100 block of west Main Street to play at the Frequency. They have also played at The Harmony Bar, The Crystal Corner, Mickey’s Tavern, Revolution Cycles, High Noon Saloon among other east side venues. “The west side is a hard market; you have to do three sets of cover tunes, we are not going to be a cover band,” says an anonymous band member.

Feeny says "The music business is as sleazy as it gets. Bar owners, people in the industry etc. You can't let the sleaze ruin the talent." The Motor Primitives play venues that they want to do and "it's pretty unusual that the places we play are good" states the band. It is agreed however, that Madison is a great place to play due to open minded thinkers vs. the pre-packaged, experienced to be perfect and predictable on their iPod musicians. Madison has musicians that support fellow musicians. This is why they very rarely venture out, although they are starting to play more out of town gigs.

I realized that each have come a long way from being an undercover detective at a food store, who by the way didn't do so well in that role because he figured people who were stealing food really needed it, an assembly line worker in a bagel shop, and an electronic drafter staring at lighted boards all day. They have turned themselves into very fine, funny, and secretly edgy punk rock and rollers. But not so much that they wouldn't be our friend on my space. "We rock for you...you don't realize we're already your friend," says Barrett.

In kindergarten I remember this boy who always chasing me because he wanted to tickle me. We called him the "goochy goo boy." Meeting with the Motor Primitives was very similar to this experience, I wasn't sure about being chased but ultimately I really liked it. Spending time with The Motor Primitives definitely tickled a part of my brain that doesn't get tickled enough. Go see this band, and you'll discover you too may really enjoy a good tickle every once and a while!