



BIG BAD IRISH

the Big and Bad part, but we let 'em fight it out to decide who is bad and who is big," Shawn Murphy said.

Friends from their days on the campus of County College of Morris back in 1992, core members Dave Murphy and McMahon recruited Shawn Murphy after college. Henning and Hampson came on board via Craigslist.

"Our goal for every song is to get people up and moving around," Shawn Murphy said. "The one that does that best is probably 'How Many More Times' by Led Zeppelin."

What they play: In addition to Zeppelin, the band embraces "rock's lost classics," like Aerosmith, ZZ Top and Jethro Tull, with a mix of modern such as Weezer, Foo Fighters, Pearl Jam and more.

"The best compliments we get come from people who say that we play songs they love but never hear anymore, either on the radio or from other bands," Shawn Murphy said. "We also invite lots of audience participation, so there's always the chance that our fans don't just watch the show, they become part of it."

What you say: "They're tight, and they rock," said Peter Herрман of Ringwood.

**Original bands
68 A.D.**



GROUP THERAPY

Art Wright: Lead singer/guitar
John Trotte: Guitar
Tim McDade: Bass
Joey Leshko: Drums
Ritchie Sammet: Lead guitar
www.68adrocks.com

Now playing: Stay tuned. 68 A.D is currently in the studio but frequents The Stone Pony in Asbury Park and The Crossroads in Garwood.

Behind their scene: With numeric and historic symbolism, the band plucks its name from the year some members were born, the cost of their rehearsal space — \$68 for three hours — and high school football numbers.

The A.D. refers to the band's first project, a rock opera, "Bread and Circuses"; also, a statement by Julius Caesar: "If you keep the peasants fed (bread) and entertained (circuses), you can easily control the masses."

"We took that to the new era where bread is symbolized by fast food (McDonalds) and the circuses are replaced by television, movies and the like," said drummer Joey Leshko of Long Valley. "It turns out that in the year 68 A.D. there were four Roman emperors, as three of them were murdered. This all occurred in the era of bread and circuses."

What they play: The energy put forth in their name comes through in their music. They're inspired musically by metal and punk of the '80s and '90s, and lyrically by Wright's angst with the government and corporate America and the "tragedies and triumphs of life in general for the common man."

A union of longtime friends and six degrees of separation, the band collaborated 18 months ago and since then has ripped out "Bread and Circuses" and "Hell's Tenants," which has earned airplay on New York station WRXP, 101.9 FM.

"The thought of working in a

cubicle equated to spending time in hell," Leshko said. "It touches on two songs from the album, 'Cube Farm' and 'Hell's Tenants.'"

EMPIRE

Chris Ratchko: Vocals, guitar
Zach Cooperstein: Lead guitar
Sander Bryce: Drums:
Henry Yavorski: Bass
www.myspace.com/empire1337

Now playing: Feb. 7, The Crossroads, 78 North Ave., Garwood, (908) 232-5666, www.xxroads.com

Behind their scene: They bonded in sixth grade and banded in high school. Such is the life of four Livingston High School juniors balancing the three R's: Reading, writing and rockin'.

Meet Empire, a classic rock collaboration currently finishing their first EP — and their homework. The name has nothing to do with "Star Wars."

"Inspired by a light shaped like the Empire State Building, one of the members came up with the idea of Empire," Ratchko wrote in an e-mail to the Daily Record. "It seemed to be a nice solid name for a classic rock band, and it stuck."

"Since our practices are generally on Saturdays, we do not have to worry about things like homework and we are very understanding about a member missing practice for education reasons," Ratchko said.

What they play: Influenced by the likes of Led Zeppelin, Van Halen, Guns 'n' Roses and Metallica, Empire currently boasts eight original songs, which earned them first and second places in two Battle of the Bands contests. (We applaud "Bringing it Back.")

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