



PHOTOS BY SARAH L. VOOR — THE WASHINGTON POST

Judge William "Dawgg" Jackson pounds a beat during a performance by Deaf Dog and the Indictments at Children's Hospital.

All Rise, Rock and Roll

7 D.C. Judges and a Shrink Court Fun — and a Little Disorder

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They look like a bunch of mobsters. They wear dark suits and darker sunglasses, have nicknames like Trash Can and Top Dog and brag about how they fought the law (and the law won).

The thing is: They are the law.

Stoic stewards of the Constitution by day in D.C. Superior Court, they are by night (or weekend, or whenever they feel the urge) Deaf Dog and the Indictments — a guitar-

heavy group of seven music-loving judges, anchored by the lone civilian among them, a ponytailed shrink on drums.

They aren't picky about where they play. All they ask for is a little space and a little bit of love.

The love might take some work tonight, when the band is to perform at the Fraternal Order of Police lodge — in front of a crowd of cops, prosecutors and defense lawyers.

But it was in plentiful supply last weekend, when the band played its first show in months — at the Armed Forces Retirement Home.

Strutting onto the stage Saturday afternoon in Blues Brothers-black, Dawgg (aka Judge William Jackson) and the rest of the Indictments had more space than they needed — 100 or so people were spread out in an auditorium built for lots more.

"Let the good times roll," Dawgg announced, launching into the classic from B.B. King, as Dennis "Red Dog" Doyle on lead guitar let out a howl of approval.

It was to be a trip back to the 1950s and '60s, with the

See **BAND**, B2, Col. 1



Patient Micah Stewart, left, smiles at her mother, Kenya Stewart of Silver Spring, while singing along with the band.



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL ROBBINSON OWREZ — THE WASHINGTON POST

John "Cartwheel" McCabe, Russell "Top Dog" Canan, William "Dawgg" Jackson and Dennis "Red Dog" Doyle preside at the Armed Forces Retirement Home.

The Indictments: A Hearing, So Ordered

BAND, From *B1*

music of Wilson Pickett, Ben E. King and, of course, The King himself.

Unsure what to make of their guests, more than a few of the retirement home's residents sat toward the back, as if they were at a Sunday service they feared might go on too long. Dancing in the aisles they were not, but with each song, the restlessness seemed to fade just a little bit.

Even a few fellow judges turned out, eager to see how the band had progressed since its debut last spring during a talent show at the judges' annual retreat.

No one had expected that gag gig in Cumberland, Md., to be the beginning of anything. But then something clicked. Russ "Tin Dog" Ca-



At the Armed Forces Retirement Home, Marc "Hounddog" Feldman — a psychologist and the only band member not a judge — delivers a pep talk.

"Brown Eyed Girl" drifted onto the quiet Northwest Washington street. "We knew we had arrived when one of the neighbors complained," joked Jackson, the front man whose fellow band members say has the soul of Otis Redding and the shtick of Jackie Mason.

For the judges, it's about fun. They can't play for money, or even for charity. So they play just to play, wherever they are welcome. The Washington Home, a nursing facility, was one stop on the tour. Children's Hospital was another.

"We all do outreach," Canan said, and that sense of civic obligation is part of it, he said. "And part of it is it's just fun, playing for folks, sharing the music."

Like the night a few months ago when they took the stage at the

nan, who had started it all, sent out an e-mail. Did anyone want to keep playing?

All they had were a couple of songs and a curious name, hatched in an early rehearsal, when a few of the musicians thought they had found a real fan — Canan's German shepherd, Chapin, who was never put off by the racket that chased everyone else away. Canan had to break it to his brethren that Chapin was deaf. But he didn't doubt her devotion, and so was born the name, Deaf Dog and the Indictments.

Maybe it was the pangs of middle and not-so-middle age sounding a call to their inner youth. Or perhaps they wanted a break from all the pain and conflict they see in court: the murder cases Canan tried as a judge in criminal court, the dysfunctional lives that Jackson saw as head of the domestic violence courts or just the indignity of having a deranged defendant hurl a trash can into your head, as happened to John Campbell when he was assigned to a criminal court.

Whatever it was, the band lived to play again, starting at D.C. Superior Court, where it was the surprise entertainment for the employee awards ceremony last fall. It was a

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Deaf Dog and the Indictments performs from 5:30 to 9:30 tonight in the District.

home crowd, to be sure, but even so, before long, the judges had hundreds of court employees clapping their hands and tapping their feet — and asking themselves, "Who are these guys?"

Canan, now in civil court, was on rhythm guitar. So was John "Cartwheel" McCabe, who hears abuse

and neglect cases. Doyle, who hears child support claims, was joined on lead guitar by Bill "Blue Dog" Nooter, who hears abuse and neglect cases.

Jackson, who dabbled in song as a college student, was lead vocalist for most of the band's set, pitching in with harmonica and tambourine when he was not singing. "Trash Can" Campbell, who sits in family court as well, was on bass guitar. Frank "Professor" Burgess, who hears probate and tax cases, was behind the keyboard.

And Marc Feldman, aka "Houndog," the ponytailed psychologist, was on drums. An old friend of Canan's from their days in a garage band two decades ago, Feldman was the drummer the group realized it would need if it was going to make a go of this thing.

Very much the producer, Feldman has made his home the band's clubhouse, and on a recent Sunday night the ground floor was a swarm of amplifiers, electrical cords and half-empty pizza boxes.

The beat of Van Morrison's

Grog and Tankard, the Glover Park tavern that is a regular stop for many up-and-coming bands.

For people who have such busy day jobs, they were surprisingly good, said Colin Hoss, the Grog's booking agent. "They had the entire crowd dancing," he said.

But those busy day jobs have a way of slowing down runaway success, and the band took a break for a few months. Emerging from their hiatus, Deaf Dog and the Indictments turned up at the Armed Forces Retirement Home to headline the home's spring break party.

There was Feldman roaring through Elvis's "Blue Suede Shoes," Jackson soulfully rendering Wilson Pickett's "Mustang Sally" and so on through a 12-song set.

James Hart, a 77-year-old retired Air Force administrator, had heard about a bunch of judges claiming they were going to play the blues and some rock-and-roll, and was decidedly skeptical. "I said, 'I got to see this,'" he said.

But by the end, the band had won Hart over.

"They're entertainers," Hart said after telling the judges the same thing. "I told them they can quit their day jobs and go on the road."