



Love Day swag

You don't have to be Tom Cruise to find Holmes funky

By Lisa Egan

Eight band members may sound like a lot for one group, but it worked for the likes of Chicago and The Ramones. That's even the sum total of former Duran Duran bandmates. Talking locally, add Holmes — Worcester's own blend of funk, soul, R&B and reggae — to that list. It's a large outfit pulling off that funk.

Funk music actually has a pretty hip etymology. The word "funk," once classified as the stench of body odor or sexual intercourse, was commonly looked upon as vulgar or indecent. Musicians subscribing to this style initially employed the name "funk" to describe music with a slow, smooth rhythm. Eventually, because of the word's association with sex, it was applied to music with a distinct, determined beat. This early form of the music set the pattern for later musicians.



Inspired by the authentic funk of yesteryear, Holmes was founded in 2002 as the brainchild of Steve Snuffer and Mike O'Shea. Drawing inspiration from Snuffer's vast collection of music, the guys were looking for a fresh alternative to the cover-band scene. They began by playing various venues all over the Northeast. They even opened for noteworthy national acts such as Bonerama, Rebirth Brass Band and Big Sam's Funky Nation.

Originally a five-piece group, Holmes added a full horn section and a female

back-up singer. "I found many years ago bands with horns have a mass appeal," says Snuffer, "and command better pay scales in addition to adding to that 'wow' factor." Their aim was to play music with more substance than typical Top-40 fashion, but they still wanted to radiate a mass appeal.

Holmes professes to combine traditional soul elements (think The Isley Brothers, The Meters, Stevie Wonder and Al Green) with some of its own contemporary style. Their classic de-emphasis of both melody and harmony allows for more attention paid to bringing the rhythmic groove of bass and drums to the foreground. So in a word, Holmes is just downright catchy.

Holmes' standard line-up consists of lead singer Steve Snuffer, Mike O'Shea on the keys, percussionist Alex Budrow, back-up vocals Linzy Martinelli, alto sax Tim Reese, tenor sax Mike Rudick, Russell Bogartz on the trombone and Lee Whalen on the bass. They also share guest musician Sam Holmstock with the local band Entrain, along with so many other area performers from the local scene who have known to sit in with Holmes from time to time. "The Worcester music scene has an unbelievable camaraderie and a real communal vibe," says Snuffer. "All the bands are like a tight knit family and rarely does ego get in the way."

To honor the city that's been so welcoming to them, they've decided to give a little something back. Snuffer says of Worcester, "We're psyched that we've been recognized for our hard work and musicianship," he says, "and we plan on giving back to the city and people who helped us with a new CD of original music for free, which we hope to give away copies of at our next Tammany Hall gig." For a post-Valentine's Day funkathon (and as promised, hopefully some free swag), be sure to check out Holmes accompanied by Soulstice for an 18-and-up show. -*Lisa Egan*

DETAILS

What: Holmes and Soulstice
When: Saturday, Feb. 16, 9:30 p.m.
Where: Tammany Hall, 43 Pleasant St.