



The harmony-singing lads in Ichthyosaur, from left, Tanner Allen, Robert Parker and Nico Telles.

PHOTO/MARK EARNEST

Fine tune

Ichthyosaur

It's pretty striking when the harmonies hit during a typical Ichthyosaur song. Modern bands tend to have a lead singer and the occasional bassist or guitarist chipping in with some backups or unison parts. Not with Ichthyosaur: harmonies are featured on every song and involve all three band members, who also each take lead vocals during the set.

Bassist Tanner Allen, guitarist Robert Parker and drummer Nico Telles said it was planned from the get-go to share the vocals, and they agreed that it's a lot of work to get the blend that distinguishes them from other Reno rock bands.

"We were all pushing for it, but I think some of the inspiration on my end, that motivated me to push the band even more toward it, was the classic rock of the '70s," said Allen. "Like the Eagles or Boston, those massive full-band harmonies that just sound bitchin'. That sounds like an element that is missing these days, and I'm not sure where it went, but we think it needs to be back."

Everyone also chips in when it comes to the songwriting.

"We don't tell each other what to do, mostly," said Parker.

"Oh, no, it's very free-flow in our band," Allen added, to chuckles all around.

That free-flow description fits the band to a tee. Although they pull from a lot of different sources, there are some consistent hallmarks to the Icky sound: Parker's driving, syncopated guitar parts; Allen's melodic bass lines, which also have plenty of drive; and Telles' solid drumming that occasionally explodes into punk or Who-like fury.

It also taps from different eras: the 2000s rock revivalists, '90s UK melodic

indie, '70s straight-ahead rockers. One song reminded me of '70s power pop geniuses Big Star, while another made me instantly think of the great '80s UK indie band Wedding Present. Yet Icky's music has an appeal beyond the cult favorites. Rock fans of all eras will find something to like.

Interestingly, it was metal music that first bonded friends Allen and Parker, who both work in the Air National Guard as aircraft mechanics.

"We bonded over similar interests in music," said Allen. "We listened to the same bands, and nobody else we were working with shared that same enthusiasm for music."

Ichthyosaur's roots were in a worship band that Parker was in, and that Allen filled in for from time to time. The diversity of that experience really stuck with the band.

"The cool thing about the church was that the singers wanted to do songs in different ways, or at least in some different way from how we would normally do it," Parker said. "We had to learn by ear how to compensate for that, and it really helped us create our own songs."

Icky started in 2015, with Telles joining up at the end of 2016. As it happens, Telles' father is also in the Air National Guard and tipped him off to his future bandmates.

The work in the military does take precedence—both Parker and Allen have been deployed in recent years—but Icky does its best to get together to practice, write and play shows—and to record and release EPs, with a new one due sometime in the fall. □

Ichthyosaur plays on May 19 at Jub Jub's Thirst Parlor, 71 S. Wells Ave., with touring bands Catbamboo and Mannequin Mishap, and on Jun 21 at Shea's Tavern with touring groups All Boy All Girl, A Summer Alive and Red Light Radical. Get more info at facebook.com/ichthyosaurband.

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