

## Mulligan

They're not Irish and they don't golf, but now, after a few tries, Kalamazoo's Mulligan may have just figured out how to make this whole rock 'n' roll thing work.

The band of three longtime friends is set to release their debut full-length album, *The Tides of Black Heart Bay*, later this month after setbacks resulting from lightning striking their recording studio postponed a previously announced November release. Such a setback could have disillusioned a less-prepared band. Thankfully, the members of Mulligan, guitarist/vocalist Jakob Goheen, bassist/vocalist Derek Feltner and drummer Dustin Smith, are no strangers to making music out of disaster; Goheen and Feltner played their first song together in honor of their first guitar teacher who had committed suicide. It was through this teacher that the two had even met and the tragedy brought them together as musicians.



From there, the duo played self-confessed pop-punk at junior high school talent shows and elsewhere in its hometown of Tekonsha before meeting Smith in high school.

"I met him because he stole my girlfriend," Goheen said. "This really cute girl named Megan."

"Hey, she was hot!" Smith said in his own defense.

Usually such a deed spells the end of a band, not the beginning. But not for Mulligan; Feltner and Smith even stole each other's girlfriends later on.

After high school, all three tried their hands in other bands before reforming as a trio. They then released their first EP as Mulligan, *Hearts On Fire*, in 1999, and began building an audience around the area.

Earlier this year, Mulligan placed sixth out of over 100 entrants in the World Series of Rock 'n' Roll held at The Club Soda. Goheen was quick to point out what this finish really meant for the band.

"Ouch, sixth seems so high, but it was last place of the final round, so it goes to show how tough the competition was," he said.

"We entered thinking that if we made it to the second round we would be stoked," Feltner added. "We ended up getting to the final night and it was apparent that every band brought all they had. Some bands, like our friends [in] *Your Best Friend*, gave a truly memorable performance. Overall, it was a great experience and totally unlike the usual sketchy battles that you hear band's horror stories about."

Leaving the battle with new management, Mulligan set about recording *The Tides of Black Heart Bay*, the follow-up to their independently released *Grey Vs. Black EP*, at Dynamite Sound Project in Grand Rapids.

"The actual recording time was very spread out and really laid back," Goheen said. "The opposite of what we're used to. But it was such a cool experience. We were able to see how a big-budget studio works and how many people it takes to make a good record."

"Ironically, what took the most time getting used to was simply having more time," Feltner added. "Spending an entire day on the guitars for one song was a new experience. I can totally see how some bands take a year or two years to record a new CD. Hell, we worked on this one for like six months."

The band's influences include such disparate artists as Small Brown Bike, Snow Patrol, My Chemical Romance, Hot Water Music, and even Hank Williams, Johnny Cash and Elvis. ("Jake calls them the three wise men," Feltner said.) Unfortunately, this has led to Mulligan's music being referred to as emo at times (even in an earlier review in this magazine) but they don't seem to mind.

"The term doesn't really bother me at all," Goheen said. "It's how people view the term. I don't necessarily see it as a badge of honor, but at the same time it's nothing to shy away from. We have songs on our first CD recorded in 1999 that would classify as 'emo' now. So more than anything I think we're proud to say that if we are in fact an emo band that we're not one of the bands who jumped on the emo bandwagon; we've been sad dorks since before it was cool."