



Interview: 'The Motor Primitives'
by Gert Driver

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With a blend of Midwestern musicality and punk rock ethos, The Motor Primitives have built a dedicated following over the last three years. They routinely fill clubs in the Madison area with smiling - and often dancing - fans. The group's two CDs on Boat Records have done well, and despite recent changes, the band is looking forward to making more music and winning more fans. Maximum Ink recently spoke to singer/guitarist Pam Barrett about her group.

Max Ink: Last month, The Motor Primitives performed their last show with the original lineup. Who is leaving the group and what brought the change about?

Pam: It's the typical Madison band experience where there's high turnover because people finish school and move on. Our lead guitarist, Kat Spring, just got her Ph.D. And she's off to a teaching position out of state. At the same time, our bassist, Matt Sanborn, decided to move his focus to recording in his new studio rather than doing live gigs. We'll miss them, but life goes on!

Max Ink: The last show was at the Harmony Bar, a great venue. How did it go?

Pam: Just fantastic. It was very nearly sold out. The energy was really flowing between the band and the audience. I think we were all savoring the moment.

Max Ink: There have been reports that this is the end of the band. Is that the case?

Pam: There's no way in hell The Motor Primitives are done. Robin [Davies, drummer] and I have new songs, we're playing with new people, and there's lots of fresh energy.

Max Ink: What exactly is the current status of the band?

Pam: We are working with new musicians, experimenting, getting comfortable with different individual styles, and hoping to start gigging again in May. I can announce that Ed Feeney [of Reptile Palace Orchestra and The Appliances SBF fame] is our new bassist, and we're very happy to have him on board.

Max Ink: Despite the lineup changes, you just released a new album...

Pam: Well, sort of. Our 5-song EP sold out its first printing and we had 4 new songs in the can, so we thought we'd add them to the next batch of CDs and make it a full length album. It's called Be The Engine > Long Play.

Max Ink: So far, the band has stayed close to its Madison roots, rarely playing outside of the city. Any thoughts on expanding your following?

Pam: Yes, and the new lineup will be influenced partially by that goal. We want to pursue regional markets like Milwaukee, the Fox Valley, Minneapolis, and Chicago. I think The Motor Primitives are ready for those places and those places are ready for us.

Max Ink: How do you envision the future of the group?

Pam: I'm very excited about the future and the possibilities. Keep expanding and keep gigging. We've got good new songs and people that have had a chance to hear them are really liking them. Robin, Ed and I are encouraged and energized.

Max Ink: Any final comments on The Motor Primitives, rock'n'roll, or the world?

Pam: Madison is a great rock'n'roll town because you can do what you want; there's creative freedom here, and we appreciate it. Hey, the only thing better than playing in a rock'n'roll band is sex!

Be The Engine > Long Play is available in Madison at B-Side Records, Madison City Music, Sugar Shack Records, and nationally at CDBaby.com.