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To dream or not to dream: Local bands discuss their future

By Adam Rodewald

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It's a sunny afternoon as the BackTrax Band practices Johnny Cash in the basement of Wayne Jellish's tree-encased home on South Washington Avenue -- Jellish wears his Brewers cap, Donnie Keiffer strikes his keys, Al Duerr places microphones around his drums and Don Kerper is late as usual.

They live for improving their craft, but "we're never satisfied exactly the way we are," says Jellish from his seat between two CD towers.

While most bands strive to tour the country, pack stadiums with their fans and hear their tunes spin on the radio, these guys don't let "the dream" drive them anymore after 20 years together.

"One of our goals is to keep playing as long as we can and to still have fun," says Jellish. Maybe they'll get some bigger and higher paying shows someday, but even recording an album is more than they're after.

"Where we've been going is we're trying to change our marketing or how we present ourselves so we can get gigs that are a bit larger," says Kerper.

"Bigger dances, better dances, better pay for the effort we put into it," adds Jellish.

For younger musician Elijah Blair, however, "the dream" is still real.

"Ideally, I'll be making a living at it in five to 10 years," he says, but he realizes the likelihood is slim. "Hopefully, I'm just out there and have a CD or two under my belt."

Blair is currently looking to professionally record a demo CD to help in booking gigs throughout Wisconsin and possibly out of state.

He knows reaching that goal won't come easily but hopes persistence will pay off. His plan of action: Write good songs, record a demo and play as many shows as possible.

"Once you got it down, just keep playing shows and playing shows, get another recording and build on those two things," he says.



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Local musician Elijah Blair performs Wednesday night at Clearwaters Hotel and Convention Center. *Dan Young/Marshfield News-Herald Advertisement*

More information on the web

[Link to live recordings of Elijah Blair and BackTrax band](#)

Coming tomorrow

Elijah Blair and the BackTrax Band talk about why music appeals to them and whether or not the local scene is satisfactory.