

RADIO 45'S QUEST TO REACH NEW LISTENERS

Article by Jim Price

Pittsburgh-based power pop act Radio 45 is not your average local Pennsylvania rock band. From how they dress on stage – to selling their own tickets online – to recording the very best songs available to them (even if it means working with songwriters in Nashville) – to embracing the tribute band movement in order to get their original music in front of as many people as possible – these guys are DIFFERENT.

Internally, their approach to navigating Pennsylvania's indie music scene is referred to as “playing chess, not checkers.” Radio 45 is playing the long game, using strategic moves to reach goal after goal after goal. They don't like to talk about it. Why? Because it's hard for many people – especially musicians – to understand the value in this approach. “Nobody gets it at first,” says Radio 45 founder C. Scott Gilbert (known outside the band as “Mr. White”, Radio 45's Manager). And because they think of it as “giving away their secret sauce.”

So what is Radio 45 doing?

Since their onset, multi-instrumentalist and singer C. Scott Gilbert, lead singer and lead guitarist Aaron Greer, lead singer and guitarist Gary Bickerstaff, and drummer, percussionist and singer Mark “M-Sexy” Wesesky have set out to create and record great music that they can use to build a streaming portfolio. The group's mission is to record 50 songs between now and 2030.



Part of that creation is to collaborate with songwriters in Nashville and Los Angeles to find the best songs out there, breathe new life into them, and record and make them their own. According to Scott, “We're looking for the best radio-friendly songs we can find.”

Since the release of their four-song debut EP “Transcendence” last year, Radio 45 has issued three subsequent singles, which can be streamed on their website and on various streaming platforms: the songs “Anti-Gravity,” “Happily Ever Over” and a cover of Cheap Trick's “I Can't Take It.”

Their game plan has worked so far, as audiences have discovered and embraced Radio 45's brand of music – labeled by some as the “new Knack” (the group responsible for the 1979 hit single “My Sharona”) and compared to the early dawn of 80s new wave and MTV. Attendance at the group's live shows has steadily grown as well.

As they pursue their objective of making records, they realized the challenges facing them. As Scott explains, “The art of making a record is very expensive – from licensing songs to studio time to making sure the musicians are paid, gas money and all that stuff. It adds up, so we thought – we love playing live, there's a lot of great songs by a lot of musicians out there. We thought we'd work into the tribute band avenue a little bit, because it's a way for us to earn a little more money and pay for our recording habit. And at the same time, it gives us a bigger audience to play our original songs, too.”

This led into the advent of two tribute band side projects – their Tom Petty tribute group Petty 45 and their U2 tribute U245. Both projects were born out of the respect and admiration the band members have for both artists.

