

JNDS



A KILLER SIDESHOW: Catch formidable metal-pop-rock band SUPER Bob at Hard Times Cafe (Four Mile Fork), 5099 D Jefferson Davis Hwy.; 540/710-6771 Saturday, Nov. 30, at 9 p.m.

BY STEPHEN HU
FOR THE FREE LANCE-STAR

>> LOCAL COUPLE ADDS FUNKY FLAVOR TO ANY SOUND

Becky and Slam Stewart have a mixed marriage. Their ethnic differences are apparent, but the musical ones are far more important.

Becky is a formally trained musician with a minor in music from George Washington University who plays flute, guitar and keyboards. Slam is a self-taught percussionist who has played styles from fusion to rock 'n' roll. Their worlds collided 10 years ago at the cultural melting pot known as The Recreation Center in downtown Fredericksburg.

"I started the open mic circuit with the guitar," said Becky. "I'd get out and do my little songs. Slam came walking by one night."

"I was walking through and some musician friends asked me to sit in," Slam said. "Becky was in the audience, I asked her something and that was that."

"I think we went for a five-hour cup of coffee," said Becky.

Two months later, they were married in Las Vegas.

Today they perform together as Becky and Slam, often joined by saxophonist Daphne Cashion or Alberto Limonta Perez on percussion. They are also members of Sons of Solomon Reggae, Sunset Syndicate, Ask Fred, Marenje Marimba and The Network. They also teach music lessons and record music in their own basement studio in King George County.

Their lives and talents are intertwined now, but it took some time to blend their individual styles.

"When we first met it was like, 'Oh, I play this instrument and you play that instrument' and we sat and jammed for each other," Slam said. "I found out Becky played piano, so we kind of shifted gears."

"It was a transition because Becky's level was different than mine. I was a very good drummer, but musically there were certain things that I wanted to be able to



Becky and Slam Stewart are married and making music.

A PERFECT PAIR OF MUSICIANS

communicate with Becky, and I had to study."

Becky taught Slam to write music on paper, and Slam taught Becky the intricate rhythms of Latin and funk music. "Dance With Me," a song from Becky's upcoming album, illustrates how they borrowed from each other. The song has a cool funk groove under Becky's jazz-influenced vocals.

"Becky wrote this song years ago and I just sat on it,

because it didn't have this funk when she played it for me," said Slam.

"It was almost country and it turned into this," Becky said. "It evolved. In other words, we put a backbone in it."

Their business card has the slogan: "If you can't get with it put a backbone in it!" Becky said it refers to Slam's mother's secret ingredient in her greens: a turkey neckbone. It's something funky that gives their music extra flavor.

Slam has a different take on the slogan.

"Neckbone is really a fictitious character that a school friend and I made up. By day he is a barber, by night he's a crime-fighter in the ghetto. And that's his theme song: 'If You Can't Get With It Put a Backbone in It.' Think Earth Wind & Fire or the Commodores."

Five years ago Becky and Slam decided to add a music studio to the basement of their home. They recruited some talented friends to design and build it. Those friends also happen to be local musicians—the target audience for the studio in the first place.

"It's kind of a combination rehearsal space and working band area," Slam said. "We also teach here. It's a home base for people who do creative music."

Becky and Slam believe in the power of working together with their many musician friends. They see it as an extension of their own journey together, sharing their unique gifts and talents.

"With the circle of friends we have, we can play anything," said Becky.

Many of those friends have added their instrumental voices to her album, which she hopes to release next year.

"Next year is our 10-year anniversary," Becky said. "Five years in the studio and 10 years married, so that'll be the CD year."

Stephen Hu needs to find a reputable turkey neck supplier.

WANT TO GO?

What: Becky and Slam

Where: When Pigs Fly, 1011 Caroline St., Fredericksburg

When: Friday, Dec. 6, at 7 p.m.

Cost: Free

Info: slamone.com