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## ON THE RISE

### Swaying to a furious mix of jazz-rap swagger

**T**he music of the Buck Dewey Big Band hip-hop shimmies off the stage like Minnie the Moocher trying on "phat" pants. It's experimental jazz-rap with an attitude. It mixes old-time jazz styles with modern funk and hip-hop. It's not just fun, it's pure craziness.

"Basically, all of us have pretty short attention spans," said Chris Barrett, who sings and plays trumpet and keyboards. "We're all interested in a lot of different things."

Added Jimmy Fox, singer and guitarist, "There's jazz and blues and hip-hop, but everything just flows from one funky point of view. We're just really conscious of making people move."

The songs all have a furious, upbeat, jazzy swagger, and while everybody in the band sings, there is a very distinctive sound to the Buck Dewey vocal approach. They sound sort of like Cab Calloway rapping.

"We were thinking more of Louis Armstrong, actually, stumbling out of Central Square at 2 in the morning," said Matt Myers, the madcap drummer, who also trades gruff vocal licks with hand percussionist Rob O'Dwyer in "Central Square" from their self-released CD "Friday Night Chicken Waltz."

"We looked around after woodshedding for a year, and lots of people are doing the jazz/swing thing now," O'Dwyer said. "But don't lump us into that. We are incorporating so much more into it, like rap and rock."

"Swing is cool, but we add in Miles, Mingus, and John Zorn," Barrett said, referring to Miles Davis and Charles Mingus. They are also careful to make sure there are songs behind the insanity.

"We're four-trackers," Myers said. "We record a lot of stuff. Jimmy put out his own CD before, I put out a tape, Rob had his music."

While the songs are well constructed, and contain a lot of intelligent, if offhand lyrics, the most distinctive thing about the group is the way they perform.

"We think of it like a slice of vaudeville," Fox said. "We're putting on a stage performance, like Charlie Chaplin doing som-



Daigo Fujiwara (left), Rob O'Dwyer, Chris Barrett, Jimmy Fox and Matt Myers are the Buck Dewey Big Band, which mixes jazz, funk and hip-hop.

ersaults on the stage."

One of their onstage staples, "The German Drinking Song," uses props: oversized cue cards with the song's inane lyrics scrawled on them. The group dresses in suits and ties, a serious approach that makes their craziness even funnier. They look like a group of young college professors on a bad bender.

"The best thing is that we can appeal to couples in their late 40s and 50s, but we also still had a big young crowd at The Middle East for our CD release," Myers said.

Fox has his own special explanation for the band's success.

"We sold our souls, just like Led Zeppelin did," he said.

"We're all going to hell. So we're just going to enjoy it now."

DAVID WILDMAN

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