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Young indie band thrives on old-school influences

By: **ANDY VINEBERG**
Bucks County Courier Times

TEXT SIZE

Bronze Radio Return's rootsy music wouldn't have been out of place 40 years ago - but, no, the Connecticut-based indie rock band is not stuck in the past.

Instead, the group melds its appreciation of blues, folk, jazz and rock into a fresh sound that has earned it an ever-growing fan base in New England and beyond.

"We're definitely a mish-mosh of influences," says drummer Rob Griffith, a Central Bucks West High School graduate who is one of two area natives in the band. "We try to incorporate all of them and hopefully make something that sounds unique."

BRR has achieved that goal on its first full-length album, "Old Time Speaker," released in June.

Any doubts about the band's musical state of mind are erased on the lead track, "Lo-fi," in which frontman Chris Henderson sings: "I just fell in love with a 45, kept alive in a box over 30 years old," and later raves about hearing "that needle scratching, vinyl catching."

This band of 20-somethings might have grown up in the age of CDs and mp3s, but their hearts are definitely in a simpler time.

It's a mindset that seems to be connecting with audiences.

"It's a tough route being an independent band these days, but we're very happy with the reaction we've been getting from the fans and the press," says Griffith, 24. "We plan to keep building on that by doing a lot more touring. Right now, we're doing about 100 dates a year, but we're trying to kick it up to about twice that."

BRR's touring schedule includes a headlining show Saturday at Puck in Doylestown. The band will be back in Bucks County Dec. 11 when it opens for Mutlu at the Sellersville Theater.

The gigs are homecomings for Griffith and bassist Bob Tanen, a Souderton Area High School graduate.

"We've played Puck a couple of times," Griffith says. "It's always a blast."

Most of BRR's six members met as students at the University of Hartford's Hartt School of Music before the band formed in 2007. Henderson had already written a lot of music, and a few informal jam sessions eventually led to the birth of a band.

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so we make sure we're not just playing the record for people. With six guys in the band, we've got a pretty full sound, and we like to incorporate a lot of improvisation and instrumental solos."

Of course, in the world of unsigned indie rock bands, not everything goes smoothly. The start of recording for "Old Time Speaker" in Nashville was delayed because of the band's adventures trying to drive there.

"The whole way down we had problems with our van," Griffith says. "We were laid up on the side of the road three times with two flat tires and a dead battery. We became really good friends with the highway patrol officers because of all the time we spent on the side of the road."

Bronze Radio Return performs Saturday at Puck, 1 Printers Alley, Doylestown. Michael Miller and Caravan of Thieves open. Show time: 8:30 p.m. Tickets: in advance, \$10; at the door, \$14. Information: 215-348-9000; www.pucklive.com.

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"I felt things clicked right from the beginning," Griffith says. "I had heard a few demos Chris had recorded before, and I really thought he had a unique sound and unique voice and that he wrote some really good songs."

Griffith, who played drums in various school bands while growing up in Doylestown, brought a strong jazz background to the group. He had previously spent time on a national tour of the Broadway musical "Evita."

"Playing jazz in general opens up your ears a little more than other kinds of music," he says. "It teaches you to listen to everything going on around you and helps a lot with interacting with the rest of the band in a live setting."

"We definitely consider ourselves a live band. We pride ourselves on rearranging the songs for the live show,

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