

Summer assignment: Rock out with your band on tour, at least for some Millersville students



• [JANELLE JANCI | Staff Writer](#)



Lauren Hill, lead guitarist for MauveStrom, performs at a past Tellus360 show. MauveStrom, a band of current students and alumni from Millersville University, will return to Tellus360 on Friday.
VICTORIA PAPPAS

The last thing most college students want to do in the summer is homework.

But for a select few music students at Millersville University, their summer assignment is a bit more lively than your standard assigned reading.

That's because they've formed a rock band over the last few months, perfecting sing-along classic rock favorites such as Bon Jovi's "Livin' on a Prayer" and Heart's "Barracuda."

Their summer assignment? Embark on a mini tour, to be followed by a full-fledged jaunt this fall.

MauveStrom, a rock band comprising current Millersville students, alumni and one professor, will kick off a weekend tour by opening Friday for The Company Stores at Tellus360. After that, the band will head to Reading for a show at Schaylor Brewing. The adventure will culminate Sunday with a performance at Bethlehem's Musikfest, the largest free music festival in the country.

IF YOU GO

What: The Company Stores with MauveStrom.

Where: Tellus360, 24 E. King St.

When: Friday, 8 p.m.

Cost: \$5.

More info: [Facebook event](#).

The band is advised by Barry Atticks, assistant professor of music business technology at Millersville. Atticks also plays keytar in the band.

The idea formed after Atticks prepared five student bands from the Music Business Technology program to open for Joan Jett and the Blackhearts at a show at the college in 2017. Each band was named after a color. The last to perform before Jett was the Mauve band. While some members have since graduated and gone on to other projects, Atticks and lead guitarist Lauren Hill, a junior at the school, remained. The band started rehearsing for tour in earnest during the past school year.

The students will get real-life experience performing at different types of venues, breaking down and setting up equipment in varied situations.

“It’s really unlike anything I’ve ever heard of before. ... The experience we’re giving them is they get to go out and experience what it’s like to be away from Millersville and work on the road,” Atticks says.

In addition to Atticks and Hill, MauveStrom is Nathan Kraus on guitar, Luke Leonard on bass, Steve Sammartino on drums, and vocalists Elaina Hatton, Michaela Burns and Colin DiLucido.

Hill, Kraus and Hatton are current students. Leonard, Sammartino, Burns and DiLucido are alumni.

Atticks says the goal is to eventually include nonperforming students as well in areas such as marketing, promotion and sound engineering. And, since the band is formed of all Millersville musicians, he hopes it will be a useful recruiting tool, too.

The project is made possible by money gifted to the university by Patrick J. Tell in 2018. Millersville named its music school the Tell School of Music in recognition of the \$2 million donation.

MauveStrom is Hill’s first band, so she’s particularly excited about performing in other venues. Her resume so far isn’t too shabby though: in addition to opening for Jett, she performed with Gene Simmons when the Kiss musician played at American Music Theatre in 2017.

“To actually be able to be in a band and play the music that I always loved and perform and open up for artists I have known since I was young, that really made me want to continue the opportunity when Dr. Atticks asked me to do MauveStrom,” Hill says.

Hill also has taken over the marketing responsibilities for the band. She’s working on a press release about the tour and also will write a letter about her experience in the band from a student’s point of voice. Other bandmates will tackle creating MauveStrom’s social media presence.

As with all bands, the journey hasn’t been without a few bumps. Illnesses and other unexpected circumstances caused a few members to drop out, necessitating some last-minute lineup changes. And a few other students who were tasked with booking shows didn’t follow through, partly why the plans for an extended tour have been postponed until the fall.

But ask any established band and they’ll likely share a few similar stories, Atticks says.

“It was an experience for them to realize, hey, this is what happens when you don’t hire the right people,” Atticks says.

Hill says the band was able to address the problems head-on with the guidance of Atticks and a little optimism.

“We all get along and we all want a common thing,” Hill says. “We all enjoy playing. So I think that we’re all willing to work through the challenges that come up or whatever, and we’ll get through it together.”

Atticks says reinvesting in his own musical craft in preparation for the MauveStrom shows has been quite healing. In March 2018, Atticks was severely injured in a car accident. He’s still undergoing concussion therapy and working on regaining strength in his eyes.

Getting his hands back into playing shape has been a lot of hard work, too. As soon as he was able, he spent his recovery time at home practicing playing daily, which he says he hasn’t done for 15 years.

“Music is a great tool for therapy, but I think for me, just being a musician, probably even more so,” Atticks says. “So working with occupational therapy and physical therapy to get my fingers back to working to where they were before I think has really pushed me to have that mobility that I had prior to the accident. It’s been really great for me.”

And now, alongside his students in MauveStrom, he’s making sure to live every day to its fullest.

“Building a band like this, playing music that I love, has really been an inspiration for me,” Atticks says. “When you almost lose your life, you’re like, I’ve got to spent more time doing what I really love to do.”