

## Point of Pride

Motorcyclists, flag-twirlers and drag queens converge each June for the Stonewall Columbus Pride Festival, an annual check-in for the area's LGBT community and its allies. The parade/concert/festival/dance party is a summertime staple here as well as one of the largest gay-pride events in the Midwest, second only in scale to Chicago's.

Karla Rothan, executive director of organizing group Stonewall Columbus, expects to see 250,000 people for the celebrations centered in Goodale Park on June 15-17.

It's also a place to reflect on battles for LGBT equality won in the past year and a rallying ground for what's to come. The politics can't be avoided. They're ingrained in the DNA of the 31-year-old event, which began as a 70-person visibility march and slowly grew alongside Stonewall. Now, Rothan says the event is as much about visibility as it is about welcoming people, from LGBT teenagers seeking supportive community organizations to the elderly fighting for partner rights. Hence this year's theme: "Allies and Equality."

A celebration of the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" will get a prime spot in this year's parade, with openly gay veterans and soldiers marching down High Street. A few nods will also be made to the now-sputtering effort to repeal Ohio's ban on gay marriage: Two of its biggest backers, Equality Ohio and Freedom to Marry Ohio, will be around to collect signatures from supporters. And Pride sponsor Barefoot Wine will supply an inflatable, 20-foot-tall rainbow-decked wedding cake that also happens to be a slide.

Also new this year will be the "Pride Patio" on a stretch of the I-670 cap, which will feature a deejay and a dance floor, and a Sunday brunch honoring Mayor Michael Coleman. The events, Rothan says, help people from across the country see Columbus as an accepting place. "With Pride, everyone can come out and be gay for a day," she says.

▼ Carrie Schedler



DISPATCH FILE PHOTO



DISPATCH FILE PHOTO

# Watershed Moments

New book looks at the 20-year career of Columbus' hardest-working rockers

It seems that every band worth listening to has its own wild stories to tell, from trashing hotel rooms to getting trashed backstage. For longtime Columbus rockers Watershed, theirs is a tale of chasing big dreams in an old van with no AC, of inking a major record deal only to have the rug pulled out from under them, and of pressing on even as the bandmates began to settle down and start families.

"Hitless Wonder: A Life in Minor League Rock and Roll," penned by bassist and co-founder Joe Oestreich, recounts Watershed's recent tour along with detailed memories of Oestreich's childhood (how he and co-founder Colin Gawel decided

to start a band while riding a COTA bus up High Street following a Cheap Trick concert), his college days (meeting his future wife at a campus house party), and the heart-break of realizing that, even with agonizing hard work and dedication, sometimes things just don't work out in the music biz.

The memoir hits bookstores on June 5. Among the highlights:

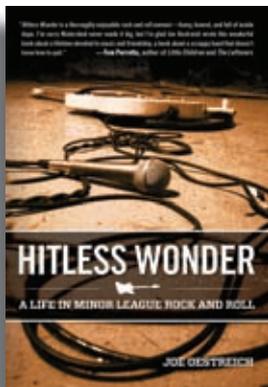
- \* A grueling, daylong studio session with Willie Phoenix, who had the band perform a single song dozens of different ways, only to decide the first version was best. "A record needs to be good enough to last forever," Oestreich recalls Phoenix telling them.

- \* Driving from Toledo to New Orleans for a show they hoped would get them noticed by a hotshot manager. Their engine died 100 miles shy of the Big Easy, and the

band was rescued by a tow truck driver who let them hide in the van while he pulled them the rest of the way. They made it with five minutes to spare, but the manager never showed.

- \* Opening for the Insane Clown Posse, whose fans—known as "Juggalos"—routinely booed them and hurled items onstage. "On the upside," Oestreich recalls, "the Juggalo median age was probably 14; those kids had weak arms and spotty aim."

▼ Ben Zenitsky



COURTESY LYONS PRESS