

## Band continues to bring 'hype' to local music scene

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Mallory Jordan

Self-titled "urban garage jazz" band Midwest Hype wrapped up the night for the FM stage at Muncie Music Fest this past Saturday.

A seven-man band native to Muncie, Midwest Hype has become veterans to the Muncie music scene by playing 150 shows per year for the past four years.

Drummer and manager, Max Kepler, 26, explained how the band became a part of the music fest.

"We've been involved in a lot of different downtown events for a couple years," he said. "We had to submit [to Muncie Music Fest], but we've been involved for a very long time in the Muncie music scene."

Combining reggae, funk, rock and hip-hop to create an original sound, lead vocalist and guitarist George "Genrefree" Prellwitz, 24, said Midwest Hype's sound can jokingly be summed up in one word, "flavor."

"We're trying to create this magic moment," bassist Nate Miller said.

Before taking stage at Muncie Music Fest, Midwest Hype enjoyed listening to other local bands that they support, including Fresh Hops, The Michael Martin Band, Eumatik and Catch Curtis.

At one point in the night, Bradley Thomas & Friends' performance on the Coors Light Stage caught their ear.

"I'm down with these guys ... that bass player is ripping it," Miller said.

In regards to hearing new music, Miller described the types of bands Midwest Hype generally finds an interest in.

"We're all about original music," he said. "We'd rather watch an original band we've never heard of."

Throughout the night, the members of the band continually referred to their music as a unique blend of all different genres created from their varying music tastes.

Vocalist Justin "Ideal" Diehl, 23, who brings the hip-hop side to Midwest Hype, said his biggest musical influence is The Roots.

"I'm like an MC, like a real lyricist," Ideal said. "I always dreamed of rapping over a live band."

Miller described himself as bringing the jazzier, classical side of music to Midwest Hype. He then described Kepler as the "band-guy" who adds in an eclectic feel to the band. The reggae influence comes from Prellwitz.

Blending together the separate music tastes of each band member gives Midwest Hype an eclectic energy.

"It helps create our sound because everyone around us has different influences," Prellwitz said.

As a pre-performance ritual, the members of Midwest Hype squeeze into their van for a pep talk.

"There's a fair amount of group camaraderie before every show," Miller said.

Although the schedule for the night was about an hour off track, Midwest Hype's audience was eager to crowd around to watch one of Muncie Music Fest's final performances of the night.

Scott "Hot Lips" Whitford, 27, started off Midwest Hype's set with a trumpet solo that got the crowd's attention. Soon, the audience became a mob of dancers getting into the feel of the music.

"The crowd is super important, I feel like, when we play ... I love to see people respond to the music," Kepler said.

Prellwitz agreed and said "people dancing makes the show."

Midwest Hype is currently putting the finishing touches on their new self-produced EP set to be released within this month, as well as gearing up for their Oct. 11 performance at Schubas Tavern in Chicago.





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