

Music | Talent

## San Marin grad leads local band and new album

By Derek Wilson  
*Marinscope*

A band that strives to live up to its name, The Happys, hope their music can help bring a smile to those who might need it most.

"We all hurt," said lead vocalist Nick Petty, a 2009 San Marin High School grad. "But it's OK to be depressed. It's OK to be different and to smile even when it seems weird."

Petty admitted he has suffered with attention deficit disorder and depression his whole life. With his three bandmates, Petty hopes the band's latest four-song release "Bipolar" will reach out to others suffering with similar issues.

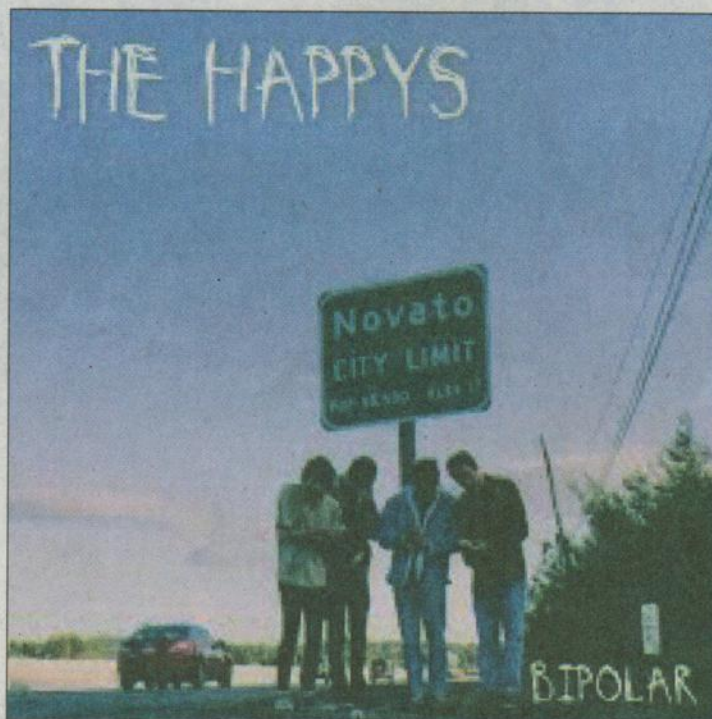
Petty is extremely proud of the album, which is a follow to the band's 2016 debut "Trippin'."

The Happys are firmly rooted in Marin County, where Petty, bassist Brett Brazil, guitarist Alex Sanchez, and drummer Ryan Donahue started their careers. Their followers might remember Petty from his days playing live shows at the Hopmonk Tavern in Novato and other Marin clubs.

"I remember I played the Belrose Theater in San Rafael by myself. That was a rush," Petty said.

Petty was at a club in San Rafael where Brazil was rehearsing with his band and something clicked. Soon, Petty and Brazil were performing together with ever-changing rosters of bandmates.

The Happys' new lineup started in January of 2018 when Petty and Brazil returned from a Pacific Northwest acoustic tour and reconnected with longtime friend Sanchez. Sanchez had previously played in Hot Start and had just



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ALEX SANCHEZ  
*Guitarist for The Happys*

touched down from an extended backpacking trip in Australia. Donahue, another San Marin grad, approached the band by weird coincidence at a local bar and joined the band shortly after a few rehearsals.

"We want to put Novato and Marin County on the map," Petty exclaimed.

The band, which recently left on a Southern California tour, began booking shows and accruing a fast number of fans and several thousands of views on their Spotify and Youtube channels. The Happys' reggae/punk/surf rock sound carries their positive message to the audience. They try to be encouraging, while realistic and understanding, with their lyrics.

The band name inspires a philosophical question: "Are we really that happy? Is anyone really that happy?" according to Petty.

Watching them on stage, it would seem the four friends really are that happy together.

"We get on stage and it's just

amazing how good it feels to be doing what we love together," according to guitarist Alex Sanchez, who studied at the Marin School for the Arts. "When we're playing, we're jumping around and having a good time. That's when it's obvious we're The Happys. Everyone has good times and bad times, and we all should be able to reach out to someone. We all pick each other up."

Petty said, "After a show, some people will come up and say, 'I can see why you guys are The Happys.'"

Petty described the band's new album, in part, as a tribute to beloved popular figures — including Robin Williams, Chester Bennington of Linkin Park and Anthony Bourdain — who struggled with mental health problems before their early deaths.

"As a society, we should reach out to people, not punish them for being depressed," Petty said. "The people we love are the ones we need most to show we love."