The practice of medicine, in any form, is a messy business. Humans are complex creatures who don’t always do what’s in their best interests and according to Fox TV’s “House,” they never tell you the whole truth.

Patients arrive at your clinic infused with a melange of pharmaceutical protocols, hopefully most of them legal. Your charges are confused about their symptoms, unsure about their exact medical history and predictably never follow any advice on diet and exercise. Stop smoking? Don’t even go there.

It’s no wonder playing in a rock ‘n roll band is good medicine for those who care for humanity’s physical wellbeing. It’s a sanctuary from the ambiguity and irrationality of medical practice, a brief and pleasurable respite from a job that demands total focus and commitment, and where customers sometimes expect nothing short of a miracle.
So, bring on that pure rock 'n' roll the way it was played in the 50s, 60s and early 70s. Standards like "Stand by Me", "Love Potion Number Nine", "Sweet Home Alabama" and anything by the Beatles, Doobie Brothers or Monkees.

These are songs that make sense. Chords that progress in a natural order, always changing at just the right measure, one movement following another in an exquisitely predictable dance toward the coda.

No matter how many times you play them, the songs we love radiate the joy, freshness and idiocy of our youth. They speak to us in ways our kids will never understand.

In our riverfront town, we are blessed with a band that summons to consciousness memories of frat parties, love-ins, college football, Vietnam and the search for inner peace, and delivers it at just the right decibel level and at a pace where we can dance to the rhythm all night long.

The fact they are doctors (one lawyer and one computer geek) adds an interesting perspective to the "here's a bunch of old guys in a rock band" narrative. Sheesh. Lots of old guys are still playing. Mick Jagger and Paul McCartney have both sped past 65 and haven't we heard enough of Glenn Frey's (Eagles, guitar) ongoing bouts with diverticulitis threatening cancellation of the band's recent "Last Road Out of Eden" tour?

The characters who make up the B-Flats have a story. It's no better or worse than anybody else's story except two are lifelong friends of mine and one is my Internist. That's Little Rock for you. So as you may guess, I have a special affinity for the group, aside from the fact they really kick ass and boogie down. So let's meet the Band.
DR. SUSAN SANTA CRUZ
STAFF PHYSICIAN,
ARKANSAS HOSPICE

The band’s moment of conception sparked from the mind of Susan Santa Cruz, who set out to assemble a band for the annual St. Vincent Nurses’ Day event. “I’ve been a singer all my life,” Susan told me. “Our family sang together as far back as I can remember. I joined school choirs starting in Junior High and was a member of the Madrigal Singers at Washington University.” Susan was later invited to join the Arkansas Chamber Singers. Eventually, due to time pressures, she had to make a choice between the Chamber Singers and the Band. She decided, ‘gimme that good ol’ rock’n and roll.”

DR. DAVID BAUMAN
CARDIOLOGIST,
LITTLE ROCK CARDIOLOGY CLINIC

When Susan started recruiting players for the original Nurses’ Day band, she started with David Bauman, who like Susan, began vocalizing at an early age, most often with his brother, Steve Bauman, the band’s rhythm guitarist. The brothers’ favorite melody? “You’ve Lost that Lovin’ Feelin.” But the guys had talent. Accomplished on keyboard, bass and guitar, David began playing in high school bands, and once at Tulane, was a member of the school’s Choral Society, the Tulanians, and helped organize a show band that’s still playing on the New Orleans music scene today.

DR. SIDNEY HAYES
MEDICARE MEDICAL DIRECTOR,
ARKANSAS BLUE CROSS/BLUE SHIELD

Though Sidney Hayes had never been in a rock band before, music has permeated her world since childhood, where in her family, all the daughters were expected to learn a musical instrument—hers was piano. Country music was a favorite at home. She sang in school choirs, gospel at church and being a Memphis girl, loved blues and rock’n roll everywhere else. So when Susan called her to join the band for Nurse’s Day, Sidney readily accepted and as they say, the beat goes on.
DR. JIM GRISsom
PRIVATE PRACTICE,
MEDICAL ONCOLOGY AND HEMATOLOGY

For about a year, the band lay dormant, then resurfaced when it was nearing time for another Nurses' Day concert. Jim Grissom, a friend of Sidney's from college days at ASU, answered an ad placed by David Bauman in the hospital bulletin about playing with the B-Flats. Jim started playing piano at age six and picked up guitar for the first time in college. Inspired by the likes of Eric Clapton and Jimi Hendrix, Jim mastered the axe and joined "The Loving Kind," a band that performed at clubs and community centers around Northeast Arkansas (the region's Highway 67 is now known the "Rock 'n Roll Highway"). While in med school at UAMS, he played acoustic guitar in a bluegrass band. It's been a long and winding road for a guy who, as a teenager, began his music career as a church organist.

STEVE BAUMAN
ATTORNEY,
MITCHELL AND WILLIAMS

David also recruited his brother Steve, whose repertoire gleaned closer to the Kumbaya tradition of belting out Hebrew folk ballads around summer camp fires and today, with brother David, sings religiously at Temple B'nai Israel. Nonetheless, Steve's life-long dream of playing in a rock 'n roll band came to fruition. Steve, a member of the Tulanians with his brother in college, had a trained singing voice and fit nicely with the rest of the band. In fact, when the band decided to form an LLC, the doctors were glad they had admitted at least one lawyer to the group.
THE BAND PLAYS ON

Evidently, the band’s second performance at Nurses’ Day was even better than the first because they began receiving invitations to play at various events around town. An evening of entertainment by the B-Flats has become a much-sought-after item at non-profit silent auctions with the highest bid to date at $1,500.

Here's how the finances work: if they get a paying gig (i.e. the Afterthought Lounge on New Year’s Eve and Halloween or a private party) the money goes into an account, which is then used to pay expenses for any of their charitable performances. Needless to say, they’re not in it for the money.

It’s been about eleven years since the first Nurses’ Day concert. Some of the original members have left, others added. These days, they try to play at least once a month, but with tight time schedules, on-call duties, family time and everything else life throws at you, setting dates can be a challenge.

“There's something special about being in this band,” one of the members said as we sat and chatted after the photo shoot. “We like each other and enjoy the rehearsals as much as playing the gigs.” They admit it’s difficult to get everyone together, but despite all that, the band plays on. Guess their rock’n’roll is here to stay.