

Arts & Entertainment

Anti-Social Sally having fun on and off stage

Passion and hard work starting to reap rewards for punk-rock foursome

By **STEPHANIE THIESSEN**
The Champion

Ah, the life of those lucky enough to be in a band. The fans. The girls. The night after night of brilliant performances that work the crowd into a frenzy. And, of course, there's the thrill of the music itself.

It's a life that became a reality right away for Milton punk-rock band Anti-Social Sally after releasing a demo CD, right?

Hardly.

In fact, about the only similarity to the archetypal band description above is the music. But for the four members of Anti-Social Sally, all former students of E.C. Drury High School, that's enough.

"Even in practice, we have so much fun," said bassist Peter Leaman, 18, who makes up the band with Johnny McMahon, John Whittaker and Garrett Halls.

For young bands eagerly trying to make it in the music business, there are no guarantees. The next show could be their big break. Or big flop. And the next year could bring the first hints of fame — as is the case for Milton band The Most Serene Republic, currently touring across Canada and the United States — or the demise of a dream.

But the simple fact Anti-Social Sally was playing together for nearly three years before they began performing publicly shows their passion for their music comes first. Anything else is a bonus.

Miltonians may recognize the faces of the two 17- and two 18-year-olds from their performance at the local Canada Day festivities.

They've also performed several times with other independent Canadian bands since April in battle-of-the-bands-type concerts in clubs around the GTA — including the well known Reverb and Opera House in Toronto.

The group took second place at the competition at the Opera House, which won them a performance slot at a multi-band concert at the Molson Indy in July.

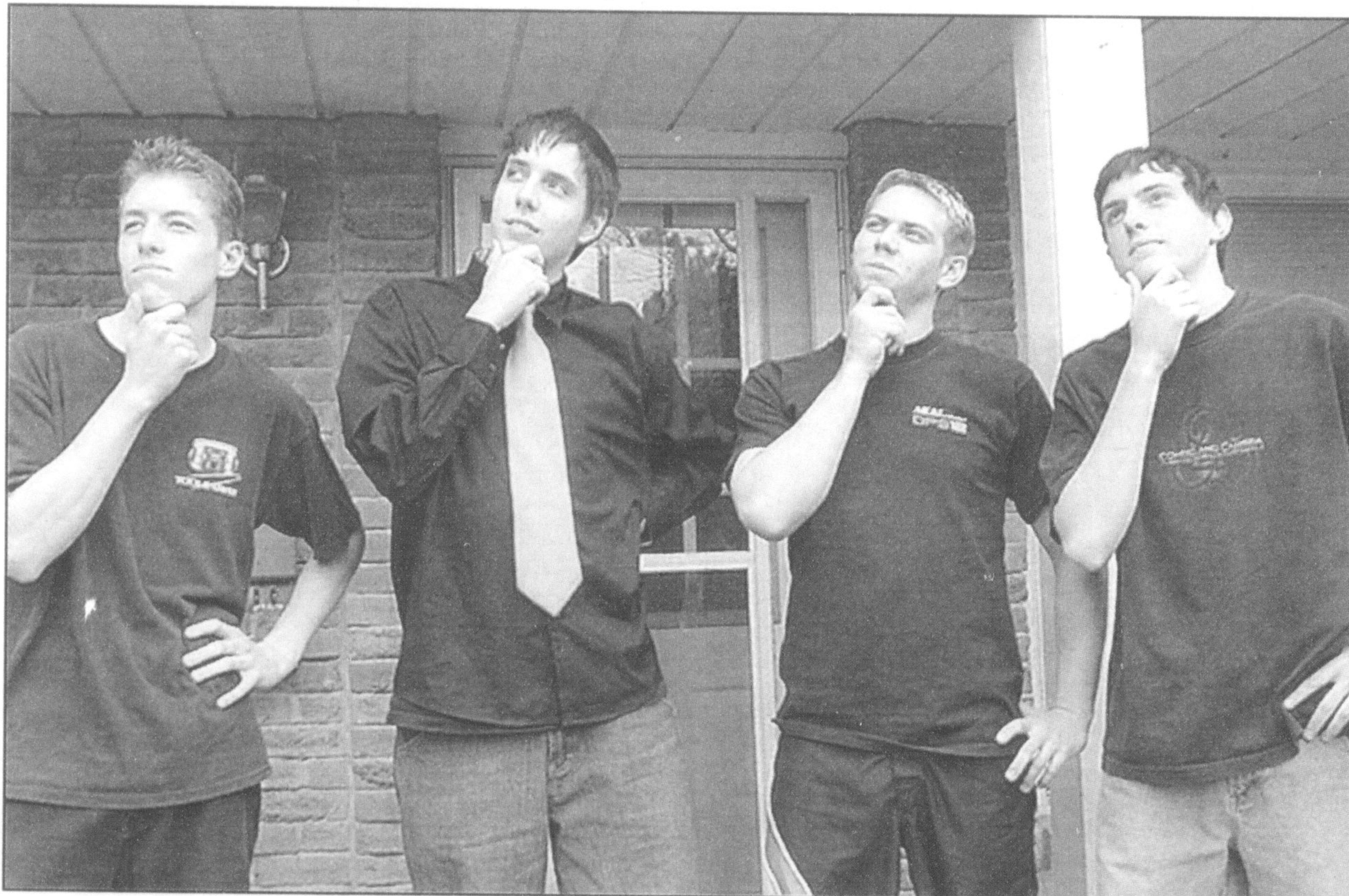
Next Friday, the group will perform at Club Vinyl in Guelph with the group Social Code and 13 other bands.

Needless to say, they've been busy.

"This year we went from three guys playing in a basement to playing at the Indy," Peter said.

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PETER LEAMAN



Miltonians (from left) John Whittaker, Garrett Halls, Peter Leaman and Johnny McMahon comprise Anti-Social Sally.

They also recorded their four-song self-titled demo CD, which is available at CD Plus at Milton Mall.

Drummer John, 18, said their punk band isn't the "screamo" sort.

"We try to avoid screaming," he said. "We just don't understand it."

John's mom, Heather, said she enjoys listening to the CD and watching the group perform.

"It's a real rush seeing them on stage," she said.

And, although she'd never tell this to the band members directly, her mother — John's grandmother — even enjoys it.

Currently, three of the members are in their first year at college or university, while John's working. Naturally, this presents scheduling difficulties. Practices are held on those rare weekends when the foursome returns home.

Way before Anti-Social Sally was officially formed, there were three grade 10 students — John, Peter and Johnny — who began getting together to play and write music.

It wasn't until they were in grade 12 that they became somewhat serious about writing songs with hopes of performing them.

"They were awful songs — they were really bad," said lead guitarist Johnny, 17, who writes the lyrics to most of their songs.

That's when Garrett joined, stepping in as vocalist and guitarist.

The 17-year-old said he's in it for the long haul.

"I personally want to stick it out for as long as possible," he said, adding perseverance is a necessary characteristic for any musician hoping to make it. "It takes a lot of time and energy to get noticed."

The band performs all its own songs.

"Our guitarist is totally against playing covers," John said.

Each member of the group spoke glowingly of Supernova Entertainment Inc., Canada's largest promoter of new bands. It's been through Supernova that the band's shows have been lined up, and although there's no pay for performing, "It's exposure," Johnny said.

For all the band's achievements so far, it's clear the future's still uncertain.

"I don't know if this will go anywhere," Johnny said.

Peter took a more optimistic approach to where he thinks the band will be in a year or two.

"Judging by what we did this summer, we could be anywhere, really."

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