



MEAT PUPPETS

CRANKING IT UP TO 11

Rock at RIBCO and dozens of other ideas for New Year's Eve await

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Entertainment & Dining in the Quad Cities
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By Tripp J Crousse
features@qctimes.com

>>> Curt and Cris Kirkwood have been through a lot together with their share of ups and downs. The founding members of the Meat Puppets persisted through the drug addiction and legal troubles of younger brother Cris to continue creating the American alternative music for which they're known. "You can take lemons and make lemonade, that's kind of how I look at it," Curt Kirkwood said from his home in Austin, Texas. Curt continued on while Cris took time away from the band, a stretch that lasted nearly 10 years.

"I just didn't have anything to do with any of his problems, and I was able to separate myself enough to keep doing art," he said. "I did some Meat Puppets; I did some Eyes Adrift — the band I did with Krist Novoselic (the bassist for Nirvana) and Bud Gaugh (the drummer for Sublime) — and I did a solo record. It was an easy way to keep doing stuff. It's what I did. I had a flow going." The brothers reunited in 2007, began touring again and have since released two albums, "Rise to Your Knees" and "Sewn Together." The band plans to release a new album in April. The Meat Puppets (the Kirkwood brothers and drummer Shandon Sahn) return to the Rock Island Brewing Company for a New Year's Eve show. The band, known for the songs "Backwater," "Lake of Fire" — thanks mostly to Nirvana's cover of their "MTV Unplugged" appearance in 1993 that featured the

ABOVE: The Meat Puppets are, from left, Cris Kirkwood — bass, Curt Kirkwood — vocals, guitar, Shandon Sahn — drums. RIGHT: The Retribution Gospel Choir includes, from left, Alan Sparhawk, Steve Garrington and Eric Pollard.

RAMPING UP TO A ROCKING 2011

Meat Puppets, Retribution Gospel Choir headline RIBCO NYE

Making the best of it

Meat Puppets return to RIBCO for New Year's Eve show

Kirkwoods — and more, played at RIBCO in 1985, which was early in their careers and not long after the release of "Meat Puppets II." They also played at RIBCO last summer. "I think people there really enjoy the music. To me, it's just the people in any city that come out and appreciate it," Curt Kirkwood said. "That's why we're coming there for New Year's." "We had just a ball the last time we played there — just a fantastic audience."

FIVE QUESTIONS — with Curt Kirkwood of the Meat Puppets

1. RED OR WHITE MEAT? Today, it's chicken. Either way, I don't care, as long as it's not green.

2. WHAT'S FOR BREAKFAST AFTER A BIG GIG? Oh, eggs Benedict, if I'm going to eat breakfast. I don't do it that often. I'm from the Southwest. I like bacon. I like breakfast. I like all breakfast food, I just don't do it that often. When I'm touring, I do.

3. IN A GAME OF CHECKERS, WHO WOULD WIN? Curt Kirkwood or Cris Kirkwood? Cris, easily. Cris is the smarter, the more clever of the two of us. He's good at games, always won at H-O-R-S-E. He beats me at jumbles hands down, no problem. Anything that takes wits. Cris is going to win at I don't play games, either, so right off the bat I would concede without playing. I like crossword puzzles just to kill time, but I've never been into games.

4. YOU'VE DESIGNED SEVERAL OF THE MEAT PUPPETS' ALBUM COVERS AND SOME ART FOR BOOK COVERS. WHAT'S THAT CREATIVE PROCESS LIKE AND WHAT GOT YOU INTO THAT ART FORM?

It's all the same, it's just messing around. I don't have any discipline. My paintings are usually something I've just doodled and decided to make a painting of. There's no process. It's just an extension of stuff that I used to like to do when I was a kid.

5. YOU'RE BIRTHDAY IS JAN. 10. ANY BIG PLANS?

No, no, none whatsoever. I don't really do that, either. I'm really boring. I don't do holidays, really. I might do some stuff for Christmas this year. I've got a granddaughter — my first grandkid. I might send her something. But she's pretty young, she wouldn't even notice I did it. No birthday plans, though.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Retribution Gospel Choir is a break for Low guitarist

Minnesota-based group appearing on same bill with 3 other bands

By Kellie Reich
features@qctimes.com

By name alone, Retribution Gospel Choir sounds like something you would stumble upon during an adventure in the Deep South. However, this rock band couldn't be farther from the South, both in terms of location and sound.

Based in Duluth, Minn., Retribution Gospel Choir, which is comprised of Alan Sparhawk, Steve Garrington and Eric Pollard, blends heavy drum and bass lines to create a sound that is deep and dark. The sound is something lead singer/guitarist Sparhawk is enjoying, given his background as a founding member of the indie rock band Low.

"With (Retribution), we play louder," he said during a recent telephone interview. "It's a lot more physical band, so there's definitely different things going on. It's a different set of limitations, so to speak."

Having formed the band while filling in for another group, Sparhawk said they knew right away that they wanted to keep working together as Retribution Gospel Choir, which will be making a stop Friday night at the Rock Island Brewing Company.

"By the time we'd done the first show, I knew. I mean, most musicians can tell when something is clicking. When you work well together with someone, it's really recognizable, and that's what happened."

"By the time we did that first gig for 25 minutes, we were already pretty excited about doing another one."

As two of the band's three members, Sparhawk and Garrington are in both Low and Retribution Gospel Choir, so it's impossible to hear one and not think of the other. Sparhawk recognizes that and believes the difference in each band is carried through by way of the drummers.

"Eric Pollard, who is the drummer in Retribution Gospel Choir, is a very different drummer from Mini (Parker, Sparhawk's wife, who plays in Low)," he said. "They're very much playing the way that they play, and that's, I think, in many ways a testament to good drumming. Good drummers really sort of dictate the tone of a band and really establish a format of 'OK, here's the rhythm' or 'Here's the range of possibilities that can be done with this band.'"

"And then, if you're working closely as a band, you work to that format," he added.

On tour in support of Retribution Gospel Choir's second album, "2," Sparhawk says that allowing the drummers to be who they are and having the foundation of the band build on that is most exciting for him and allows him to experience things differently.

"You know with Low it's about making sound and trying to make it as big as possible, even though it's very small and quiet," he said.

IF YOU GO

WHAT: Meat Puppets, also featuring Retribution Gospel Choir, Los Yegueros and Driver of the Year

WHERE: Rock Island Brewing Company, 1815 2nd Ave., Rock Island

HOW MUCH: Advance tickets are \$20, \$25 the day of the show

INFORMATION: (563) 793-1999 or RIBCO.com

ON THE WEB: www.myspace.com/themeatpuppets; RetributionGospelChoir.com

ON THE WEB: Curt Kirkwood talks about Disney, and its early influence on him, at qctimes.com.

