

red. wanting blue

Working-class musicians from Ohio's capital stick together for fifth album



Red Wanting Blue is performing Friday at the recently renamed Poison Room downtown.

RODNEY WILSON | CIN WEEKLY CONTRIBUTOR

Musicians out of Ohio don't tend to be rock stars — those cornfields don't produce too many flashy prima donnas. Cleveland's Joe Walsh, Dayton's Guided by Voices, Cincinnati's Over the Rhine — there's a working-class mentality in these musicians that can easily be attributed to the Buckeye State's strong Midwestern vibe.

Columbus's Red Wanting Blue is a prime example of the blue-collar rockers this state tends to churn out. Self-proclaimed "farm boys," these Ohio band members give props to their home state for the music they make and the way they make music.

BLUE-COLLAR ROCK

"It's given us kind of a blue-collar work ethic where we don't mind that this s— is hard — we sleep on floors, we sleep on couches, we play for five people in Utah sometimes," says Mark Stepro, drummer for the band. "And it's OK — nobody really has any aspirations of Bono-esque stadium fist-pumping."

Stepro, along with bandmates Scott Terry (lead vocals), Epp (guitar) and Mark McCullough (bass), make rock that's every bit as blue-collar as their tour-heavy work ethic. The songs on their fifth album, *The Cold Lover*, are accessible and unpretentious with

strong hooks, big guitars and straight-ahead rhythms.

Stepro gives partial credit for Red Wanting Blue's common-man sound to their fellow Columbus musicians. "There's just a low-key, music-for-its-own-sake mentality that we've been indoctrinated into, and I think that's a good thing because it keeps our heads on straight," he says.

SAME NAME, DIFFERENT BAND

Red Wanting Blue is something of a veteran band. The group formed out of Ohio University in the mid-'90s and it's still going strong. Despite developing a strong local and regional following, Red Wanting Blue hasn't been able to break into the big time, a fact Stepro believes is linked to the band's unique history.

"With so many bands that you see nowadays that are really good, the band is oftentimes comprised of dudes that all were in other bands a long time ago, bands that nobody remembers anymore," says Stepro. "The curse that Red Wanting Blue has always had to deal with is that it's been the same band for going on 10 years. We've had the fortune to remain a band but also the misfortune." He refers to people who saw the band in its early days – when it was (by his own admission) not very good – and who hold Red Wanting Blue to that early judgment. "We're like, well, fair enough, but you're thinking of an entirely different band at that point."

GO IT ALONE

A decade's worth of performing has allowed the band members to see many sides of the music business, and their experiences have led them to the conclusion that they're happy to be right where they are – an

JUST THE FACTS

WHAT: Red Wanting Blue with Chaselounge and Philosopher's Stone

WHEN: 9:30 p.m. Friday, Jan. 13

WHERE: The Poison Room (formerly The Viper Room), 301 W. Fifth St., downtown

PRICE: \$6 ages 21 and up, \$8 ages 18-20

PARKING: On street or lots on Fifth Street

CONTACT: (513) 333-0010 or www.redwantingblue.com

A CRAZY MOMENT IN RED WANTING BLUE HISTORY

"I wish I had some cool story about us doing blow with Chloe Sevigny or something like that, but I just don't," says Mark Stepro, drummer for Columbus band Red Wanting Blue.

"But one time we got kicked out of this dude's house in Montana. He let the band stay at his house, and he did a bunch of peyote. Then his wife came home and they got in a fist fight – we had to gather up all our stuff and run out into the woods in the middle of the night."

independent band making music its own way.

"The fact that the band does very well – draw-wise, financially-wise – in Ohio and the Midwest kind of enables us to maintain control of the project," says Stepro.

"There would have to be a really good offer for us to even mess around with that whole world (of record labels). We've tried to go there so many times and we've thought about how to do that kind of stuff, and, ultimately, we just reached the conclusion of, like, why are we even bothering with this?"