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Snohomish's Pilchuck Boyz release new album of 'mossy reggae'

With their silly, hooky tunes and willingness to make fools of themselves, the duo have been compared to the Flight of the Conchords.

By Sara Bruestle

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SNOHOMISH — Like a reggae beat, The Pilchuck Boyz are about to drop a new album.

The Snohomish reggae-rock duo of Steve Parris and Bill Keaton will release their second album, "Leisure Village," on Friday.

Although they've been writing songs together for 20 years, Parris and Keaton, both Snohomish High School grads, formed The Pilchuck Boyz in 2017. They both grew up along the banks of the Pilchuck River in Snohomish, so they named their band after it.

“We have this weird kind of chemistry, and it’s kept us laughing, kept us interested, it’s kept us engaged for a really long time,” Parris said. “I’m super grateful that we have that with each other.”

The band’s sound is mostly reggae with dashes of funk and disco. Their lyrics feature silly but hooky choruses and tongue-in-cheek references. Their influences include The Police, Sublime and Peter Tosh.

Our PNW Music podcast described the band as a reggae version of comedy duo Flight of the Conchords — a comparison they’re mighty proud of.

“A lot of our songs are completely ridiculous by design,” Parris said. “We work really hard to be as musical as possible, but we also work hard to be as entertaining as possible. We’re totally cool with making a fool of ourselves.”

The duo doesn’t try to recreate Jamaican roots reggae, nor their offshoots in California and Hawaii. Rather than the common Pacific Dub, the duo like to refer to their style as “Deep Woods Dub” in homage to their Northwest upbringing.

“We make mossy reggae, dripping with satire and natty grooves,” Parris said. “Our take on reggae is a danker, moister version.”

Parris, of Lake Stevens, and Keaton, of Snohomish, both play guitar, Parris also plays soprano sax, and together they sing along to the backing samples they create from scratch.

“We’ll bounce ideas back and forth,” said Keaton, who is a systems analyst for EvergreenHealth. “Sometimes it will just go crazy where we’re laughing so hard our stomachs are hurting. That’s our process. We do better when we’re both together, just bouncing off ideas.”

Recently, the band partnered with Ballard-based Catio Spaces to license their song “Catio” to promote the company’s sales of outdoor cat enclosures.

“It has been amazing to work with them, and as cat guys, we are thrilled to see it gain traction,” said Parris, who creates learning software for HeadLight. “It’s really, really cool.”

Although Parris and Keaton had already recorded a “Catio” music video, Catio Spaces produced its own. That version features a tabby named Cevin — the company’s “Daddio” cat — who is seen sporting sunglasses in the video.

In the Pilchuck Boyz’ video, Parris and Keaton dress up as cats and jam in the catio on the patio. The men mimic cats in the video by taking naps, having fights and batting at toys in Parris’ cat enclosure. His cats are Julious and Mingus.

Keaton’s kitty also drinks malt liquor and smokes a cigarette for a chuckle. Parris’ pussy prefers Mountain Dew.

Which one is your favorite? Watch Pilchuck Boyz’ “Catio” music video on YouTube. Find Catio Spaces’ version at www.catiospaces.com.

The 14-track “Leisure Village” is the follow-up to their debut album, “Empty Horizon,” which was released in 2017. Parris and Keaton recorded the album at Parris’ home studio.

In addition to “Catio,” songs featured on the Pilchuck Boyz’ second album include “Aren’t Ya,” “Slow Down Stacy,” “See Me Blind” and “Fire in the Jungle.” They also have a mashup of George Michael’s “Careless Whisper” and Camper Van Beethoven’s “Take the Skinheads Bowling,” which they called “Careless Bowling.”

The Pilchuck Boyz are celebrating the album’s release with a party at SnoTown Brewery in Snohomish on July 23. They’ll sign albums and take photos with fans.

If you have yet to see the Pilchuck Boyz live, Parris said their shows have featured disco dance-offs and conga lines.

“It helps to sort of have no shame and feel free to let what little hair I have left down,” he said. “Our fans certainly sense this and leave it all out on the dance floor.”

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If you go

The Pilchuck Boyz are celebrating the release of their new album “Leisure Village” with a 7 p.m. all-ages show at SnoTown Brewery 511 Second St., Snohomish. The reggae-rock duo will perform a two-hour set on the brewery’s outdoor stage. Call 425-231-8113 or email snotown@yahoo.com for more information.



Sara Bruestle is The Daily Herald's features editor and the editor of its quarterly magazine, Washington North Coast Magazine. [Learn more about Sara.](#)

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