

Probable Cause

Band Creates Danceable Rhythms

By Dorothy Timpy

The band that gives you probable cause to hit the dance floor and dance 'til ya drop is a four-piece group called Probable Cause.

Setting the rhythm for the dancing is Greg Dawson on lead vocals and rhythm guitar; Brad Lund, vocals and drums; Mark F. McDermott, vocals and lead guitar; with Marvin Slifman rounding out the vocals and taking on bass guitar duties.

Dawson, founding member of the group, tells of beginning to play music just as soon as he was able to reach the keyboard of his mother's upright piano. This interest led to lessons. His enchantment with Rock'N'Roll came about when The Beatles mania hit America. Soon thereafter, he took up the guitar and has worked in that capacity throughout the Portland area since 1988.

Dawson teamed up with Lund and began working casual gigs with a friend, Evan Oulashin, in a group that would eventually become Probable Cause. Dawson indicates his strong influences in addition to the Beatles, Elvis, Conway Twitty, The Doobie Brothers, Beethoven and Haagen-Dazs.

Lund, also one of the founders of Probable Cause, came from Seattle but was raised in Beaverton. His love of drums started when he was but a tender five years of age. That first snare drum was made of cardboard, the second of plastic and now he works percussion on maple. He recalls dropping out of band in the fifth grade to start a rock group and

got a big lecture from his band director. Lund has worked with such groups as Killin' Floor, Catch and Release, The Last Chance Band and Sidekick. His musical repertoire includes Blues, Country and Rock'N'Roll. His influences were Mitch Mitchell and Sandy Nelson.

Joining Probable Cause early in 2000 was Marvin Slifman, a Portland native dubbed "Five Fingers." He joined when the group's original bassist, Matt MacNaughton, left due to job and family constraints. Slifman met Dawson when they played with The Bill Hagen Trip. The beginning of his musical career began in high school on the guitar. He has worked Blues and Rock bands and points out, "We are playing the songs I have loved all these years and with the addition of several original tunes written by lead guitarist Mark McDermott, offer up a collection of music guaranteed to get you on your feet and dancing with us all night long.

McDermott joined Probable Cause late last year. Originally from New Jersey, McDermott began his guitar playing when he was but ten years old. His talent took him to gigs with several New York area bands including one called Riff Raff, along with diamond and Tattoo. Influences he has followed include Jeff Beck, David Gilmour, Duane Allman, Eddie VanHalen and Jimi Hendrix. Dawson proudly indicates McDermott brings a fresh new feel to Probable Cause with his song writing talents and his aggressive guitar style.

Initiation of Probable Cause began back in 1966 with Dawson and Oulashin getting together to jam as often as possible. In 1988, Lund joined them and their musical

interest began to take on a more serious note. As 1992 rolled around, the three found themselves sought out for private parties and special events and decided perhaps it was time they "got serious"

After deep brainstorming, the name Probable Cause was introduced by Lund's partner, Shelley Anderson and the name was immediately accepted by the rest of the group.

Another decision high on the list of priorities was the idea that as long as they were playing cover songs, they wanted to play the kind of music that makes people want to dance. They even made "Dance 'til ay Drop!" part of their logo.

Probable Cause began to perform on a somewhat regular basis in 1994. Shortly thereafter, about a year-and-a-half following severe flooding in Vernonia, Probable Cause was invited to play at The Lyon's Den Pub & Eatery and were the first entertainers for the people of the town in that year-and-a-half. Dawson recalls the club ran out of tables, pitchers, glasses and beer on tap but was fortunate to have beer in cans as backup. Probable Cause is scheduled to play Vernonia Days there August 3 & 4, 2001.

Everyone in the group adds his own brand of energy to the performance and provides wide audience appeal.

On this night, the four musicians appeared at The Spot in Vancouver Washington, where Alan Dubois and Patricia point out that "service" is the most emphasized idea of the establishment. He indicates that plans are underway to open up the interior and move the bandstand close to the front door to make it more convenient and compatible with the dancing public.