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RIFFS: What's in a name?

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"Have you ever seen a Love's gas station, the kind with a heart on them?" asks Oklahoma native Crosby Bray. "I'm a personal assistant to the whole Love family. Whatever they need taken care off, I do it for them."

Mr. Bray is referring to his day job, a position he's held for over two years. Working for the owners of a national travel-stop chain is a unique gig, but it pales in comparison to his newest profession - banging drums for the Uglysuit.

With song titles like "Happy Yellow Rainbow" and "Everyone Now Has A Smile," Mr. Bray's music evokes the same sunny, amiable feelings as his employer's surname. The fact that the Uglysuit's moniker suggests something unattractive only highlights the playfulness in the band's music.

Bright harmonies and piano arpeggios pepper the Uglysuit's debut album, whose eclectic sound draws comparisons to fellow Oklahoma natives the Flaming Lips. "They're my favorite band," Mr. Bray enthuses. "We all respect them so much as kind people and superbly creative dudes! I've seen them two unbelievable times; they are by far the best performance I have ever seen."

Rather than intentionally mimic their musical heroes, however, the young musicians carve their own path with songs about flying penguins, Midwestern cities and warm weather.

"Honestly, we just write what seems pretty to us," explains Mr. Bray, who, like his five band mates, is in his early twenties. "It's beautiful to know that something that cannot be seen or physically touched can reach so many people."

The Uglysuit officially formed in 2007, yet the band's roots date back nearly 10 years earlier. As teenagers, Mr. Bray and vocalist Israel Hindman took up residence in the latter's garage, playing "little punk-rock jingles" while gradually admitting more musicians into their fold. The band grew older, changed directions and revamped its roster, with classically trained pianist Jonathan Martin climbing aboard in recent years.

"We struck some gold finding him," says Mr. Bray. The piano quickly became an important component of the Uglysuit's sound, balancing the band's

psychedelic guitars with elegant ivory flourishes.

With the help of Quarterstick Records, a Chicago-based record label, the Uglysuit is now finding a national audience. The musicians have never toured the continental U.S., much less Europe, but both are on their agenda as the Uglysuit embarks on a three-month tour.

The Uglysuit will play its first D.C. show on Tuesday at DC9. The New Year will open the show, whose doors open at 8:30 p.m. Admission is \$12.

Fall CDs: A look ahead

The record industry has entered Q4, a three-month period in which many veteran artists release their albums. Major labels look forward to strong holiday sales, while music fans anticipate the release of the year's biggest records. Will 2008's blockbuster season help revive a struggling industry? Perhaps the following albums can help tip the scales.

Snow Patrol, "A Hundred Million Suns" (Oct. 28) — Released in 2006, "Chasing Cars" made Snow Patrol one of the biggest acts to emerge from Ireland since U2. The group now returns with another batch of pop/rock material, led by the studio-slick strains of "Take Back the City."

David Archuleta, "David Archuleta" (Nov. 11) — He finished second in the "American Idol" competition, but David Archuleta may pull ahead of rival David Cook by releasing his solo album first. Are your children fans of the "High School Musical" franchise? If so, consider this album a handy stocking stuffer.

Fireman, "Electric Arguments" (Nov. 18) — Paul McCartney embraces his electronic side with "Electric Arguments," the musician's third album with veteran producer Martin Glover (also known as Youth). In a recent interview, Sir Paul assured listeners that his latest collaboration would give them "ambient dreams in rainbow arches."

David Cook, Title TBA (Nov. 18) — Having won the "American Idol" crown earlier this year, David Cook is now poised to become a modern rock superstar alongside Chris Daughtry and Nickelback's Chad Kroeger. Ballads and full-throated rock songs comprise his debut album, whose lead single "Light On" was written by Soundgarden's Chris Cornell.

Guns N' Roses, "Chinese Democracy" (Nov. 23) — Believe it — the long-awaited "Chinese Democracy" will finally see the light of day. Axl Rose spent 14 years creating the album, toiling over its every nuance with a rotating cast of band members. After such a long hiatus, however, does Guns N' Roses' appeal remain intact?

Kanye West, "808's and Heartbreak" (Nov. 25) — Kanye West is one of