

# HOMETOWN HEROES

## Local band sees success at State

By Josh Bollinger  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Throughout the weekend, students who venture downtown are bombarded by music streaming from the many venues where local bands perform.

But local music promoter Jesse Ruegg said those bands are likely playing cover songs.

"It's a pretty inherent part of college rock," he said. "As far as original music goes, it's kind of slim pickin's."

State College is the home of a gaggle of bands — largely cover bands — and it begs the question: Is there still room for original artists in a college town?

Local venues are more likely to book bands they believe will attract the most people, Ruegg said, and often, people want to listen to songs that they know.

Though cover bands are being booked more frequently around town, Ruegg said he'd rather listen to a band playing originals.

"Who's playing original music?" he said. "Now that's a band."

One local band still playing original music is Dirty Superb, who will perform at 10:30 p.m. Wednesday at the Darkhorse Tavern, 128 E. College Ave.

Dirty Superb percussionist Jacob Haqq-Misra (graduate-meteorology) describes their music as "soul jazz," derived from the roots of free improvisation and exploration of new musical territory.

The band plays all instrumental music and has had some success booking shows in State College, but they said it's definitely harder to book a show because they're not a cover band.

But Dirty Superb guitarist Ryan Alford said they are not upset by this.

"There's always been that aspect of music," Dirty Superb keyboardist and bass synth player Micky New (graduate-English) said. "People have always played what's popular."

New said the music industry has begun to phase out instrumental music — it doesn't have the same presence in our culture as it did in the past.

"Instrumental music is a little harder to access," Haqq-Misra said. "It's a little bit of a skill to listen to jazz."

Though the band incorporates some covers in its set, Dirty Superb has no plans to make a full conversion to a cover band.

"The problem with cover music is people expect to hear the little nuances from those songs," said Alford. "I don't get to be myself."

Dirty Superb can be caught periodically jamming a street corner downtown. Their goal is to "revolutionize" State College and make their funky jazz music accessible to a new generation of listeners.

But some, like Ruegg, still appreciate bands like Dirty Superb.

Kyle Brashers, of State College, said he'd much rather see an original band than see a cover band as a last minute choice.

"An original band kind of adds styles that are unique," Brashers said. "The music comes from State College instead of outside of it."

Though Brashers said cover bands detract from the artistic aspect of music, a cover band can also positively influence any atmosphere.

"I'd rather have a cover band than no band," Brashers said.

One reason most bars and venues book cover bands could come down to a band's lack of experience, Ruegg said. To combat the inexperience new bands face, he said they should be "relentless in their pursuit of shows," by having a good quality-sounding demo and spreading it around as much as possible.

"If their songs come screaming out of the stereo and sound great, they're probably going to get a show," he said.

Ruegg said most local bands have a short life span — about a semester or two — and then disappear because of the "transient nature" of Penn State.

Many local bands are student-led bands, leaving the health of their bands in question when members return home after the semester ends.

As the battle for musical superiority continues between original and cover bands in



Courtesy of myspace.com

Dirty Superb will perform at 10:30 p.m. Sept. 1 at the Dark Horse Tavern, 128 E. College Ave.


State College, Alford said people need to take note of all of the bands State College has to offer.

"There's a lot of good original music in

this town that people don't recognize," he said. "Hopefully that'll change."

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