

## Band fearlessly combines music culture, covers

### Concert preview

Tonight, at the Zoo Bar, 136 N 14 St., Brave Combo asks the musical question — "What is hip?"

This according to Jeffrey Barnes, woodwinds stylist for the group.

Barnes, who has played with the band for "a mere ten years," tried to explain:

"This is the land of American homogenized pop culture," he said.

"But a lot of people have become interested in 'world music'. African, Asian music. We do polkas."

Though it may seem strange to some people, polka is an ethnic music — and it's powerfully alive in some parts of this country.

In Chicago — which has, Barnes said, more Poles than Warsaw — polka is very much a living musical form.

But Brave Combo plays polka with a difference. "We have very catholic tastes," Barnes said, "with a small 'c'."

The band takes a traditional form, or forms, and throws them in the mix together — what Barnes called "cross-cultural pollenization."

The result is a form of music that has never existed before on earth — a sound the Zoo Bar flier affectionately called "weirdo" music.

Some American bands want to be as authentic to the ethnic music as they can, Barnes said.

"We couldn't do that if we wanted to," he said, "and the truth is, they can't either."

So Combo comes off as something completely different.

"I don't think there any other bands quite like Brave Combo," he said.

What in any other band might sound like hyperbole, seems true in the case of Brave Combo. No one seems to know quite what to make of them.

"Genius is as good a label as any," said the Dallas Observer in April.

Part of the problem in defining Brave Combo comes from its extremely wide range of musical sources:

On any one album they might play mambos, Japanese Ondo (Summer Festival) music, Israeli Circle Dance tunes, along with their trademark polkas.

"We cover quite a few different styles," Barnes said — in what must have been the pinnacle of pop music understatement.

The band hails from Denton, Texas, where band founder Carl Finch began in 1979 to take "the squarest stuff possible" and play it seriously.

And serious seems to be a key word here.

Although the band is famous for their bizarre cover versions — their latest CD, "No, No, No, Cha Cha Cha" contains a cha cha cha version of the Stone's "Satisfaction" and a riff from Ringo Starr's "No No Song" — there is never a sense that the band is indulging in parody.

This is fun — not funny — music. Weird Al Yankovic it's not.

Barnes said he hopes the Combo's music

See COMBO on 10



Therese Goodlett/DN

Ray Soto of Ray's Tattoos has been adding tattoos to Curt Webber's back for eight years. Webber said he became addicted after his first tattoo.

## Not just for bikers Tattoos becoming more popular among students

By Paula Lavigne  
Staff Reporter

At one time, the word tattoo summoned images of large snarling beasts, the word "mother," or a naked woman imprinted on a man's chest.

Once associated with bikers and convicts, tattoos now decorate the arms, ankles, backs and even lips of many university students.

Local tattoo artists said more than 50 percent of their clients were college students, with the majority being female.

Nick Ley, of Hungry Eye Tattoos, said tattoos were "just kind of the fashion now."

Ley said in the past students usually requested smaller designs — which are easier to conceal. But lately, more students are picking the larger designs.

"It's neat because a lot of students are starting to get larger stuff such as tribal ankle bracelets, dolphins and hearts," he said. "It has now become more acceptable. It varies, and it's not that limited anymore."

Ray Soto, of Ray's Tattoo Shop, agreed with Ley's perspective on tattoos.

"I think that our generation is changing," he said. "People thought only those in the penitentiary and bikers were getting tattoos. There's not that much prejudice anymore."

While tattoos are becoming more socially acceptable, not everyone is in on the trend. When freshman architecture major Aaron

Ewoldt told his mother about the hammerhead shark on his right tricep, she wasn't pleased.

"My mom said, 'I could just beat you,' and my dad thought it was a stupid thing to do," Ewoldt said.

Eventually they softened up, though.

"Now, they just laugh at it. My mom asks me, 'How is the minnow doing?'"

Ewoldt decided to get a tattoo after he went with his friend to a tattoo shop.

"I just liked the way they looked, so I decided to get one," he said. "It was a (high school) graduation present for myself. I'm going to get another one when I graduate from college."

Ewoldt said he chose the hammerhead shark design for several reasons.

"It's not evil like a devil eating skull," he said. "I don't want my kid to see something like a naked lady on my arm. It's more original than a lot of the others, too."

Safety was one of Ewoldt's other concerns.

"I checked into it and it was really nice and clean," he said. "You had to sign a paper saying you had no diseases such as AIDS or anything."

Ley said students are encouraged to ask questions about the procedure.

"It's good for business if they know we operate under sanitary conditions," he said.

— 66 —  
**Custom tattoos are nice because you'll be the only one walking around with it.**  
— Ley tattoo artist

New needles, ink and gloves are used for each customer to establish a hospital-type atmosphere.

Ley said he advised against going to an unsanitary tattoo artist or "scratcher."

"They're just out there to make a buck," he said.

Tattoo artists should also take precautions concerning the age and physical condition of their customers, Ley said.

Neither Ley nor Soto allow customers under age 18, unless they are accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Pregnant women, diabetics and individuals with pacemakers also are advised against getting tattoos.

Customers are required to sign a release form before work begins, which protects the artist from liability.

The process itself involves a series of needles, which pierce seven layers of skin,

See TATTOO on 10

## Sweet to tread familiar ground during Omaha concert

### Concert preview

By Paula Lavigne  
Staff Reporter

Pop rock artist Matthew Sweet returns to his home state for a concert tonight at the Ranch Bowl in Omaha.

Sweet, a Lincoln native, is touring in support of his new album "Altered Beast" and couldn't resist the opportunity to stop in Nebraska to play and to visit his family and friends, said his agent, Hanna Bolte.

Sweet grew up in Lincoln and attended the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for two years, then moved to Georgia to attend school. He now lives in Los Angeles.

Two years ago the success of Sweet's third album, "Girlfriend", propelled him into the pop spotlight.

"Girlfriend" sold more than 400,000 copies. The success allowed Sweet more freedom to create his next album.

"Altered Beast" was co-produced by Sweet and Richard Dashut. Unlike the bittersweet love songs on "Girlfriend", "Altered Beast" bares the artist's dark side.

Songs off the album, such as "Dinosaur Act" and "Ugly Truth Rock", are powerful songs that rely on heavy guitar wailing and sinister vocals.

Named after a Sega video game in which the man-monster must continually evolve to defeat his enemies, "Altered Beast" changes from alarmingly harsh guitar riffs to lighter chirpy melodies comparable

to the songs on "Girlfriend."

Sweet's "Altered Beast" touring band includes guitarist Richard Lloyd, bassist Tony Marsico and drummer Will Rigby.

Sweet just returned from a tour in Europe and Australia. Before starting the current tour, the band performed a series of warm-up shows around the United States.

Tonight's concert at the Ranch Bowl will be the seventh stop on the tour, which runs through late November.

The singer is planning a hometown concert sometime in the future, Bolte said.

The band Hollyfaith will be opening for Sweet at tonight's concert. Doors open at 8:00 p.m. and the show begins at 9:00 p.m. Tickets are \$13.75 at the door.



Matthew Sweet

Courtesy Zoo Entertainment