

BLOO

One of the most exciting live bands to start playing around New York over the past year is Long Island, N.Y.'s Bloo. And if reaction from the impressive crowds it has been drawing to recent gigs at the Westbeth Theater and Wetlands is any indication, it won't be long until this group is the talk of the town.

Bloo's eclectic blend of folk, funk, jazz, and blues rock evokes the flowing jams of the Grateful Dead, the Allman Brothers, or Phish; the jazz quirkiness and irreverence of Frank Zappa; and the folk funk hoedown of Dave Matthews band. Add to that mix soft, four-part harmonics, the electrifying fiddle solos of violinist Earl Maneen, and drummer Dave Ferrara's imaginative percussion palying.

Earlier this year Bloo won the \$25,000 grand prize in the Mastercard American Collegiate Talent Search held in Philadelphia and beat out 70 local bands in the Guinness Fleadh Band Search for a chance to appear with Sinead O'connor, Soul Asylum and Van Morrison among others at the Fleadh Festival on Randalls Island this summer. The band clearly struck a chord with its fleadh appearance. Its album, "The Geology of Plannet Weird," outsold all but two other acts releases at HMV's on-site store at the festival.

Together just two years, the quintet possess the chemistry of a seasoned unit. Part of that comes from the fact that three of the members have palyed together since junior high school. The other factor is that Ferrara and Maneen are classically trained musicians who met while attending the Aaron Copland School of Music - though that hasn't kept Maneen from plugging his violin into a wah-wah pedal. Live shows see the string playing members of Bloo routinely trading guitars with one another, which bass guitarist/lead singer Pat Hurley says was an outgrowth of the songwriting process in which they would "go in a circle and switch around and feel out what each of us liked most."

Singer/front man Bredan Lynch emphasizes the democratic process, saying that each song starts from "any one of us bringing a little peice or a riff," with the remaining members all contributing to the final result.

Perhaps the band's collective effort is best exemplified by the communal spirit in which it's members live and rehearse. The Bloo house - complete with dog Meathead, family, and friends strwaming in and out, and the Blue bus parked in the driveway (in requisite color of course) - "is a pretty positive thing," says the bands elder, 23-year old Ferrara.