

FOCUS

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YOUR *FREE* ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT, PERSONAL FINANCE, & MUSIC NEWSWEEKLY



GEN-X OPENING THE BAND BATTLE



SEPT. 8 AT THE SOCIABLE INN



SHERRY DRIVE

ART

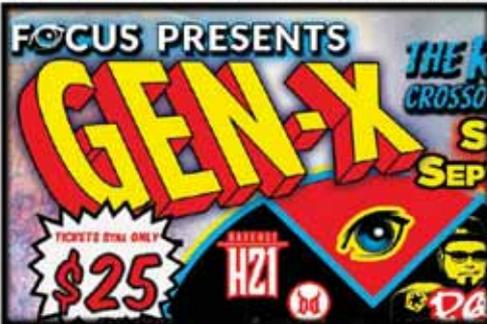
HEALTH

Stephen Kavanaugh

Coconut Water

LIVE

Gen-X



REAL ESTATE

Coldwell Banker





Battling to the Top

By Andy Roberts

Stepping out of Wrigley Field on a Sunday afternoon for a quick phone call with Focus, Jales Hupke was happy to update us on the status of Virgin Mary Pistol Grip (VMPG).

The Omaha-based band released *Secret Codes* about a year ago when they were featured in Focus prior to a release party. The five-track EP was their second release and had been recorded in Omaha and Los Angeles. They did that one with Bob Marlette, who'd been behind the board for artists like Tracy Chapman and Rob Zombie.

That release, available for purchase online at iTunes, Amazon, CD Baby, and at music stores in Omaha, has been the basis for most of their work the past year.

"We've basically just been promoting it, doing shows," Hupke said. "Just working on exposure."

Hupke, on guitar and vocals, is joined in VMPG by his brother Jas Hupke on drums, lead guitarist Wyatt Mason, and Coleton Narduzzo handles bass duties. The name, for those who wonder, came out of an old Clint Eastwood western and refers to what

is a relatively common handgun grip.

For the OEAA winners, working the EP has meant branching out to Colorado and Wisconsin while remaining relevant in Omaha. VMPG has worked to avoid over-exposure, so they have performed about an average of twice a month for the past year.

"Some shows we get booked, some we get asked," Hupke offered.

R.E.M. is one reference point for their music, Hupke said. "A couple fans have described it as manic poetry put to music."

Virgin Mary Pistol Grip has been working on new songs and probably has "about an album's worth" ready to go. Recording will likely start in the spring.

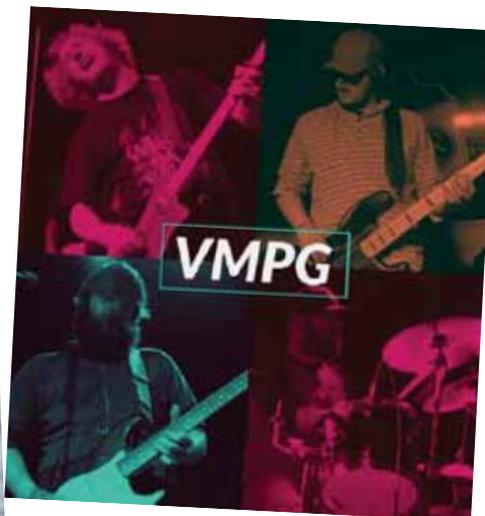
While the singing and musicianship is strong, Hupke offered: "Relating with the crowd, you know, on some lyrics," as being a major band strength. "We all know our parts . . . do your job."

That will be what VMPG plans to do when they play for the right to perform at the Gen X Show. Hupke is excited about the possibility of what that can do for the band.

"It would help us immensely . . . you have a built-in crowd," he admitted.

"It's easier if there's 5,000 people than if there's 50," Hupke said. "It's always good to have support locally. A lot of cities don't have the kinds of things we have."

Catch them on September 8 when they perform during the 6 to 11 p.m. show at the Sociable Inn for one of two Focus Presents Gen X competitions to



find out who will open for the lineup on September 15.

For more on Virgin Mary Pistol Grip: [facebook.com/virginmarypistolgrip/](https://www.facebook.com/virginmarypistolgrip/) www.VirginMaryPistolGrip.com

SHERRY DRIVE

Retooling & Energizing

By Focus Staff

For Anu Ratzburg of local rockers Sherry Drive, it's all about the energy.

"We've changed our logo, our appearance, everything. We're bringing a lot more energy. That's come with a lot of the changes over the years," Ratzburg emphasized. "We bring 110% energy to the crowd and we're able to feed the energy that we want from them."

Ratzburg and Sherry Drive – the name comes from a Bellevue street with which they have some familiarity - have been part of the local music scene since 2012. They've shared the stage with the likes of Sick Puppies, Like Moths to Flames, Volumes and Fit for a King. They hope to be part of the Gen X show on September 15.

Ratzburg handles lead guitar and vocals for the band and is joined by Richard Ratzburg on rhythm guitar,

drummer Trevor Ratzburg, and screamer bass player Cory Drennan. Singer Ratzburg shared Sherry Drive's story with Focus.

They've added jazz chords to heavy riffs and retooled their sound. Taking a new, "more mature" approach to vocals has added to the evolution. That means more mixing and studio work.

"A lot of 'poppier' vocal stuff along with an aggressive mix," he elaborated. The lineup also has changed, resulting in a tighter sound that Ratzburg said has "matured" and he feels his writing is better and now allows him to create sounds from more genres.

"We're trying to bring something that no one else can," he stated.

Lyricaly the material has its roots in what's happening in Ratzburg's life.

"I want other people to have a connection to what I'm writing and be able to relate to it in their own lives." While some of the music may be sad, Ratzburg hopes it sends a hopeful message.

"It's like saying you're not going through things alone," he offered.

"Even when life feels good, you're still allowed to be down in the dumps.

"You can be having a great day and remember something that brings you down and you listen to music and something that relates to you."

His writing reflects deep thoughts and feelings. "It's coming from my heart."

Sean Sorensen, who has worked with Canadian singer The Weeknd and whose band Devil in the Details is set



Photo Credit: Sean Thomas of Inspired Film Studios

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