

Music for the people

A nonprofit music education center gives young bands a place to perform

By INARA VERZEMNIEKS
THE OREGONIAN

Inside a dark, low-ceilinged building at the corner of North Williams Avenue and Killingsworth Street, just down the street from an upholstery shop and a minimart, a disco globe spins, a red crushed-velvet love seat beckons and a group of tattooed and T-shirted guys packing guitars and amps are setting up on a small stage.

Soon, the room will dissolve into howls and screams and growling bass as the guys sling sweat from their brows and beg the people sitting on that love seat, and assorted other sofas scattered throughout the room, to buy their CDs, and for a few hours, their music is heard.

It's a recent Thursday night at Club

the **zone** young ideas & perspectives

the club has given nearly 300 local acts, many of which are young or just starting out, a place to play. It's also given music fans of all ages and persuasions a smoke- and booze-free place to listen.

The club is an offshoot of Ethos Inc., a nonprofit music education center launched in Portland in 1999 by Charles Lewis, a graduate of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, to help fill the void that school budget cuts left behind. Ethos' goal: to provide music instruction to all

Ethos, an all-ages venue that opened last summer in North Portland. Over the past year, the

kids who want to play or sing, regardless of their financial situation. Ethos offers free and low-cost music lessons to kids, holds instrument drives, puts on school assemblies, sponsors a music mobile and helps get music instructors into schools.

And last June it opened the club — a low-key venue that feels like an art major's living room (a beauty salon chair in one corner, a green velvet rope at the door, black-and-white-checked floors). It is imbued with the same music-for-the-people philosophy and social consciousness that underscores Ethos' education programs — a place where people who love music can easily share their passion with others and find a wider audience,

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DOUG BEGHTEL/THE OREGONIAN

On a recent Thursday night, End of All, a metal core band from the Bay Area, takes the stage at Club Ethos, an all-ages smoke- and alcohol-free venue in North Portland that has given hundreds of bands — from metal core to jazz — a place to be heard.

IF YOU GO

Think you might want to play at Club Ethos?

◆ Visit the Web site at www.ethos-inc.com and click on the link for "booking a gig."

◆ Fill out the band information, then get a cassette tape or CD with at least three original songs to club manager Adam Reid, and he'll let you know whether your band's a go.

◆ Club Ethos can also record your band live, then mix the result down to a CD. The cost is \$25 (with a room mike) or \$45 if you'd like them to mike each instrument. Each additional CD is \$3. The club also will record your band professionally for \$20 an hour.

Want to volunteer at the club?

For more information, contact Adam Reid at Club Ethos, 503-288-4166.

Zone: 'Other choice is to scrap'

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says Adam Reid, the club's manager.

"Charles and I have been in bands — some not very good ones — and we knew what it was like," says Reid, who is 21. "How hard it is to find a place to play, let alone a place where everyone can come see you."

All a band has to do if it wants to perform at the club is fill out some band information and submit a CD or cassette tape of at least three original songs to Reid. If he reviews the tunes and says they're OK, the band is in. The money earned from the club's cover charge, usually \$5 a head, is then split three ways: one-third to the band, one-third to help pay overhead at the club, and one-third to scholarships for needy kids in Ethos' music programs. Bands have to sell a few tickets ahead of time in order to play.

In many ways the club is just another extension of Ethos' education programs. Volunteers help Reid run the shows. In exchange for working the door, or doing the sound, they not only learn the ins and outs of working a club and making music, but Reid also gives them free time in the club's recording studio.

The recordings that the club offers have been a big draw: For \$25 or \$45, Reid and his volunteers will record bands live and mix the performance down to a CD.

Shows are held most Friday and Saturday nights, and the last Saturday of the month is open mike.

"One night you can come here and hear hip-hop," says Portland performer Radix. "And the next night there's a piano recital. This place is completely open to the community."

On this night, the lineup is metal core: four bands, three of which are from the San Francisco Bay Area — Antagony, Boof and End of All. They are five days and 1,000 miles into a two-week tour of the West Coast. By day, they are bankers, librarians and busboys. By night they play songs with words like "rotten" and "human" and "consumption" in the titles.

The other band playing tonight is Portland's the Dead Unknown, which already has played the club about five times in the past year. "Your only other choice is to scrap," says Justin Sitner, the band's 21-year-old lead singer. "You try to find a grange, an American Legion hall, someone's basement."

As the bands take the stage, Reid sits at the back of the club and walks one of tonight's volunteers, 16-year-old Dylan Esmonde, a Wilson High student, through how to do the sound. The other volunteer, Natalie Flipper, 16, takes the money at the door.

Soon, the librarian has shed his shirt. And the couches are full. In the audience tonight are five girls who work at Multnomah Falls.

Earlier in the day, the Bay Area boys were doing a little sightseeing before their show and the girls gave them free lemonade. The band gave them a flier. Come check us out tonight, they said.

So they did.

"There's a lot of shows I can't go to because I'm not 21," says Ivory Freeman, 18, from Stevenson, Wash. "And then there are a lot of places that claim to be smoke-free and alcohol-free but don't end up being so."

So they didn't give a second thought to the idea of jumping in a car and driving the distance to see these bands play at this club. "It's a Thursday night," says Ivory. "What else were we going to do?"

While they wait for the last band to set up, some people run next door to the minimart for Popsicles and iced tea. And then finally, Antagony is up on stage, trying to hang a band flag up on the wall with duct tape.

Everybody get up, the lead singer shouts. Everybody up off the couches. There are shout-outs to the girls from Multnomah Falls, and all the friends who traveled from far away to hear them play, and the guitars crash, and the lead singer growls, and the music drifts out into the night, the siren song of summer.

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