

Alumnus rocks out around the county

Kacey Stark
Reporter

Elon alumnus Shawn Kennedy has abandoned his job search to pursue a passion for music. His band The Pikeys held its first performance Sept. 15 at Front Street Public House in downtown Burlington.

As band manager and guitarist, he said he recalls that as a student he "didn't like seeing a cover charge." So, Kennedy opted not to charge cover for the show. He believes in starting with a free show to showcase the band's talent, and only after building interest and connecting with an audience would he charge admission.

Kennedy says he believes that music "should not be sold." Plans are in the works to record soon, but he does not plan on capitalizing on the sale of the recorded music.

"I think music is a universal language," he said. "To make that a commodity is so wrong."

The Pikeys consists of three other Elon alumni, as well as a Burlington native. Kennedy said The Pikeys have the vibe of an "Irish attitude" and mix acoustic and electric sounds to create the band's indie sound and collaboration style.

Kennedy graduated from Elon in 2010 with a degree in philosophy. He says music has been a part of his life since he was three years old when his parents enrolled him in Kindermusik, a musical-based education program.

"They had no idea what they were getting into," Kennedy said.

He said in college he was self-conscious and "afraid of criticism" so he shied away from playing his own music but always enjoyed the local music scene. He said he is excited to pursue success for The Pikeys, as well as two other developing musical projects.

One of his other projects, Phunakadelic Groovetrain, is an eight-member band that will be playing at 10 p.m. Oct. 12 at The Fat Frog. Another developing project involves a genre he has not previously explored: dubstep.

His advice for those wanting to pursue music is to be sure you're willing to dedicate yourself.

"If you have a job, quit your job. If you're gonna do it, do it right," he said.

Kennedy offered several recommendations of venues other than the steps of Moseley Center for

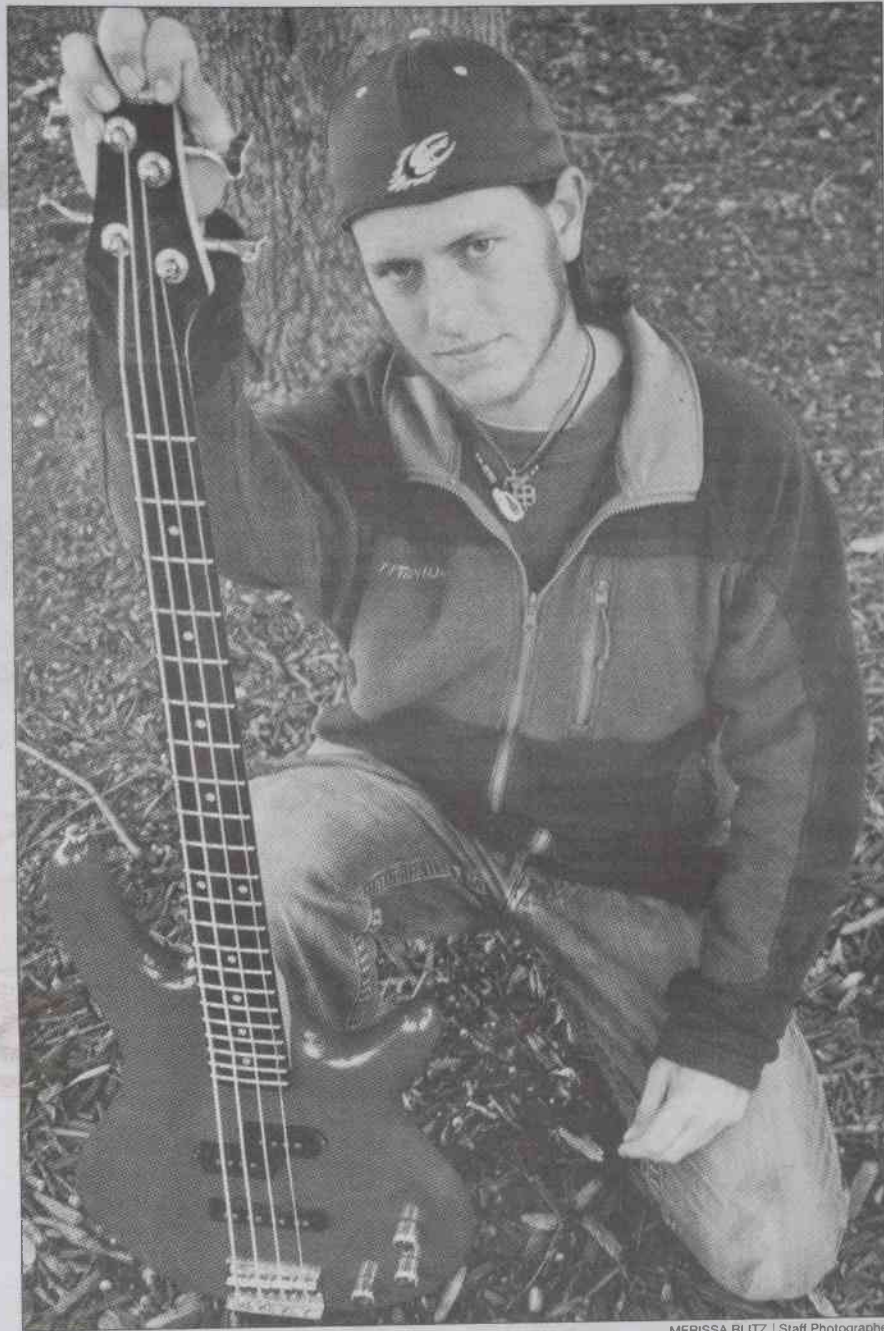
finding local talent.

"I love Fat Frog as a venue," Kennedy said. "(Playing there) would be like a coming home."

Front Street Public House offers an intimate pub setting, Kennedy said. For those more than 21 years old, Kennedy recommends Brewballs. He

warns that the bar is for those who come with a good attitude and are open to people, the interesting crowd makes the scene a "great place for people watching."

Kennedy's next performance will be with the Pikeys, Sept. 30 at Front Street Public House.



Elon alumnus Shawn Kennedy performed at the Front Street Public House with his band The Pikeys on Sept. 15.

MERISSA BLITZ | Staff Photographer

Hip-Hop Happenings



Neima Abdulahi
Columnist

Will The Next Eminem Please Stand Up

Eminem is arguably one of the best rappers of our time. When he entered the hip-hop realm, it

was a music genre that was fully dominated by black artists since the late 1970s. Not only did Eminem provide a new shade to the color palette, he also shattered any stereotype that white boys couldn't spit. Em received a co-sign from legendary producer Dr. Dre back in the late '90s and has been unstoppable since then.

Now, there are a few new rising icons that are legends in the making. And a few of them just so happen to be white. Rap is making room for additional deserving white rappers like Yelawolf, Machine Gun Kelly and Mac Miller.

Yelawolf

Alabama rapper Yelawolf is one of the fastest rising emcees in the business right now. If you've never heard his music before, just imagine a fusion between Outkast, Lyrndr Skynyrnd and The Beastie Boys.

With a unique sound, he's managed to catch the eye of the man who paved the way for white rappers. Eminem decided to sign Yelawolf to Shady Records in January 2011. Yelawolf brings many different sounds to his music - classic rock mixed with 808 drums. Give Yelawolf 16 bars and he'll hold nothing back lyrically. He shies away from flowing in a traditional format. He'll control the instrumental rather than letting the beat restrict his pace.

Machine Gun Kelly

While Eminem was recording his first demo back in 1992, Cleveland rapper Machine Gun Kelly was two years old. Kelly is a rising icon and is signed to P. Diddy's label Bad Boys. He shows off his flow versatility by flowing at a fast Bizzy Bone-meets-Twista pace on his hard tracks. MGK can also slow down his annunciation on meaningful humble momma-I-made-it songs. MGK is just now taking off. His best mixtape thus far is "Laced Up."

Mac Miller

Mac Miller's music is playful, yet takes us back to the '90s when lyricism held more weight than it does now. He plans to drop his first album "Blue Slide Park" Nov. 8 through his label Rostrum Records. Miller furthered Wiz Khalifa's efforts by helping put his hometown Pittsburgh on the hip-hop map. His biggest break was being listed on XXL Magazine's "Freshmen 2011" which recognizes the top 10 rising hip-hop artists of the year.

Yelawolf was also mentioned on the list, among great rising artists like Cyhi The Prynce, Kendrick Lamar and Big Krit. Miller was also inducted in the 2011 MTV Jam's Fab 5 list. Miller is continuing to make a visual impact with his music. While he's selling out shows nationally and internationally, this is only the beginning for the 19-year-old emcee.

Check it out: Musical mix in Chapel Hill

Stephanie Butzer
Senior Reporter

Rock, soul, blues, folk, country and indie music combined in Chapel Hill through the outlet of Lizzy Ross, lead singer and bandleader of the Lizzy Ross Band.

The band consists of Ross, Jock Pyle, Brett Hart and Drew Daniel. Together, the group released its first album, "Traces," in June 2010. The second album, "Read Me Out Loud," will be released this October.

The band pieced itself together over time.

"Drew and I met when I needed a temporary drummer," Ross said. "Our

drummer was out of town, so we put up a Craigslist (ad) and won the lottery. Drew played roughly 16 bars before I knew he was the drummer for me."

Hart joined the band after a friend suggested him to Ross. With only a week until the band's first big show at the Shakori Hill Grassroots Festival, he learned all the songs in time to perform.

Pyle and Daniel played together for years, so when the band was looking for a new guitarist, the choice was easy.

"It's a joy to play with this band," Ross said. "I feel incredibly lucky to have them on the team and to have their company on stage."

With a mix of musicians from different backgrounds, the band's genre is not easily defined.

"A friend of mine jokingly quipped that I should be known as the 'Queen of rock-soul-blues-folk-country-Americana,'" Ross said. "The genre description, at least, is fitting."

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LEAD SINGER OF THE LIZZY ROSS BAND

The band's first album gave Ross a lot of insight in to what it means to create a record, she said. The process was hard and came with many challenges. There was a constant tug between perfection and quality and how to express what she intended for her music.

"The first record was a great learning experience for me, and the experience gained is the foundation for this second record, "Read Me Out Loud," Ross said.

The release of "Read Me Out Loud" represents a lot for Ross. She said she is much more confident with what she has produced in relation to her first album "Traces."

"I feel more formed as a musician, songwriter and person," Ross said. "I'm more comfortable with the process of recording. I understand what I want to say and how to say it."

Ross said she is already looking forward beyond this album to a third.

"I want our band to continue to grow and make music," she said. "And I imagine that soon our tour base will be expanding and we'll be working on our next record."

A CD release party to celebrate the debut of "Read Me Out Loud" will be held Sept. 30 at the Haw River Ballroom.

"We will be having a pig pickin' with local, pasture raised pork from Cane Creek Farm," Ross said.

That night there will be a concert, with many guest performers including Birds and Arrows, Andrew Magill, Justin Powell of the Mantras, Casey Cranford of Big Something and more.

In the future, Ross plans to tour along the East Coast and in Europe. She also intends to book an agent for the band, as she believes it will give her more time to write.

"I've had unfinished songs bumping around in my head for months now," Ross said.