

## AUDIENCE

## LOCAL BAND CHIP AND THE CHOWDERHEADS DRAWS ON SONIC DOMAINS CREATED BY A COUPLE OF OLD-TIME PALS

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**T**ime seems to swim by, as friends habitually dart in and out of our lives. But once in a blue moon, a person manages to lodge his or herself in another's life no matter how many calendar pages fan by. These people have the ability to finish our sentences, order for us off menus, and know exactly when we might be telling a little white lie; they know us, as we are, inside and out.

So what happens when this logic is extended to musicians that exercise a similar long-lived intuition? Local band Chip and the Chowderheads exemplifies this phenomenon.

The quartet implements bass, drums, and two electric guitars. The two singer/song-writer/guitarists, John Bunzli and Michael Boileau, anchor Chip and the Chowderheads with a lingering, intrinsic bond — their history. The two have been creating music together since they met in high school and their prolonged union has played a dynamic role in the band's overall sound.

"I think it has influenced it [our sound] because we have played so long together we have an almost intuitive communication with each other. We do a lot of double-lead stuff that isn't necessarily a written-out part, we just play off each other," says guitarist/vocalist John Bunzli. "I think that's a result of us playing together for so many years."

Bunzli and Boileau have played music on and off for a couple of different bands, as Chip and the Chowderheads has been a name for various projects they have had at different times.

"I would say the current incarnation is something that came together about a year and

a half ago," says Bunzli. In addition to the four-person Chowderheads, Bunzli and Boileau play acoustic sets in local venues. "I would like to think that we're pretty good at playing music, but we're pretty bad at the music business," he says with a playful, affable sense of humor.

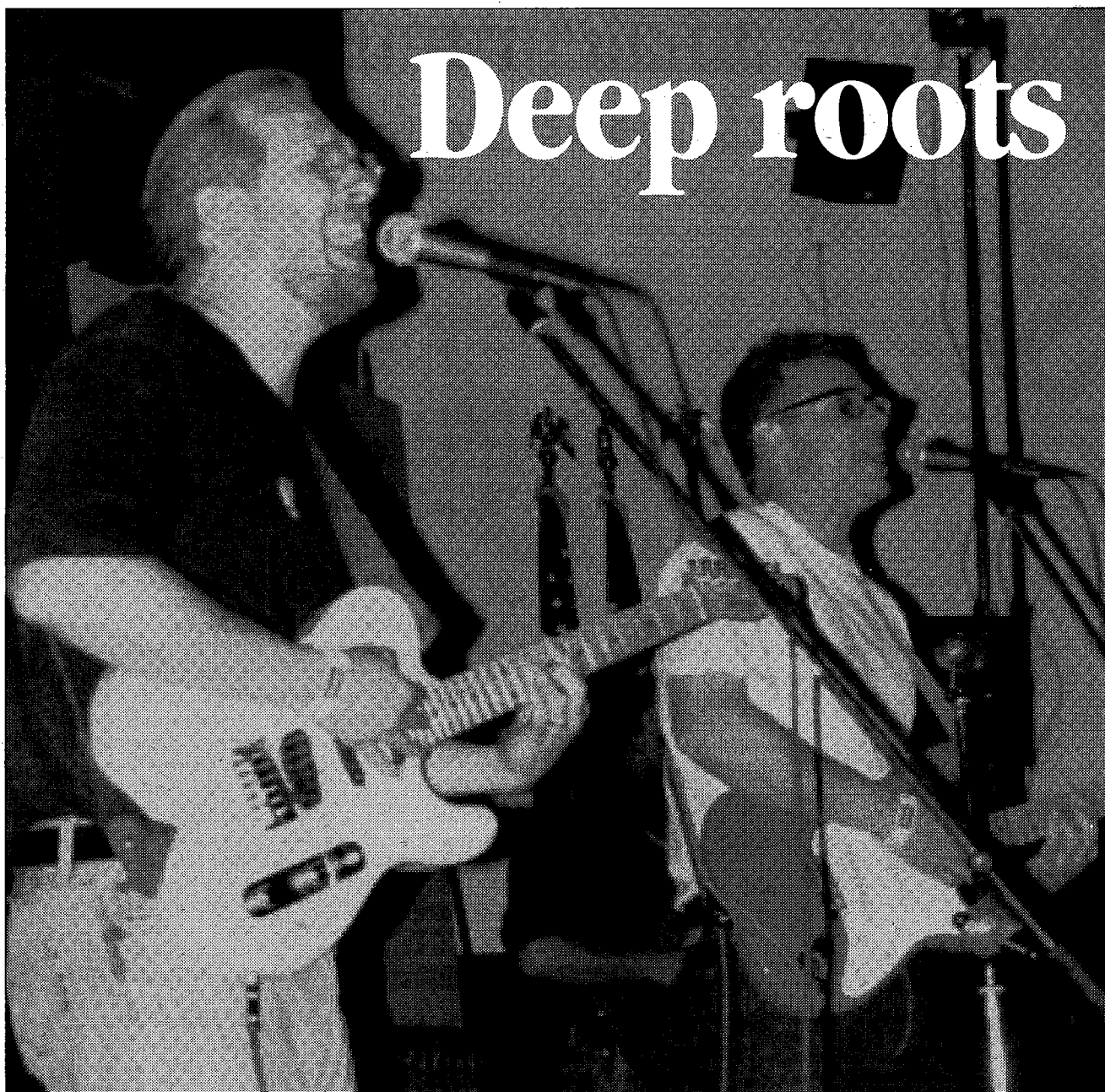
In reaction to the need for organization in professional realms John's sister, Peggy Bunzli, moved to Boulder in order to take over the reins of the band's business direction.

"I did this in theory because I have business skills that complement their musical talent, but really because I simply believe in their music," says Peggy Bunzli. "I was moved by their passion for the music ... I knew I had to do this, that this would be a new path in my life."

Bunzli and Boileau use their instinctive interplay to create original songs and rap out diverse covers each night. Whether they are covering the sonic experimentations of the Grateful Dead and the Allman Brothers Band, the pop melodies of the Beatles, assorted music by Sarah Maclachlan, Bob Marley, Bruce Springsteen, Johnny Cash, or Daniel Lanois, the group creates a fun, lightweight atmosphere. Although John and Michael's dueling six-strings and vocals may not define perfect talent, it does create a jovial time for the audience.

While the Chowderheads lace the room with numerous improvisations, the group does not label itself a jam band.

"I hate labels. Sometimes it can be so limiting. We came up with 'fun funky jamming groovy craziness.' The reason we tried to come up with a term like that is to show that we really have a lot of different influences," Bunzli says. "I think one difference between us and a lot of jam bands that are out there



Chip and the Chowderheads will be performing next at The Cannon Mine Coffee Co., 210 S. Public Rd in Lafayette, on Friday, Jan. 14. For more information please visit [www.chipandthechowderheads.net](http://www.chipandthechowderheads.net) or call The Cannon Mine at (303) 665-0625.

today is that we're very song-focused. Whatever we're doing, we start with something that is a strong song. Then, if there's space in there to stretch out and do something interesting or weird or whatever, then that's great, but the song is the starting point."

The band's original tunes are approached with the same song-focused intentions. They try to create music that is threaded with structure yet col-

ored with improvisation.

"We try to write stuff that stands on its own as a song without the jamming," Bunzli states. "We are about tight song structure, but at the same time we also are into doing improvisation. I don't think you see that a lot."

He describes how there are bands that will either play a string of short songs right after the other, or bands that will play three hours of music with no

clear song division.

"I think that's unique about us," he adds.

Chip and the Chowderheads has an eclectic pool of covers they draw from each night. Abiding by their self-described intent to be influenced by numerous styles, the foursome will often play "Mary" by Sarah Maclachlan and segue into the Dead's "Franklin's Tower," then back to "Mary" in the end.

Bunzli and Boileau create a

sound arising from two guitars that do not have strict rhythm and lead assignments, but that meander through different paces, pitches, and styles. The bass and drums tend to take the back burner and the focus remains on the dueling guitar work.

The Chowderheads cover songs such as "Long Black Veil," "Angel from

[See DUO, Page 10B]

# DUO: Two pals making music

[DUO, from page 3B]

Montgomery," "Big River," and "The Maker." When Bunzli and Boileau play "Brown Eyed Woman" in an acoustic set with no backup, the vocals create a fuller, cohesive sound as their instrumental sounds swirl around each another. The harmonies are stronger when the

two play acoustic, yet the energy is livelier when with the band backs them.

"I think that music is really an incredible force, in general a positive force... I'll play music till I die. It's like an incurable illness. It's in me," says Bunzli. "We're just trying to see where it [our music] takes

us. How much fun we can have and how many people we can share the music with."

Peggy Bunzli adds that "Our goals are realistic, we do not expect superstardom, but I know that when these two get together and make music, it's a beautiful thing and one which should be shared."

John describes the feeling he gets when he is watching the audience and realizes that he is affecting someone in a positive manner.

"Being able to make that connection, even if you only do it with one person every time you play is something ... pretty special."