



The Saturday Knights in their tiki-rampant rehearsal basement. From left, Noland Magnuson, Tim Eschrich, Dan Steinmetz and Tim Blake. PHOTO/MARK EARNEST

Blood lust

The Saturday Knights

There's that old saying that you sometimes have to bleed for your art. It's something Noland Magnuson knows all too well.

"I cut my finger at work down to the bone on a Friday and then went and had to get stitches," Magnuson explained. He's the guitarist and singer with the Saturday Knights and works as a truck mechanic. "Then, I had to play a show on a Tuesday, and I knew I couldn't play guitar, so I just sang. Right off the bat, someone smashed into my hand and popped all the stitches open, and it was a bloodbath.

"So, I decided if I'm gonna bleed, then I might as well rub blood on my face and paint an upside down cross on my chest in blood," Magnuson said.

Now before you get the impression that the Saturday Knights are led by a blood-thirsty freak, know that the venue asked Magnuson "politely to clean up" afterward, he said. And he complied.

Really, though, it's just another memorable show for this band, now on the upswing since their lineup has solidified. Joining Magnuson are Tim Eschrich on bass and vocals, Tim Blake on guitar, and Dan Steinmetz on drums.

Getting this final lineup took time; the seeds were sown more than 20 years ago. In 1998, Blake and Magnuson met during a show from Blake's band Ample in Carson City. Magnuson met Eschrich when they were both living in the same house in Portland in 2008, and they played in what Eschrich called "a shitty heavy metal band called the Fucking Wizards." They broke up on stage.

Magnuson and Eschrich moved back to Reno in 2017, the same year that Magnuson asked Blake to start the Knights. At the time, the band was a trio, with Blake as drummer. In March of this year, they asked Steinmetz to take over on drums and Blake switched to

guitar. Steinmetz said he was already a big fan of the band.

"I feel like they have a lot of the same influences I do, just good American rock and roll that has some European influences, basically where America dropped the ball," Steinmetz said.

"We were looking for a second guitarist, but we couldn't find anybody," Blake said. "We knew people who were great guitarists, and some people that were a good fit, but couldn't find anyone who was both."

"And that wasn't a total liability," Magnuson added, "because we had three of them already."

It's clear from their freewheeling interview during a recent practice that this is a tight band, and not just musically. There was lots of finishing each other's sentences and good natured ribbing throughout. The band also writes communally, with Magnuson and Eschrich bringing in skeletons of songs and Blake and Steinmetz arranging.

Those songs are mostly four-to-the-floor rockers with titles like "Life of Crime," also the name of their EP on local Humanterrorist Records. A few are even topical, such as "Shit Where You Eat," which bemoans commerce concerns that are "taking all the soul out of West Fourth Street and driving people out of the places where they at least had a stable place to live," Magnuson said.

But, for the most part, the Saturday Knights are a flat-out rock band with all the hedonism and good times that implies.

"I just tell people that we're in a loud rock and roll band," said Magnuson. "I hate the description 'dirty rock and roll.' In what sense? Is it because you stink or you like playing in a shithole bar, or both?"

"I have fun telling people it's like Mötley Crüe sped up three times," Blake said. □

The Saturday Knights play with Gutter Demons, Drinking Machine Guns and the Sonic Dead on Sept. 7 at Shea's Tavern, 715 S. Virginia St. Hear them at thesaturdayknightsreno.bandcamp.com.

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