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Up, Up and Away

Michelle Beebs and her band of superheroes have a plan to take off—and the business savvy to do it.

JUSTIN BRAUN



Roberto Gonzalez

Before she danced into the spotlight as the kazoo-wielding,

Before she came into the spotlight as the rambunctious, checkerboard-tights-wearing front woman of the band Beeps and Her Money Makers, Central Florida's Michelle Beeps was best known for her talent behind the music as a show promoter and band manager. But four years ago she decided to form a band and put her whole life into it. Now she's fresh off her first national tour with the Vans Warped Tour and the release of her sophomore album and is poised to take her music-making business to the next level.

Beeps and Her Money Makers (BaHMM) look more like a circus act than a band of serious musicians, but don't let their clownish appearance fool you. The six members of the self-described psychedelic rock, funk, ska, and soul ensemble have combined professional performance experience spanning several decades. What makes them notable is they perform as superheroes of their own creations, complete with costumes and a self-produced comic book penned by Orlando artist Tony Baldini.



"At first I wasn't sure about the costumes," guitarist and band co-founder Jeremy Lovelady says. "I'm fine being on stage, but I certainly don't want to be the center of attention. I'm used to them now though."

When the band formed in 2009, Beeps channeled her comic book passion to create a distinct onstage personality—think Wonder Woman meets Beetlejuice. Her Money Makers (Lovelady on guitar; Bunky on the trumpet; Dave Wade on the bass; P. Briske on the drums; and E. Money on the sax and flute), whose characters started as a ragtag band of masked robbers, have since united in style thanks to sponsorships from apparel companies including Sanuk and Loudmouth Golf.

Beeps' business model is no trade secret. She has found success by tapping into popular culture with catchy music, positive messages and a memorable gimmick. Beeps designs every show to feel like a carnival. During performances she acts as the

Though she starred in plays and musicals through high school, she studied to become an EMT and worked as an in-home healthcare provider. She had been contemplating a band for some time but hadn't met anyone who shared her vision until a mutual friend introduced her to Lovelady and his funky guitar riffs. The two began writing songs at a frenetic pace. "What we've produced so far is just a sample of what we have in our heads," Lovelady says.

Beeps' entrepreneurial venture is extraordinarily successful, often selling out performances across the region. Yet she didn't get her big break until the band performed at the 2012 Florida Music Festival where Lyman, Beeps' idol, happened to be in attendance. Afterward the two talked for hours, and the next thing Beeps knew, BaHMM was asked to be the featured amateur act on the 2013 Warped Tour.

When the tour stopped in Orlando in July, more than halfway through its schedule of dates, Beeps was full of energy and already working out logistics for tour partnering with nonprofits. "Making connections with these organizations will help to get the band a bigger audience while giving back to the people who support us," she says. "It helps us be better superheroes."



Beeps certainly acts like she has superpowers when it comes to her work. "I've had to make a rule for myself that every day I have to create either art or music so I can balance the business with creati

ringmaster, pumping up the crowd with a megaphone, prancing about the stage, and even jumping into the audience. Meanwhile the horn section does funky choreographed dance moves and the rhythm section rocks out. Merchandise is raffled, winners of costume contests are announced and get to dance onstage, and confetti cannons blast crowds at climactic moments. Local vendors and food trucks have been known to set up shop in the lobby or parking lot of the venue, making for a small-town fair atmosphere.

“When people come to our show I want them to feel like they’re in a whole other world,” Beebs says.

“Beebs is a master when it comes to getting a crowd involved,” longtime BaHMM fan and Orlando musician Michael Dodson says. “And she does it in a way that’s not ‘Hey, jump for us.’ It’s more like ‘Hey, jump and dance so you have a great time just like us.’ And it works.”

Beebs says her inspiration for creating the festival experience was realized at age 13 when she first attended the Vans Warped Tour, a traveling showcase of music and extreme sports. From then on, she followed the career of Warped Tour founder Kevin Lyman and began producing music festivals and managing her friends’ bands. “I wanted to learn everything I could about the music industry before starting my own band,” Beebs says.

Growing up in Melbourne, Beebs was a natural performer but not always demonstrative.

But her business is her art, which is probably why she’s able to accomplish so much. Her passion live production is so intense that she personally designs and produces every element of her show, the experience is the product. “That’s where we make all of our money and all our fans.”

And she’s able to connect with her fans because she is a self-described super nerd. Beebs uses her music as a vehicle to spread a message of self-acceptance and positive vibes to a young audience with uplifting songs like “I’m a Super Hero,”

“Love is Enough” and “Beautiful Gloomy.”

“A lot of really young kids come to our shows,” Beebs says. “There’s this group of little girls who call themselves the ‘mini money makers.’ They all have their own costumes and they get onstage and dance with me. They like the music, but I’m sure our superhero gear attracts them as well.”

Beebs is always encouraging her fans to find the superheroes in themselves. “No matter how weird or different you are, that’s your character in the comic book of life and you have to embrace people for who they are.”

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