

Polyshades: Our neighbors upstairs

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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ALTON - The Riverbender.com offices are on the second floor of the Riverbender.com building, but on the sixth floor, just above the heads of the news staff, magic is being made.

Called the "Polygarden," an office on the sixth floor acts as the practice space of local band, [Polyshades](#). The band is about to release its first album this Saturday, Dec. 23 at Bottle and Barrel Pub in Alton during a large celebration concert. A reporter from Riverbender.com sat with the band during one of their last practices before the big evening to ask about their music, the album and the Alton music scene in general.

Polyshades is composed of Ricky Wilson on bass and vocals, Nathan Luck on guitar and vocals, Cody Hale on guitar, Zach Toner on drums and lyrics and recently Drew Meadows on organ and keys and Sebastian Raich on additional percussion. The genre the group plays is hard to define. There are elements of several musical styles incorporated in the band from long, electric-guitar-based jam session to psychedelic surf rock to a sort of Western twang all melding together to sound like none of the above.

That sound is organic, Wilson said.

"We've been jamming for about four years together," he said. "We experimented for the first two years or so, before we all settled on this."

The band has been recording this upcoming nine-song album for about a year with Lighthouse Sounds, an Alton-based recording studio. It has been engineered by Alex St. Cin.

"Yeah, we've been working on the album for way too long," Toner said. "It's kind of a money thing. The money comes in when we play a bunch of shows or sell merch, and then we can do more recordings."

Wilson said the community has been incredibly responsive to the band and their work.

"Our friends have really helped us out by coming to shows and buying up all our merch," he said. "It keeps our recordings going."

Lighthouse Sounds also recorded [the band's live video sessions](#). Those sessions caused the band to recruit Meadows, Hale said.

"We pretty much forced Drew into the band," Hale said. "We needed an organ. It was a void that needed filled."

With a month to go until the live sessions, Wilson said Meadows was given only two weeks to learn all the songs and give them an organ part. After he rose to the occasion and met the challenge, Wilson and Hale said Meadows became a permanent fixture of the band. He now plays an organ lent by Steven Luck, Nathan Luck's father and owner of Sign Magic.

On Monday, they were working on playing songs from their album, as well as their newest jam not yet heard by anyone outside the Polygarden. Their practice space is "very feng shui" Hale said. It has dark maroon walls and is lit by ceiling-mounted lines of icicle Christmas lights, which are seasonal only by coincidence.

Nathan Luck and Wilson said choosing the Bottle and Barrel just up the street was an easy decision.

"Everyone else was trying to charge us way too much money to use the space," Nathan Luck said.

Because of recent circumstances involving the closure of Bottle and Barrel for 15 days by the city, a lot of attention has been drawn to the establishment. Owner Chris Keidel said he was looking forward to reopening with more of a community mindset. After reopening Dec. 12, he has hosted an Ugly Sweater Party for SNIP Alliance, and is hoping to do more for local arts, culture and charity. The Polyshades show this Saturday is one of those such promises fulfilled.

"Chris is really good to bands," Wilson said. "I mean it's pretty symbiotic. We help him bring people in and he gives us a place to play."

Admission to the show Saturday is \$5, which covers both a copy of the album and "some grub to get you through the night."

Music starts at 8 p.m. with [Grandhouse](#). [The Mindframes](#) take the stage at 9 p.m. The favorite St. Louis band of Polyshades, [Pono AM](#) goes on at 10 p.m., and Polyshades will close the night at 11 p.m. More information on the event and updates can be found on the [event page on Facebook](#).