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concerts & nitelife

Thursday, January 20, 2005

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Real life inspires Mulligan

By Dana Carter
 The Enquirer

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In golf, the world mulligan means a redo. A second chance.

In music, it means three guys from Tekonsha starting over.

Jakob Goheen, Derek Feltner, and Dustin Smith form the indie-rock band Mulligan, which will release its first full-length album during a CD release party Saturday at Club Soda, 340 E. Michigan Ave., Kalamazoo.

The CD, "The Tides of Blackheart Bay," took nearly six months to complete and features 12 tracks. The release, on Kalamazoo's Hearts On Fire Records label, follows three EPs that the band previously released on its own.

The trio grew up in Tekonsha where they performed at high school talent shows, after football games at Goheen's house and wherever they could.

At the age of 6, Goheen got his first guitar from an uncle. He took lessons for 13 years in classical, jazz, rock, music theory, music literature and anything that would help him become a better musician.

"I've been playing guitar way longer than I've not been playing," said Goheen, 20. "My parents are the utmost supportive. They've been buying me guitars and equipment since I was young. I think they're looking for a return investment."

If anything, the trio's parents can be proud of the new CD their "kids" will release this weekend. Like many bands building a fan base and looking for recognition, Mulligan would record music to CDs for distribution.

"It's totally awesome," Smith, 19, said. "I'm sick of burning CDs and making copies. The fact that there's this real, real CD that could possibly be in certain stores and you can go out with your friend and say, 'Hey, that's my CD.' That's the coolest thing in the world to me."



for the enquirer

Jakob Goheen, from left, Derek Feltner and Dustin Smith make up the indie-rock band Mulligan.

If you go

- **WHAT:** CD release party for Tekonsha-based band Mulligan, also featuring Murder By Death, Ettison Clio and Your Best Friend.
- **WHEN:** 9 p.m. Saturday.
- **WHERE:** Club Soda, 340 E. Michigan Ave., Kalamazoo.
- **HOW MUCH:** Admission is free with CD purchase at door or online.
- **INFORMATION:** Visit the band's Web site at mulliganmusic.com.

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"It makes you feel very accomplished," Goheen said. "It's a huge step up from sitting in your bedroom burning CDs when you get a box of 1,000 of them. It's a whole other world."

Seeing their hard work pay off wasn't always so easy. When they originally met, Smith was in junior high and Goheen and Feltner were high school students. When it came time to perform at "The Cabaret," Smith was asked to help Goheen and Feltner by stepping in as drummer.

"I remember, back in the day, in like seventh grade, I listened to nothing but Metallica and hard rock," said Smith, the only member still living in Tekonsha. "I thought that was the best."

Then, Goheen asked his band mates to play Blink-182's "Damn It." Smith had never heard of the band, let alone punk rock.

"He showed me the whole CD and I'd never heard anything like it before," Smith said. "I thought 'It's really cool but I could never play it. It's too fast.'"

The first talent show was the first time Smith played drums in front of an audience. His only experience was playing around on the drum set in the school's band room.

From that day the group worked to perfect its sound, its style and cohesiveness. They write all their own songs and Feltner and Goheen sing the lyrics they wrote to make it even more personal.

The band members have parted ways a couple times, fought over the same girls and disagreed on agreeing. Smith recalls fighting with Goheen over who got to ride "shotgun" with Feltner, the first to get his license. Bonding, it seems, in a much more fraternal order than just friends.

"It's crazy how far we've come," Smith said. "You look back at the past and laugh at how dumb you were. We've gotten past all that now."

"It's just nice because we've all played together for so long that it's kind of just unspoken," said Goheen, who works part-time for the Enquirer. "We just know what each other is thinking."

Now, the guys aren't fighting over girls. They're singing about them.

Recorded at Dynamite Sound in Grand Rapids, "The Tides of Blackheart Bay" is a collective gut-check of emotions, mostly about one girl. Ask any of the guys and they'll tell you that a girl inspired most of the songwriting and she knows it.

However, one track on the disc comes from a much deeper and mournful experience. In November 2003, their friend Ricky Pudak committed suicide.

The group recorded "Every Other Petal Spells Disaster" on this CD in Pudak's memory.

"It was really hard. We didn't do it for him. We didn't do it for us. We did it for his father. He came to us and asked us to write a song," Goheen said. "We probably had 10 different versions of the song. We kept getting better and better. We knew it had to be our best song."

Portions of the proceeds from CD sales will be donated to Gryphon Place, an area suicide prevention center in Kalamazoo.

Also rocking out on Saturday are Murder By Death, an indie band from Bloomington, Ind., Ettison Clio from Lansing and Your Best Friend from Saginaw.

Mulligan will end the evening with an extended 90-minute set. Admission to the party will be free to those 17 or older with a \$10 purchase of the new album at the door or online at mulliganmusic.com.

The event is sponsored by 89.1 WIDR-FM Kalamazoo and westmichiganmusic.com.

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