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No sign of distress

A Connecticut band called Signal the Escape hits New York



Talk about an understanding family: Growing up in Hamden, Conn., Tom Kavanagh says his late mom would hear him singing along to the radio and say, "You can carry a tune!" Later, Kavanagh was studying economics when he left college for rock 'n' roll. But Kavanagh's dad (who had a glam-rock band of his own in the '80s) didn't criticize him; and when Kavanagh recruited drummer Brandon Rapp to move to Connecticut and tour with his band Signal the Escape, Dad let Rapp move into their house.

Now that trust is paying off, with Signal the Escape's catchy first EP, "These Scars Are Just the Beginning," getting airplay everywhere. And the five guys in the group are eager to return to New York for the first time since early 2006 in their touring van, which they've dubbed "El Guapo." (They play Europa in Brooklyn on Thursday.) Maybe someday the group — with songs like "Maudlin," "Exorcism in the ER" and "Boys Lie" that feature surging choruses and memorable hooks — can quit their jobs.

"Me and Brandon work at a Dairy Queen," explains Kavanagh, who turns 24 this month. "Mark [Kovalcek, the

band's bassist] works at a video store. Adam [Sanford, guitarist] has the most adult job — he details cars. Ivan [Fiallos, guitarist] doesn't actually have a job, per se. He's getting pretty good at producing local bands in Connecticut."

Rising from the ashes of the hardcore band Forgive and Forget, Signal the Escape isn't afraid of strong melodies. And the harsh vocals of the early gigs that shredded Kavanagh's throat will soon be a thing of the past, he says. "It's terrible. I hate screaming now. I loved screaming when I first got into the scene; it sounded bad-ass. But I've learned it's not good for me."

As long as Kavanagh and Rapp remember to ask for the time off, they say their manager at the DQ is pretty cool about music, not tasty treats, being their priority. With a full-length album coming soon and a hope of joining bigger tours, they could soon put aside chocolate-dipped ice cream for good.

"Our biggest goal is to just be able to go out and play every night," says Kavanagh. "If that pays the bills one day, that'd be great." (Signal the Escape plays Europa in Brooklyn on Thursday; 718-383-2322) ♦

Michael Giltz