

Unificationist Band in Maryland Rumbles Its Way to Recognition

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From left to right: Wongil Dadachanji, Jake Mas, Shumei Yanagi, George Washington Burton and Amael Rodrigues performing at Fat Tuesdays, a bar on the campus of the University of Maryland - Baltimore County. Photo credit to Mark Muhlbock.

As a music ministry, Lovin' Life Ministries (LLM) is always on the lookout for musicians seeking stages within the LLM communities in which they can showcase their talents. One of these, The Rumble, composed of five second-generation Unificationists from the Washington-D.C. area, may be on its way to making a name for itself.

The band cut its first professional demo tape at Listen Vision Studios in Washington, D.C., on May 12, 2012. "They have a really fresh sound, and we believe they are on the cusp of much larger success," according to Marcus Dowling, an account manager at Listen Vision Studios. He added: "[Their song]'Bongo in the Congo' is one of our favorite tracks of the hundreds we have recorded in the last month." The Rumble came together in the spring of 2009, and has since stirred its audiences with its unique musical texture of rock/grunge/punk/garage.

The Rumble includes lead-vocalist George Washington Burton, 23, drummer Shumei Yanagi, 20, bass-player Jake Mas, 21, guitarist Wongil Dadachanji, 24, and guitarist Amael Rodrigues, 23.

"Our band presents a mix of brand-new yet old-fashioned punk/garage/alternative music," said Burton. "We've always struggled to figure out our genre, but we realized that we just need to make it energetic and fun. Our song writing works in a very organic way – we all try to build around Amael's guitar riffs to make a head-bobbing groove."

Burton humorously describes his voice as "conjuring the gravelly voice of an old, broken man mixed with the squeal of an eight-year-old on a major sugar bender."



The logo for The Rumble (above) was designed by Jake Mas.

The Freedom of Expression

The band meets weekly for practice and for occasional shows in local clubs and punk bars such as The Velvet Lounge, The Talking Head, Fat Tuesdays, or as Burton puts it, “any venue that doesn’t have a noise ordinance.” The Rumble will perform in Baltimore’s Sidebar pub on June 6, 2012.

According to bass-player Mas, playing in the band isn’t about “making it big.” He said, “I hope to continue to play together and create music. I don’t really care too much about shows. Shows are fun, but what is more fun is practicing together. Practice allows for a healthy outlet for the stresses of life.”

Guitarist Dadachanji said, “When we get together, that’s when the magic happens. We get really into the music and we just start going crazy. We’re all a bit goofy and we’re just trying to have fun. If a band wants to get anywhere, it has to have a good group dynamic – to be friends first and foremost and then good music can come.”

“Because of the band I have been meeting lots of other musicians and I have been to many different places,” said guitarist Rodrigues. “It has helped me overcome the fear of being on stage and has brought me closer to people and closer to my church. It has definitely made my life more colorful!”

Burton said the immediate goal of The Rumble as “to entertain.” He said, “We want you to escape your day and rock out. At the same time, we can tell wonderful stories of our friends and heroes. We can crank out that encouraging word or noise to push you forward. We can connect cultures and people through the shared love of music.

“Being a part of this band has had a huge, positive impact on my life in that it gives me an outlet to express myself. It’s also incredibly fun, and I get to play with friends that I’ve known since I was a boy scout.”

Burton’s sister-in law, Christella Burton said, “I’ve seen the band members come out of themselves more through being part of the band. I think that this ties really well into the whole idea of Lovin’ Life. The band members say that being part of The Rumble has changed their lives, and that they are happier for it. That is inspiring.”

Emerson Lykes, a youth-ministry leader in Maryland and MC for LLM in Maryland said, “I love The Rumble. All of my friends are in it! Each of the members is a boy scout, and four out of the five are Eagle scouts. Their music is very unique. That’s why it’s really cool – it’s rocky, bluesy and jazzy all at the same time.”



From left to right: Amael Rodrigues, Wongil Dadachanji, Jake Mas, George Washington Burton and Shumei Yanagi. Photo credit to Angelina Beltrami.

Promoting a Cultural Identity

The band first formed with the purpose of providing entertainment for LLM-related events, and each of its members continues to serve the ministry. Mas is active in the local youth ministry, Dadachinji is the sound engineer for LLM in Maryland, Burton serves on the leadership board of Young Adult Ministries in Maryland, and several of the members play in the local Sunday Service band. The Rumble has also performed for youth-ministry related events such as Open Mic Night and Limelight, an annual talent show.

“But being an artistically independent band has an impact of its own,” said Burton. “A secular band founded by church members has an effect on the community because we serve fellow second-generation Unificationists simply by existing. I feel a wonderful pure energy between the band and the audience when everyone in a room is united in making sure everyone has fun and feels free. Now that's how you party.

“We want our band to give Unificationists a public identity. Hopefully we can tour other parts of the country and allow kids from our church to rock out with a band that has a similar background. Growing up in our church exposes us to unique traditions and beliefs outside of [mainstream] American culture. I want other Unificationists to know they are not alone whenever they feel like a weirdo or an outsider. I want to instill pride in their identity.”

The Rumble takes pride in their performance at the Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles (CARP) Winter Gala hosted by LLM on December 30, 2012 in the Hammerstein Ballroom. “Playing in the Winter Gala was incredibly surreal. We knew that playing on stage in the Manhattan Center was truly a privilege, as world-renowned rock bands such as The Pixies and Metallica have shared that stage,” said Burton.

Burton considers his place as part of the “Unificationist family” as “a one-in-a-million experience. I love my church community and hope that any positive press The Rumble receives, exposure and understanding is finally given to our church by mainstream society.”

James Abendroth and Thomas Wojick, second-generation Unificationists from Maryland who are currently enrolled in the Generation Peace Academy (GPA), say they have known the band since its creation.

Wojick said, “They’re all different, listen to different music and lead different lifestyles. But together, they make great music, with enthusiastic performances and engage and excite the crowd. They get people stoked!”

“I grew up with all of these guys!” said Abendroth. “I would watch them during their practices at friends’ houses and I have been following them since they started. They just get better and better.”

Music from The Rumble can be accessed and downloaded for free at <http://www.reverbnation.com/therumble>.