

Marwood carves out a niche

Diverse rock 'n' roll band mixes others' sounds to make its own

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Tucked away behind the bar at 9th Street Espresso on Manhattan's lower East Side, you will find Rob Overbey: dispenser of coffee, admitted Britney and Christina fan and the lead guitarist for underground New York-based band Marwood. While you are most assuredly familiar with coffee, Britney and Christina, Marwood may be unfamiliar territory. Marwood is a good old rock 'n' roll band, drawing on influences as diverse as Kiss, Marvin Gaye, Simon & Garfunkel, Elton John and Little Feat. However, the diversity of influences should come as no surprise as it reflects the diversity in background and experience of Marwood's members.



Photo by Gabrielle Motola

Lead singer-songwriter Benji Rogers hails from London and has traveled the United States from coast to coast, with significant stays in Los Angeles and upstate New York, before settling in the East Village of New York City. Overbey is originally from Tennessee, though he moved around for most of his childhood and also spent time in upstate New York where he and Rogers met. The newest member, bassist Brett Conti, is also from Nashville, Tenn., where he and Overbey first met. A chance meeting brought them back together in Manhattan last year and Overbey has been with the band ever since. Drummer John O'Reilly rounds out the Marwood line up.

Marwood's sound has been described as "Counting Crows in their prime," with the "guitar-driven edge of the Black Crows" and a sound reminiscent of Squeeze. But Overbey disagrees.

"I don't really hear specific bands in our sound," Overbey said. "I just think we sound like ourselves."

Rogers has high aspirations for his songwriting, especially in terms of what effect he would like it to have on his listeners.

"I would love to write a song that made me feel the way I did the first time I heard 'In Your Eyes' by Peter Gabriel," Rogers said. "[That's] a song that is bigger than the sum of its parts. I want people to connect with the music."

As Conti sees it, "entertaining people for a living is its own reward."

Overbey, Rogers and he all agree that the goals for Marwood are focused on getting as many people to hear their music as possible and hopefully bring enjoyment to those people with their music, without any plans for world domination.

"I just want to be able to make a living off of music, go on tour for a few hundred days a year, be in the studio making music and make all the hardships and craziness worthwhile," Rogers said.