

Out & About Magazine

Why Rust Never Sleeps

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For local bands like Petland, there are other ways to grow old besides burning out or fading away



Meet Petland. They play a hazy style of rock with lots of curlicues that presents itself as a rather happy marriage between Sonic Youth and Wish-era Cure. They've been making music, in the Newark/Elkton area, since the late '90s. They've gone through several lineup changes, and their current roster is Eric Teather (vocals and guitar), Michael Bolan (bass), Paul Budd (drums), and Rick Martel (guitar and keyboards). They have a new album out, *Watching Things Get Stopped*, and they celebrated its release with a show at Mojo 13 in Wilmington last month.

Watching Things Get Stopped couldn't be a more fitting title, because it's been six years since Petland have made an album. And the last show they played before Mojo 13 was at Big Kahuna—which has been closed for nearly a year—in the summer of 2005. Petland are, for all intents and purposes, less of a band than a bunch of guys who happen to play music together. And nowadays, that seems to be the rule more than the exception.

Consider the members of the Scenic Route, who balance families and jobs with trips to the recording studio—a new album, their first, has been in the works for most of the year, with no release date set—and the occasional live show. Or the Casting Out, whose practice space is overrun with toys and the children who play with them. Wonder why you haven't seen your favorite band in a while? Maybe it's because being in a band is what happens when you're busy making other plans.

"We're settled in now," Paul Budd says. "The objective isn't to get signed and tour. If this doesn't work out, life goes on for us."

Budd is 35, married, with a 5-month-old, and works full-time. Teather is 38, married, has two kids, and works full-time. Bolan's particulars are the same, except that he's 39. Martel is the baby at just 26.

Petland, then, is a creative outlet, not a job and certainly not a pipe-dream. There are no illusions of

fame or fortune. If you bought one of the band's three CDs, you'd make them feel warm and special more than help pay for gas or supply their next meal. "My satisfaction," Budd says, "is in people hearing what we've been doing."

Such indifference sounds natural coming from been-there-done-that rockers with ungodly amounts of money and nothing left to prove (Paul McCartney, anyone?). But something else is happening. Or, you might say, something else stopped happening.

Being in a band, at least in these here parts, often means going it alone. Scenes never grow big enough to get noticed. Live local music—and the chance to see three or four like-minded bands in the same night—is in jeopardy.

"It's happened in a lot of areas," Eric Teather says. "It's hard to find original band scenes, even in places like North Carolina and Boston."

"Technology has defeated the necessity for a localized music scene," Rick Martel says. "MySpace can make it hard for a band or a scene to ferment when the connection is so automatic. It becomes less local, and local people need to be in contact with each other to get shows and to do things."

So Petland rejoice in the chemistry they've found. They gel quickly in a tight rehearsal space—as if close quarters keep the unit safe and strong. The space is actually a recording booth in the studio Teather built onto his house in Elkton—a house he shares, of course, with his family.

"This is going to be a piece about us being old!" Teather lets out a big, self-deprecating laugh after realizing the direction the conversation is taking. He shouldn't worry. In that space, with no reminders of age or responsibility, being old sounded pretty young.