



HAPPY DOG'S lead guitarist, James Valentine, rocks out with the band during their concert at the Culture Center on Friday night. Happy Dog shared the stage with two other bands for a benefit promoting student activism against Initiative 413.

SANDY SUMMERS/DN

Marking old Territory

Happy Dog rises from Kid Quarkstar's ashes

BY JASON HARDY
Senior staff writer

Concert Preview

Sometimes bad things happen for a good reason.

But after last year's breakup of Kid Quarkstar, one of Lincoln's premier local bands, guitarist James Valentine couldn't see anything good coming out of it.

"The ending of Kid Quarkstar was really disappointing to me," Valentine said. "It was kind of frustrating because I didn't know what I was going to do."

But thanks to his buddy Sean Beste and a couple of their friends, Valentine has something to do Wednesday. Happy Dog, Valentine's newest musical endeavor, will play Bodega's Alley, 1418 O St., at 11 p.m. after the Grateful Dead hour. The show is \$3.

Happy Dog came to be when Beste, who had once done a stint as singer for Quarkstar, talked to Valentine about playing some songs he had already written and recorded.

After recruiting Beste's brother Dave on bass and drummer Shane Rutherford, formerly of Kid Quarkstar, Happy Dog was born. But what exactly came out of that birth wasn't entirely clear.

"Originally it was just a free-for-all jazz freakout," Beste said. "We tried to do a couple of the pop songs that I had written, but it didn't happen, so we just stuck to jazz. But then I don't know what the hell happened; it was like we blinked, and now we're a pop band."

Despite a heavy pop influence, Valentine maintains the group has a lot of jazz and folk undertones, not entirely detached from Kid Quarkstar, but still definitely something new and original.

"It's totally fresh," Valentine said of

Happy Dog's vibe.

"Being in a band is just like a relationship, and I think we're still definitely in that honeymoon period."

The group has been playing various locations since last year and, despite a slow start, has received a lot of attention lately.

"We're still a new band, but in the last month shows have really picked up," he said. "They've been going really well, and I think if people come out they'll really dig it."

The shows have been going so well, in fact, that label representatives from record companies in Los Angeles have been coming to see the band perform lately — attention that wasn't expected by Beste.

"We haven't sent out anything. We don't even have a demo done," he said. "We'd all love to see Happy Dog succeed as much as we can, but right now with all the labels talking to us it gets a little crazy. We're taking it easy and exploring lots of areas as far as business goes."

For now the group is concentrating on making music and giving people a taste of its jazz-rock flavor, which Beste, who writes most of the group's songs, attributes to Happy Dog members' interaction with each other.

"I just give them the main idea that I want, and they just go nuts with it," he said, "and that's where the Happy Dog sound comes from, I guess."

Beste said he usually comes up with entire songs played out in his head and then attempts to explain them to the rest of the band, which isn't always easy.

"I don't know what the hell happened; it was like we blinked, and now we're a pop band."

SEAN BESTE
member of Happy Dog

"I don't know where they come from," Beste said. "A lot of them don't make any sense to me, and I have to listen to them 10 or 20 times before they make sense to me. I hear the songs all at once."

Once Beste heard a song in his head he would record it on his four-track recorder and offer it up to the rest of Happy Dog.

But recording isn't always easy, and Beste eventually quit his part-time job because his head was overflowing with song ideas that he couldn't record and would forget by the time he got home.

Valentine said the dynamics of the group worked well and allowed for each person to contribute toward the group's goal — to do an album sometime soon, building off of the three songs they've already recorded.

Eventually, like any budding musicians, Valentine and the rest of the guys hope to someday make Happy Dog a household name.

"We wanna do this for real," Valentine said. "Our goal is to drop out of school and not be bums."

Concert Preview

Concert reunites Sideshow members

BY JIM ZAVODNY
Staff writer

There was no animosity when legendary Lincoln rockers Sideshow separated in August 1997; it just kind of happened.

And to show everyone that they're still friendly and all that, the band's former members plan to join forces again tonight at Duffy's Tavern, 1412 O St.

But don't expect a Sideshow reunion because the members haven't performed as a band since they broke up.

They will all be playing with their new projects, instead. Rich Higgins now serves as guitarist for Erik the Red, Bernie McGinn acts as frontman for Luck of Aleia while drummer Paul Tisdale now pounds for Pablo's Triangle.

In addition to being the first time in more than a year that the three will play on the same stage, the performance also marks the last Lincoln appearance for Tisdale's new band. Two of Pablo's Triangle's crew, guitarist Mike Elsener and drummer Matt Focht (yes, there is more than one drummer in this outfit), are moving away to San Francisco and New York, respectively.

"It's kind of a cliché to say, but it's like a marriage with us. We basically learned how to play instruments together."

RICH HIGGINS
Guitarist, Erik the Red

The sudden loss of personnel created a void so large that the band decided to start from scratch.

"We decided that instead of continuing the band as Pablo's Triangle, we were going to try to start a new band," Tisdale said. "It's real depressing we're breaking up because things have really started to move for us."

With seven members roaming the stage, Pablo's Triangle melds a unique mixture of, well, it's difficult to classify their sound

because they play music that spans scores of different genres. They play some hardcore stuff, waltzes, lounge tunes, funk, and even have a "hippie" song for the Phishheads.

Tisdale said the difference between Pablo's Triangle and Sideshow was that his new bandmates allow him to do anything he wants.

"You could play a garbage can and it wouldn't matter. I think the Pablo's guys are really kind of arty, and they really love surprises. And with Sideshow it was more structured, there was really no room for error," he said.

Before the members of Sideshow quit playing together, Tisdale already had begun touring with his then-side project, Pablo's Triangle. Meanwhile, Higgins had been manning the guitar and vocals for Erik the Red since that January.

Higgins enjoys the freedom he found playing with his new bandmates.

"They're just different guys who play a very rhythmic-oriented sound," Higgins said. "It's a totally new thing because the only people I'd ever played with were Bernie and Paul."

McGinn's new band, Luck of Aleia, didn't form until after Sideshow's demise.

"Luck of Aleia is probably a bit more melodic, and has more of a pop twist to it," McGinn said. "I think it's definitely still rock, but it's maybe a little less aggressive than what Sideshow was."

While a year has passed since Sideshow performed its last concert, it seems like Tisdale, Higgins and McGinn still want to get back together someday, and they're all supportive of each other's music.

Tisdale said he was looking forward to the next time the three got together to jam.

"Those guys are a couple of my heroes, musically," Tisdale said. "And I don't know if we're going to play a show ever, but I think it's inevitable that we'll get back together."

Higgins is excited about playing with Pablo's Triangle and Luck of Aleia for the first time, and said he wished to play again with McGinn and Tisdale.

"It's kind of a cliché to say, but it's like a marriage with us. We basically learned how to play instruments together," Higgins said. "I would say that if none of us had anything to do, we would probably (get back together). I would want to, anyway."

McGinn also expressed a willingness to rejoin his old bandmates sometime.

"I miss playing with those guys since we haven't been a band, but I obviously don't see them nearly as much, which is kind of a drag because they're awesome guys," McGinn said. "I'd love to set up a side project and just play music with them."

Maybe after playing on the same stage at Duffy's tonight, the three will be inspired to play there again sometime — as a band.

The 21-and-over show is \$4 at the door and begins at 9:30.