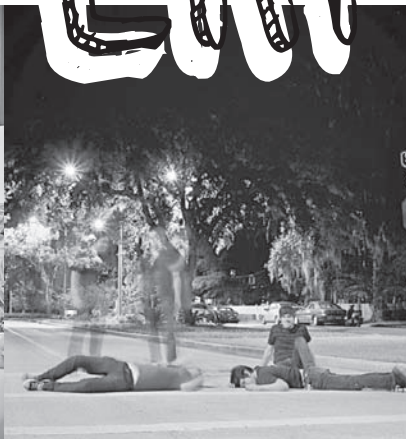




By ALLISON CANDREVA



“IT’S FOR THE NERDS...”



People scrambled for party poppers and maracas as the band played one last time. With orange and green balloons flying toward the stage, Common Grounds looked like a big party minus a clown.

Shaggy hair laced with streamers, Matt Brink sang to the packed room looking out on the crowd through his black-rimmed glasses. Parachute men floated across the room, as Averkiou finished up the Pop Mayhem show and the last set they would ever play.

Or so they thought...

Six months later, Averkiou (Av-er-kyoo) is coming out with their first CD *Throwing Sparks*. In April, the indie rock band was on the brink of dissolving. Member Jay Shusterman, 26, had briefly left the band but came back to play guitar for Pop Mayhem.

"[Shusterman coming back] felt good," said Brink the 31-year-old lead singer. "It felt like coming home."

Playing for over two years at the time, Shusterman's leaving, among other things, caused the band to consider breaking up. An hour after playing at Common Grounds, Dan and Heather Sostrom approached the band about a record deal with Clairerecords they couldn't refuse.

"It was great," Brink said. "We really wanted [the record deal] to happen."

Averkiou thought Pop Mayhem would be their last show, and they played their hearts out. Sweeping streamers from the stage, Brink felt on top of the world. Averkiou had a great show, and he was sky high. Leaving Common Grounds, he sent text messages to his other band mates about the record deal, unaware what the next six months held.

A few days later, Averkiou dismissed the idea of dissolving and started putting together their first record.

In January, the band will be together for three years. James Hernandez, 30, on drums, David Quarles, 26, on guitar and Chad Darby, 27, on bass make up the rest of Averkiou. With five members in the band there is bound to be some conflict. However, there is a plus side to so many "chefs in the kitchen."

"Everyone's really picky," Darby said. "It's five people that are filters to other people's ideas."

Although the band wrote about 80 to 100 songs since getting together, only about 20 are finished and only eight made it to the album. *Throwing Sparks* is set for release on Nov. 11 in local music stores in Gainesville, at shows the band will play, and online at sites like Rhapsody and iTunes. Along with CDs, Averkiou will release 500 vinyl records – 100 being seafoam green. Brink said it's always ideal make some of the albums colored vinyl.

"It's for the nerds," he said in a nasal voice. "For guys like us."

Averkiou recorded the album in multiple places over the past three years. Some of it was bedroom recording, getting together at Shusterman's house with a case of beer and a computer, sitting in a room recording until the sun came up.

"It's a really good feeling to stay up all night," Brink said.

Brink, a devout smoker, sat rolling Natural American Spirit tobacco into cigarettes. When Averkiou first started playing, he remembers never wanting to go home. However, staying up until 5 a.m. with the guys isn't so appealing now that he's married.

Another session was at Earthsound Recording in Valdosta, Ga. Recording in different areas enabled them to cherry pick the songs they liked for the CD.

Some of the house recordings took place while one of the members was moving out. If listened to carefully, sounds of doors slamming and people falling down stairs can be heard in the background. Brink, locked in a room with a case of beer and headphones, sang over the

muffled noises throughout the house.

While each member of the band contributes to the songs, Brink writes all of the lyrics. He pulls some inspiration from when he lived in Future House – a boarding house downtown. There was a lot of drinking and partying, and some of his lyrics are really about being tired of that lifestyle and wanting to take care of himself.

"Give'm What He Wants," the shortest song on the album, is about being at a party that you don't want to be at and finding a way to entertain yourself.

"It's waiting to leave, wanting to go and not being able to do it," Brink said.

Much of the lyrics he writes are "written off the cuff." First comes the melody, and then he writes the lyrics. Brink unintentionally relates songs to his life, and many times "meaning" comes after the fact.

The band just got back from a mini tour to New York and Virginia. Darby said their shows were just as packed as they are in Gainesville. He said they have a lot of fans out of town because many of them moved from Gainesville.

"We didn't know what to expect," he said. "We weren't expecting much, and there were a ton of people there. We were smiling our asses off."

The band's name came from a friend. While sitting around brainstorming one night, someone yelled "Averkiou" to get friend Nicole Averkiou's attention, and it stuck. Within the next year or year and a half, Brink and Darby said they want the band to come out with its next CD. There are already some songs for a second album, and the members have learned a lot from recording the first album.

"We learned a lot of lessons of what we don't want to do," Brink said.

After playing the Fest 7, Averkiou's next Florida show is at Crowbar in Ybor City on Nov. 13. For fans who feel like a road trip, there's another show before that in Atlanta at East Atlanta Ice House on Nov. 7. For all other show listings or changes to show information, check Averkiou's MySpace page, www.myspace.com/averkiou. ☺



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