Hey, Hey, My, My

Josh Dunklebarger (MD ’06) assembles his drum set. John Falcone (MD ’06) sets up his effects pedals. The growing crowd in Swissvale’s Pub in the Park mills about.

Hunched over his cymbals, Dunklebarger drifts back four years, recalling his anatomy class. He and Falcone were paired up at a cadaver and, for a moment, the conversation turned away from the vascular system and toward music. Next thing Dunklebarger knew, Falcone was pressing the percussionist to bring his kit to Pittsburgh from his family home in York, Pa. Dunklebarger soon acquiesced, and he and Falcone, a former professional trumpet player and accomplished child soprano turned self-taught guitarist, became Pitt med’s own rock-and-roll darlings, Mercury Rising.

The lights dim and the two-man band roars to life. Accompanied by a smoke machine, Mercury Rising tears through a two-hour set, performing their own songs and covering staples from the likes of Green Day and Neil Young. Falcone, affecting rock star poses, nimbly fingers his axe. Dunklebarger pounds his skins. A swaying crowd becomes a dancing crowd, taking Mercury Rising back to its days as house band at Boomerang’s Bar & Grille in Oakland while the duo was in med school.

The pair considered the evening a welcome diversion from residencies at UPMC hospitals, where Falcone is learning the art of general surgery and Dunklebarger otolaryngology. Their performance was a fundraiser for the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation’s Race for the Cure. Dunklebarger sported a pink oxford for the occasion. Why? His mom, a cancer survivor, told him to.

—Joe Miksch

Photography
Martha Rial