

## MACHINE WORK

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In 2006, Richard Lewis, a photography professor at Salem State College, had recently returned to music after more than 20 years when he was seated at a table in Salem's former McSwiggin's restaurant next to Jim Forrest, a former Salem State interactive media student now employed by the Peabody Essex Museum.

Lewis, a keyboard player, and Forrest, a guitarist, talked about their respective music projects through dinner. By the end of the meal they considered collaborating, and before long they formed a band, Machine 475.

Fewer than three years later, the two have recorded a full-length CD, "None of This is Real," an EP, "Love is all Around," and have worked together on sound tracks for a play, a documentary film and a major museum's exhibition.

Machine 475 will appear at Gulu Gulu Cafe in Salem on Friday, Aug. 29.

"What brought us together was music," said Lewis, a native of England who recorded an album with the band Movieland in the '80s.

"Everything we do is sort of a painting, a picture, because we come from a visual background," Lewis said. "We're both visual artists that can't leave music alone. It's like a bug — you cannot ignore it."

Machine 475 blends the favorite musical styles of Lewis, who leans toward British-influenced pop and electronica, and Forrest, who likes R&B, funk and jazz. The band is studio-driven and the songs include computer sequencing, loops, sampling, spoken word and drum machines.

They call Machine 475 "an ambitious prog-pop, multimedia project," that includes "pop, rock, alternative, techno, trance, bluegrass and spoken word."

"It's Pink Floyd meets Underworld," Forrest said.

"It's a 21st-century approach to music," Lewis said.

Machine 475 has grown to include several other musicians and a videographer and they have a regular gig at Gulu Gulu Cafe in Salem the last Friday of every month. On stage, instruments present or duplicated include guitar, keyboard, drums, harp, cowbell, sitar, theremin and Moog effects.

"We're like musical trash pickers," Forrest said.

Without Forrest's persistence, the band may have remained a studio project.

According to Lewis, his bandmate persuaded him that it would be possible to move from the studio to the stage. They started at Front Street Coffeehouse in Salem and the Pickled Onion in Beverly. And, in

the fall of '07, Machine 475 took the end-of-month slot at Gulu's Friday Night Spins program.

"Performance is our proof of concept this year," said Forrest, who added that the crowds' reactions have influenced the music they make.

"It has become an incredibly important part of what we do," Lewis said about the live shows. "Whereas when we started it wasn't even possible."

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