

The Ocean Blue is Riding A Wave of Success

By Andrea Abolins

The Ocean Blue is riding a wave of success that's carrying the band from the local club scene to a chance at national recognition.

The four member band's original sound has been a welcome alternative to the area's heavy metal and Top 40 dominance. Now, the band is ready to pursue national publishing and recording contracts.

"We're in the midst of getting a publishing deal and with that it would be easier to get a record deal," said Dave Schelzel, The Ocean Blue's singer/guitarist and a Penn State Harrisburg student.

Schelzel said the Hershey-based band will be looking at various record companies during April in hopes of finding the best package. Many major companies have already expressed interest in signing The Ocean Blue.

The band, which stresses its original style, started in the early 1980s. A group of friends interested in progressive and new wave music began playing at parties. Right from the outset they played their own songs.

"We did our own stuff because we weren't good enough to do other people's," said Schelzel.

The band went through

numerous personnel changes, and finally arrived at the current line-up of Schelzel, keyboardist Steve Lau, bassist Bobby Mittan, and drummer Rob Minnig. Throughout the changes they played bars, clubs, and colleges. With the 1987 addition of Minnig, letters poured in to local music magazines commending The Ocean Blue's sound and style.

Schelzel said he was shocked and surprised by the positive letters. The Ocean Blue wasn't playing the metal that seemed to define the area's music, and covers didn't make up much of the band's show.

"We usually do 150 minutes of live material with 20 original songs and 10 covers," explained Schelzel. The band does covers of R.E.M., U2, Echo and the Bunnymen, and The Smiths, but prefers not to be categorized into a particular music style.

Schelzel writes most of the group's original material, but the band has a lot of input.

"Sometimes at practice we'll fool around and expand on songs. Writing comes in spurts--four great songs and then six months without any," said Schelzel.

The Ocean Blue is managed by Peter Freedman Entertainment in New York City. When the band's members decided to get serious about a career in

the recording industry, they sent out demo tapes to booking agencies across the state and to Freedman in New York. The band felt their best choice would be Freedman because of his national connections.

"Our manager keeps in touch--we talk to him almost everyday. He books dates and keeps us busy," said Schelzel. The band also books club dates through local agencies.

Lancaster and Philadelphia have given the band large followings of fans. The members of The Ocean Blue, all under 20 years old, don't want to be thought of as a teenybopper band. Schelzel laughs as he recalls stories of girls jumping on stage to be next to the band's members. More than image, though, he's concerned with "making good music."

In Harrisburg, The Ocean Blue often makes good music as the opening act for national performers. They recently opened for Tommy Conwell at Lebanon Valley College and for Jerry Harrison (of Talking Heads fame) and his band, The Casual Gods, at the Metron. When they opened for Wang Chung, the group's soundman, who had also worked with Echo and the Bunnymen and U2, said he really liked The Ocean Blue's music and gave them advice.

The Ocean Blue is hoping to someday be on tour as a main attraction. With a national recording contract right on the horizon and support from loyal fans, that day may not be far away. For a group that was looking for a name that "didn't mean anything," The Ocean Blue has come to symbolize originality and persistence in the local music scene.



The Ocean Blue members are: (left to right) Dave Schelzel, Bobby Mittan, Steve Lau, and Rob Minning.

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Around Capital College

By Judy L. Hricak

Question: What was the most memorable experience you have had while attending the Capital College?

The responses to this question were less than underwhelming. The apathy of the campus is spreading.

Only a few students had an answer to this question. Most said they would prefer not to remember their days at Capital.

One student's most memorable experience was a stressful one.

Everyone knows that an engineering student does not go anywhere without his or her calculator. Just imagine how senior Mark Couldren felt.

"My most memorable experience," said Mark, "was probably the time I was taking an EET final my

first semester here and my calculator died."

And then there is Jon Geisler, the man who is "trying to forget all of the experiences that I have had at Capital College."

Not everyone is as pessimistic.

Jim Bubb looks at things more optimistically. He said: "As soon as I have a memorable experience, I'll let you know."

I honestly thought that I had already had the most memorable experience of my time at Capital until Friday, Mar. 25.

That was the evening of the semi-formal. It was there that I saw the provost boogie down to "Pump Up the Volume."

It was great to see a member of the administration on the dance floor having just as much fun as the students.