

# Alt-reggae group pulses with positive energy

**Amanda Sieradzki**  
Council on Culture & Arts

“I wasn’t the type of person that would go to a show and stand there and watch,” says Travis Green, vocalist for local band, Sway Jah Vu. “I feel emotionally charged when I listen to music, and I hope my music impacts people in

the same way.”

Music is transcendence for Green, who allows it to make him move, mosh, dance and headbang. As part of “Florida grown alt-reggae” band, Sway Jah Vu, Green and his bandmates conjure tropical mirages with their luminous guitars, percussion, and horns. They will play at Fifth & Thomas on Saturday,

Sept. 21.

Green’s vocals match the music’s sunny disposition with lyrics that elevate listeners into a self-reflective realm. Green began listening to reggae music eight years ago and was immediately struck by its candid songwriting and universal themes.

“It is all about acceptance and unity,

love and spirituality, which is what I think we need as a whole now,” says Green. “With all the things going on politically, we need a spiritual awakening with more understanding and empathy for the next person.”

Though he didn’t pick up an acoustic

**See GREEN, Page 2C**

# Green

Continued from Page 1C

guitar until his early 20s, Green was a quick study. He recently began taking lessons with guitar instructor Christopher Seepersaud and looks up to musicians like Brad Foutch and Incubus' Brandon Boyd. Green cut his teeth performing at friends' parties and around bonfires before putting together small projects.

Five years ago, he and bassist Logan Pepper formed Sway Jah Vu. Connecting with other musicians from Florida State's College of Music program and the local scene, their group grew to include drummer Mateo Sanchez and saxophonist Eric Kennedy.

Their band name reflects a deeper philosophical stance. Green says the group came across the French term, *déjà vu*, meaning already seen or a feeling that something has been lived through before. Ruminating on the perpetual cycle of life, the band incorporated reggae's distinctive, sonic "sway" into their play on words.

"We felt like our goal was to break the cycle and monotonousness of daily life and routines through higher ideals," says Green. "We hope our music is invoking some sort of thought or cognition, raising your level of awareness and consciousness."

In 2016, Sway Jah Vu released their second EP, "In the Company of Wolves" and are looking to release their first full-length album, "Rebirth" later this year. Green says the songwriting process for the new album typically begins with a rhyme or rhythm. He'll approach his bandmates with the seed of an idea that they'll grow together, adding lyrics that build off the concept.

No matter how old the song, Green says getting up in front of a crowd brings up different emotions each time. While he can play earlier tunes like "Simplicity" in his sleep, he's enjoyed sharing two new singles, "My Way" and "Satellite," with fans. Green says the band has gained a following over the years that will request original songs, a progression that is exciting to watch as "the music sinks in with people."

"It's an interesting process singing your own songs because a lot of times you're your own worst critic," shares Green. "I don't know what to expect from the crowd and whether they'll be receptive of your art or not. Every show is going to be new with a new audience and a new place."

Green goes through a mental checklist before making his way to the microphone. He visualizes the set list and engages in his own form of meditation to find calm. This has been especially important during major shows and festivals where they have shared the stage with national recording artists like Stephen Marley, Bob Marley's son.

Perhaps their most celebrated undertaking was opening for Sublime with Rome at The Moon. Green says it was also their craziest show to date. After sound check, an unexpected snafu left them drummer-less



Travis Green, left, performs with Sway Jah Vu during a downtown event. K M VISIONS

## If you go

**What:** Sway Jah Vu

**When:** 9:30-11:30 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 21

**Where:** Fifth & Thomas, 1122 Thomasville Road

**Cost:** No Cover, Ages 21+ Only

**Contact:** For more information, visit <https://www.facebook.com/events/351623962407269/>.

for the evening just hours before they would take the stage. With some quick thinking, the band pulled together an acoustic set list for the thousand fans that filled the venue. Afterwards, they laughed off the tense situation with Sublime backstage.

"We were telling them about it and they said, 'Don't worry, it's just something that's going to go on the DVD later,'" chuckles Green. "It was stressful, but ended up being a really cool night."

While he's looking forward to smooth sailing at the Fifth & Thomas show, Green wants Sway Jah Vu's set to uplift everyone in the venue. He believes music can be a major mood-changer. Flipping someone's bad day into a carefree night is just the slice of paradise Sway Jah Vu hopes to deliver.

"Our biggest goal is to create music that empowers people or changes the way they think," says Green. "I follow the quantum physics approach to life in the sense that most everything is made up of energy. Shows are just energy transferences from the artist to the crowd and back, and it really does feel exciting to be up there singing and feeling that connection with the crowd."

*Amanda Sieradzki is the feature writer for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area's umbrella agency for arts and culture ([www.tallahasseearts.org](http://www.tallahasseearts.org)).*