

Student band Braless rocks creative, inclusive space through music

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Gathered on the porch of their yellow house on North Street, a few members of Chapel Hill band Braless reminisced about what brought them together and how their group of friends is bringing music to a college town — in their own way.

As Chloe Winchester, guitarist for Braless, picked at her acoustic guitar, the bandmates thought back to the fall of 2021 when discussions of creating the band started.

Deana "Dee" Garst, the band's saxophonist, was Winchester's suitemate during their first year at UNC. They said they bonded over their love of music before moving in.

Sarah Lorenzi, now lead vocalist for the band, was friends with Winchester from home. They all shared the same dream of being in a band, so the three slowly started to recruit more people.

“We want a space to do art that works for people,” she said. “We want to create a community that isn’t so exclusive of people’s time and energy and also a space where people can feel comfortable to make art and also build friendship because it’s a way to connect with people.”

It wasn’t until September of 2022 – after only a few small gigs – that the entire seven-member band was solidified, Garst said, and the "energy shifted."

An aspect of the band that makes it unique is the open door that the group provides for all listeners –whether that be inviting new people into rehearsals or encouraging each other to try out various solos or new instruments, Garst said.

The band’s full sound, from strong lead vocals to the variety of instruments included in their sets, is made even more unique with the inclusion of the saxophone, which Garst said she has been playing since she was young. She said she is always looking for new ways to make the melody more interesting by adding texture and harmonies.

“As a saxophone player in any band there really is technically no space for you,” Garst said. “It’s like you’re not an essential member in the sense of where you’re like a chord player or like a rhythm section, so you have to make your own space and I feel like that’s something that I always am thinking about.”

As the friends talked about their musical backgrounds and growth as both individual musicians and band members on the porch, there was nothing but love and support spoken about one another. This includes other band members Samuel Ellington, Will Poteet and Lila Richardson.

“Everybody is talented and passionate and present, and I think we just got really lucky with the mix of people that we got,” Lorenzi said.

Winchester said the name ‘Braless’ came to be after Garst and Winchester were discussing their preference to go braless in everyday life. They then proposed the name to the band's then-members – and Lorenzi said everyone responded almost immediately with “YES.”

Lorenzi said that it can be intimidating to walk into a creative space where one’s identity is not understood. Because music is a form of expression and identity for so many, the friends hope that Braless is a band that above all else feels like a safe family, Lorenzi added.

Right now, Braless is primarily a cover band, but they hope to make original music in the near future.

This Wednesday, Braless will perform at Carolina’s Got Talent in hopes of getting voted on to play an opening spot at Jubilee, a concert hosted by the Carolina Union Activities Board.