



**Totally Jazzed:** Remember when every band looked like this?

## All That Jazz

Rites of Spring-loving emo mathletes reunite for a good cause.

By Doug Wallen letters@philadelphiaweekly.com

You may not remember the Jazz June. That's okay. They were a Pennsylvania five-piece who released a handful of albums between 1996 and 2002. Formed while at Kutztown University and spurred by a love of Dischord Records' post-hardcore, they were among the first wave of emo bands to worship Rites of Spring but add a melodically mathy element to that cathartic offshoot of punk.

To listen back now is to hear the familiar earmarks of the day. Wiry noodling? Check. Shouty vocal interplay? Check. Loud/soft dynamics? Check. It all coalesces to make for a lean, busy band whose records still give the ears a hell of a workout. The Jazz June's final album *Better off Without Air*, found them experimenting much more, earning mixed reactions from critics and fans. (Allmusic.com compares it to both Can and reggae, a tidy summation of its freakish range.)

The rest of the story should ring a bell: Band breaks up, members drift into new bands and the demands of adulthood, and some listeners move on while others hold onto the band as a cherished relic of that formative era. The next chapter—band reunites years later—would also be no surprise, if not for how it came together.

Philly native Adam Gerhart, the band's longtime roadie, was diagnosed late last year with a very aggressive form of brain cancer. He's 29 years old and has a loving wife named Casey. He also has some great friends.

Within weeks the Jazz June were plotting a big benefit show to raise money for the newly minted Adam Gerhart Fund in order to offset the costs of treatment and make up for Gerhart's indefinite medical leave.

It ballooned from there, with famous record labels like Polyvinyl, Buddyhead and Jade Tree donating CDs for a raffle at the show. Doylestown's landmark record store Siren is throwing in gift cards, and in a twist that brings everything full circle, Dischord Records

owner and punk legend Ian MacKaye will contribute signed records and box sets to the effort.

But it gets even better: The Royersford label Universal Warning will document the reunion show—slated for Philly's well-attended North Star—for a CD/DVD set that'll include footage from the duration of the band's career. It's just one more facet to the band's battle to help a friend, with all proceeds going where they're needed most.

The members of the Jazz June—who now live in New Jersey, Montgomery County and the Poconos—have kept occupied in the three years since the band folded. Singer/guitarist Andrew Low has a band with his wife called, fittingly, the Lows, as well as a "zombie punk" outfit called Wake up Dead. Bassist Dan O'Neill is in Philly's twangy Snakes and Music, which Jazz June guitarist Bryan Gassler helps with. Low is also working on Gassler's solo album, and for a while Gassler was in the punky Ready to Rip with drummer Justin Max and keyboardist Jim Moyer, both from the Jazz June.

Factor in families and careers, and these are clearly some devoted dudes. They'd like to use the momentum from the reunion show in Philly to do a few more benefits elsewhere, from an all-ages show in West Chester to one in Milwaukee, Wis., where Gerhart now resides.

And thanks to the wonders of the Internet, fans of the Jazz June are getting geared up to attend these shows en masse. The band's been "getting tons and tons of love" at [www.myspace.com/thejazzjune](http://www.myspace.com/thejazzjune), says Gassler. He also stresses that if people can't attend the shows but would like to help the cause, donations can be made via PayPal at [www.adamfund.org](http://www.adamfund.org).

The band's current enthusiasm recalls their DIY beginnings a decade ago, this time with renewed purpose. "We're going to keep this going," says Gassler. "We're going to do all we can for Adam and keep this positive energy flowing." ■

### Jazz June

Sat., Jan. 13,  
7pm, \$12. With  
New Bruises +  
Marigold. North  
Star, 27th and  
Poplar sts.  
215.684.0808  
[www.northstarbar.com](http://www.northstarbar.com)