

MORE THAN PB&JAM

FREE LUNCH COMES WITH A SIDE OF FUNK AND A JAZZ GARNISH

Athens funk-rockers Free Lunch may sound like a jam band, but they want you to know that it's more than just another band trying to be Widespread Panic.

"We might be influenced a little by bands like Phish and Widespread Panic but we feel our influences stretch much wider — going from Kurt Rosenwinkel to James Brown for instance. We don't look at ourselves as a jam band exactly, but I think the way we are viewed with the different sounds we make would be held in the jam band genre. We see ourselves as more funk and rock and hold much structure with our sound," drummer/lead vocalist Richard Chamberlain explained.

Free Lunch formed in Athens in 2006 as the brain-child of Bill Baker and Chamberlain. The duo played with various line-ups, until they found Andrew Lastrapes in 2007, who became the lead guitarist, with Baker on Bass and Chamberlain playing rhythm guitar and singing lead vocals.

Free Lunch finally solidified its lineup in 2008 when Justin Willis joined the band on guitar, allowing Chamberlain to move back to his expertise on drums, even though he remains the lead vocalist.

Chamberlain talked about the rare coordination he has to pull double-duty saying, "I played drums through high school, and no one I played with wanted to sing. I just practiced the coordination, and found I love to do both. We've found it's better with me on drums, because we have great guitarists and drums are the most natural to me."

Free Lunch also added a saxophone player, Gnarly G, in 2008. According to Chamberlain, the saxophone gives the band a sound that was missing before.

"He has added a great tone and melody that makes the sound much bigger," Chamberlain said.

Chamberlain is also grateful to the Athens music scene for helping the band find a line-up that works.

"Athens gave us the opportunity to find the best artists we can for our sound. Athens is full of great artists, and we have thoroughly enjoyed it," Chamberlain said.

Free Lunch finished up work on a five-



Photo courtesy Free Lunch

song EP, *The Odd One Out*, earlier this year. If you're a fan of jazz, funk, jam bands, or just good rock, *The Odd One Out* is a CD you'll want to check out. The songs switch between times of laid-back jazz and heavy-hitting rock, as demonstrated on the EP's first track "A Deep Blue Pocket," where shredding guitar solos suddenly pop out of unassuming, groovy jazz riffs.

Similarly, on the EP's second track "School Funk," Free Lunch showcases the smooth jazz saxophone sound of Gnarly G. Later, the song trades this sound for raging funk that you never would have expected to hear coming out of a song with a smooth jazz introduction.

Chamberlain is pleased with Free Lunch's first recording effort.

"I think the structure of our songs and the intensity of the mixed genres is the biggest strength on the CD. The sound itself was also engineered amazingly by Dylan Roth and the tones were great coming out of his studio, Odd Squad Entertainment Studios," Chamberlain said.

You can only get a copy of *The Odd One Out* at one of Free Lunch's shows. Of course, you can listen to it on the band's MySpace

FREE LUNCH

WHO'S WHO

Bill Baker (bass, vocals), Andrew Lastrapes (lead guitar), Justin Willis (lead guitar, vocals), Gnarly G (saxophone), Richard Chamberlain (drums, vocals)

FORMED

2006 in Athens, GA

LABEL

independent

LATEST RELEASE

The Odd One Out (2008)

ON THE WEB

www.myspace.com/freelunchtheband

page, www.myspace.com/freelunchtheband. Although, judging from Chamberlain's comments about the band's shows, you should probably just take the time to go see one.

"We sandwich songs and melt them into each other through the set. People groove and the energy is pretty high," he said. "I think the intensity of rock, funk and the small poppy twang we break out holds a very unique sound."

— Chris Homer