



## Scratch 'The Common Itch'

By David Pencek, Norwich Bulletin

Darin Keech wanted something grand to come out of his music.

Since Keech's band, Band of Humans, released its CD "Alive" in 1997, the Danielson native sought to turn it into more than just songs the band played during their gigs.

"It was a challenge to myself to get the band recognized in an artistic respect," the 39-year old Keech said. "For me, it's about the art. I wanted to do something so people can understand the intent of the lyrics."

With a little help from his 6-year old son, Tommy, Keech wrote "The Common Itch," a play revolving around 12 original Band of Humans' songs from "Alive." The play premieres at 8 p.m. Friday at the Donald Oat Theater in Norwich and also will be performed 8 p.m. Saturday and 2 p.m. Sunday. Tickets are \$15.



Tracy Tremblay as Sadie, Danny Telgarsky as Jude, Derek Convisas as Zac and Shauna Beth Mandelburg as Buffy in the background, rehearse a scene from "The Common Itch."

Keech described the show as being a combination of play, musical and concert. The story idea came to him while he drove his son to school. The younger Keech wanted to hear a story during the drive so his father began spinning a tale. It led Keech to "The Common Itch," a play about an adventurous college graduate named Jude, who has these wild experiences while struggling to find his way.

Throughout the play there's a spirit that follows Jude and tries to send him messages on what he should do. Whenever Jude ignores the messages he itches, hence the play's title.

"The Common Itch" begins the night before Jude's college graduation.

While all his friends know what they want to do, Jude isn't sure about anything. His girlfriend, Sadie, comes from a wealthy family in the Middle East and after graduation she returns to her home country. This leaves Jude completely alone for the first time. Keech said the story really kicks in when Sadie returns and marries Jude, who eventually finds himself unhappy with how his life has become so limiting.

Before college, Jude's life was one big adventure. In second-grade, his mother died and his father sold their home, bought a sailboat and took Jude around the world for the next 10 years.

Keech struggled through nearly all of last year writing the script. He said the rest of the band had its doubts about whether something could be put together, but now they see it happening. During the play, the band is behind the action on stage and its music represents Jude's thoughts.

Band of Humans began playing eight years ago. All of the members are originally from the northeast Connecticut. It underwent two line up changes since "Alive" was released. The band now includes Robert Stanley on bass and Wayne Gasiorsek on drums. Mike Barrette and Louise Muller remain on electric guitar and violin respectively.

'It's exciting being part of an original piece,' said Tracy Tremblay, who plays Sadie. 'We've been collaborating on it as we've been going on. It's been a challenge because it's not purely a musical. It's something that's never been done around here.'

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Labeling the band has proven difficult. Some say it's a cross between the Grateful dead and the Beatles. The name Jude in fact comes from The Beatles' "Hey Jude."

The play, directed by Stephen Thompson, stars Danny Telgarsky as Jude along with Tremblay. It also includes the Golden Harp dance Company from Bolton. Tommy Keech also makes an appearance as a younger Jude.

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'Stephen has done great with sticking with my vision,' Keech said. 'We scaled it down and it's become more humorous. The play takes the audience on a journey. It's a wild ride and gives a positive and refreshing look at reality.'



*Louise Muller, violinist for The Band of Humans, rehearses for "The Common Man," written by fellow band member Danny Keech.*