

Reggae bands help fans look on the bright side

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THE GAZETTE

This Rebelution is definitely of the nonviolent variety.

The vibes kicked out by this band are relentlessly positive, as the musicians bring together reggae, rock and hip-hop into a blend that could come only from the beaches of Southern California.

Heck, their new album is called "Bright Side of Life," delivered without the bitter irony of the Monty Python song. They really mean it.

Drummer Wesley Finley explained from a tour bus rolling through California that his mates are determined to lift up fans.

"Eric (Rachmany), our lead singer, kind of feels like we're role models for a lot of people. We play for a lot of college students," Finley said. "So, we just wanted to give them something positive, rather than put negative thoughts in their head."

The four members of Rebelution met when they were college students in Santa Barbara, Calif., where Finley graduated with a degree in cultural anthropology. So, while you watch the skin-beater ply his trade at The Black Sheep on Friday night, he'll probably be watching you, too. They weren't planning on global domination when the band formed; they just wanted to play some college parties.

"You can't force it to happen," Finley said. "It's not something we intended to do. We wanted to play for our college community on the weekends." Once they had a small following, they "cut a really ghetto recording for like a thousand bucks," Finley said, and it somehow found its way to radio play in Hawaii. When a promoter flew the band to Hawaii for a gig, they knew they were onto something.

Their first album, 2007's "Courage to Grow," was the iTunes editor choice for best reggae album of the year, peaking at No. 4 on Billboard's reggae chart.

Finley said that after that success — and once they'd all graduated — the quartet devoted itself full time to playing music and touring, and he hears their musical growth on the new songs.

The 12 originals on "Bright Side of Life" further explore the sounds that bands like Sublime, Slightly Stoopid and Pepper have created, but with a radically different mood.

The new album topped Billboard's reggae chart when it was released, and as they roll into town, Rebelution and opener Passafire each boast a Top 10 reggae album.

Finley said the combo of the rootsy reggae of Giant Panda Guerilla Dub Squad, the hard-hitting sound of Passafire, and the laid-back vibes of Rebelution should make for a reggae roller coaster.

Rebelution

Where: The Black Sheep, 2106 E. Platte Ave.

When: 7:30 p.m. Friday

Tickets: \$15; all ages; ticketweb.com

Openers: Giant Panda Guerilla Dub Squad, Passafire

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