

Marwood's guitar pop has political twist

BY ROBERT HICKS SPECIAL TO THE DAILY RECORD

New York City's Marwood plays guitar-driven pop with an occasional nod to politics. Frontman Benji Rogers said the band has drawn comparisons to the Black Crowes and Squeeze, but he spoke more favorably of the influence of Little Feat.

Whenever I write songs, I want to have real strong choruses. That's what sells it for me. Hooks and melodies -- that's the thing for me," he said. "I'm really into harmony, especially when I'm listening to Little Feat records. I want our music to sound really classic."

Marwood will rouse the crowd with its smart melodies and intelligent songs on a bill that includes Twin-A, Motel Creeps and Naked Underneath at Maxwell's in Hoboken on Friday.

I want our uptempo songs to have a lot of drive to them," Rogers said. "But I also want them to be organic."

London-born Rogers is the band's lead singer, guitarist and songwriter. He is joined in the quartet by guitarist Rob Overbey, bassist Brett Conti and drummer Michael Talbot. Recently, the quartet released its new eponymous EP.

This was the first time we've actually gotten to spend quite a bit of time in the studio playing with songs and experimenting with different guitar tunings to get it to sound the way we really wanted it to sound. We spent more time to get it right," Rogers said of the new EP.

Producer Dave McNair (Los Lobos) helped the band polish its songs at Dumbo Studios in Manhattan.

On previous recordings, the band tried to duplicate its energetic, "big wall of guitars" sound so characteristic of its live shows. Past recordings have also focused on a different song topics.

"A lot of times, I write broken-heart songs or love songs," Rogers said. "Lately, I've been more into political songs. I'm quite political in my personal life, and that merges sometimes in small ways into my songwriting.

"Marwood arose in 2002 after the demise of Rogers' solo project, the Ben Rogers Band, which released "Another Day Gone" in 2001.

Marwood released its debut full-length CD, "Regular Flips," in 2002 and its acoustic and live EP, "Radio Personalities," in 2003. The band's music samples and more information are available at www.marwoodband.com.

A year ago, the band reached the finals of the annual M.E.A.N.Y. band competition at CBGB in New York City.

Inspired by his recent travels to the Middle East, Rogers has been writing some non-preachy, political songs.

Apart from music, Rogers is really interested in the poets William Blake and Charles Olson.

"I just read in my spare time. I'm a pretty voracious reader," he said. "At the moment, I'm reading a lot of stuff on the Middle East."