

## The Profits hopes to earn place in Madison's heart

by **Rachel Alkon**

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At 4 a.m. one morning last winter, Matt Johnson drove up to a friend's house and randomly bumped into John Paul Roney (who goes by the name JP) sitting on the front porch.

On that momentous morning, these two University of Wisconsin students discovered their shared passion for music in a lengthy, intense conversation about "life and stuff."

"Before meeting, we both had our own solo musical experience, but nothing like this," said JP.

JP, now a junior, began singing with the Madison Boys Choir at the age of five. Later in his musical career, he traveled overseas as an opera soloist, and performed at the White House with the National Honors Choir, a group comprised of the top 100 singers in America. In high school, JP sang the lead opera role with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, alongside Metropolitan Opera star Kit Foss.

While JP has applied his extensive operetta experience as the lead singer for The Profits, Matt's percussion background helped to spark his career in alternative rock.

As a member of the United States Collegiate Wind Ensemble, Matt toured through Europe playing big band and jazz combos at notable tourist attractions, such as St. Paul's Cathedral, the Louvre, and the Eiffel Tower.

Within a week of sparking their friendship, these two aspiring musicians linked their vocal and guitar talents and formed the band now known as The Profits.

Although The Profits have recently established a name for themselves in the Madison music scene, most UW students were introduced to this light-hearted acoustic rock duo at their late night bartime jam sessions.

"We were real strategic about it. We'd start at Stillwaters at 10-11 p.m., when people were heading toward bars," said Matt, "and then we would come back again between like 1-2 a.m. when the bars let out."

The Profits found bar time to be quite profitable.

"At the end of the night, we would walk home with a wad of dollar bills wrapped up into a big ball and play catch."

JP recalls trading in their balls of dollar bills for studio time.

"When we booked the recording session, I kind of felt like a stripper."

The band is currently in the process of collaborating with the upright bassist Scott Lamps and the vocalist/guitarist Mike Drohomireky to produce a high-quality, real-time, seven-track album.

These singer-songwriters seem adamant about pursuing a music career and have dedicated their college lives to popularizing their music.

"A few weeks ago I skipped three or four classes to go record," admitted Matt. "I felt bad about it, but I don't know how long school will last for me."

JP is committed to earning an undergraduate degree, yet dreams of life as a professional rock star.

"I want to make music my life, even if I have to be a wedding singer."

Since 2003, the band has quickly broken into the Midwest music scene with performances at The Annex, Luther's Blues, the Orpheum, and the Angelic — and ventured outside Madtown to colleges and bars in Iowa and Minnesota.

Most recently, the Madison Area Music Awards (sponsored by Ricks Café, a southern Wisconsin music newspaper) nominated The Profits as best new artist, best new acoustic artist, and best new vocal ensemble.

Although their lyrical and rhythmic influences stem from typical college bands, including John Mayer, Coldplay and Jack Johnson, The Profits have created an unusual hybrid of slow and fast melodies.

"On our CDs, we play a quiet song like John Mayer," said Matt, "but at our concerts, we cut out slow stuff and just try to put on a really good show."

To attract new audiences, The Profits have been stopping by Langdon Street fraternities and sororities — the same guerilla tactic employed by the Dave Matthews Band before they signed with a major record label.

"We will probably give out 300 CDs this week," said Matt.

Catch The Profits with Bishop Allen this Sunday, 8 p.m. at the Annex. Check out their music at their website, [www.theprofits.net](http://www.theprofits.net).