

Pop advocacy

pre/post draws inspiration from the stories of inner-city youth

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Pop music is inherently youth-oriented, but for Mat Halton and his band pre/post, music can also be a tool that targets youth for change.

Halton is a youth-care worker, and hearing the kids tell their stories on a day-to-day basis has led him to turn some of their experiences into songs with a message.

"Writing about these kids and their stories, the message that's imbedded is that they may not present well, but these guys have all got these amazing stories behind them and there's a reason for where they're at in their life," he says. "What keeps me engaged in my job is that they seem to constantly dig deep enough to find strength despite very difficult histories. That's what really gets me."

Halton's project is relatively new, having started only a few months ago, but the band is already looking forward to recording some of the material for an upcoming summer EP.

Halton's little brother Jonathan plays an integral part in pre/post, providing most of the beats and grooves that make the backbone of pre/post's music.

The elder Halton handles the guitar and lyrics and vocals.

"The music itself is just a fun, poppy, catchy sound," Mat Halton says, "but the stories are really compelling. I'm just looking for a chance to share them."

The line-up is usually rounded out by Andrew Pahl (drums and vocals) and Ryan Miller (bass), but sometimes benefits from the extra help of Aidan Lucas-Buckland (of Yes Nice) and Tyrn Armstrong.

Playing a groovy kind of pop music might seem foreign to all these indie rockers (Halton was also a member of local band Plainsay), but Halton points out there's nothing wrong with making music that is just meant to be entertaining.

"I feel now that people -- when they go out -- they want to hear music, they want to have fun and they're looking for a chance to party and just move a bit," he says. "I'm really not targeting a specific crowd. It's simple -- there's nothing complex, new or mind-boggling about what I'm doing."

For Halton, who lives just off of the much-maligned Alberta Avenue, giving youth a glimmer of hope is essential.

pre/post may not be out to save the world, but Halton hopes that kids and young adults who have lived through hard times in the inner city will find the band to be an opportunity to share experiences and grow.

If anything, pre/post just wants to reinforce a positive message, and doing so through the kind of urban pop music that appeals to youth surely can't be a bad thing.

"Music is incredibly powerful with them," Halton says. "Not that my music is gonna change any kids. But my advocacy through this little project, I'm hoping, will just chip away at that and give them the opportunity to make good choices."

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pre/post will be playing the Heart of the City Festival fundraiser taking place at the ARTery (9635 Jasper Ave.) on Thursday, May 15th. Tickets are \$12 in advance (at Blackbyrd Myoozik and Earth's General Store) or \$15 at the door.

The band will also be playing a small show at The Carrot Arts Coffeehouse (94th Street and 118th Avenue) the following day on Friday, May 16th. Doors are at 7 p.m. and cover is \$5.