

# CT MUSIC Scene



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The first of its kind Who, Where, and  
What's got the buzz in the CT Music Scene....

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# the Monthly Mixdown

Welcome to the first issue of Excursionz magazine, and a review of the Connecticut Music Scene; The Monthly Mixdown. We are proud to be a part of the first ever publication to present all aspects of the growing Connecticut music scene.

The Monthly Mixdown will be an overview on where to go, who's hot in the CT music scene, how to get involved, and everything else you would need for musicians and music enthusiasts alike. There will be music industry insider information, tips for aspiring musicians, and a rotation of music genre themes to include everyone. Our goal is to maintain an entertaining and unique publication where we can report on Connecticut, as the music center it is becoming.

When we were approached about taking on the responsibility of this section of the magazine our first response was to decline. Running a recording studio and record label is no easy task and we just couldn't fathom making it work. But with such an innovative concept to fill a void in our state we simply couldn't resist, and the response so far has been overwhelming!

We have had the opportunity for the last seven years to watch the music scene in this state really start to take off. Cities like New Haven, Waterbury, Hartford, and the coastline are developing and have been recognized as budding locations for music, film, and all entertainment business. This magazine is another great step in the establishment of that scene and we look forward to the exciting years ahead.

We urge you also to visit [www.CtMusicScene.com](http://www.CtMusicScene.com). It is already established as the source for Connecticut music information and is truly the launch pad that has made this publication possible.

We hope you find our first issue fun, exciting, and full of that rare hard to get information on the music scene.

See you soon!

Yours,

**Peter Kowalczyk**  
**Adam Gootkin**

Managing Editors

CT Music Scene: Monthly  
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HEADLINERZ  
FEATURE BAND  
OF THE MONTH

# Undefyed

Undeniably Hot 

Don't be fooled by connecticut's pastoral landscapes and idyllic lifestyles; this is one state that's uncannily fertile for giving birth to new and exciting talent. And one of connecticut's hot-rockin' new bands, undefyed, is no exception — they've arrived and they're ripening to perfection. This is one of those bands that have more than just raw talent and grit to propel them into stardom. keep your eye on these boys.





Four young musicians from the East Hartford area have joined forces to form an all original, punk rock tour de force and they've hit the ground running. They've already won the coveted first place award from the Palladium at the 62-band extravaganza and we caught up with them during their final recording session at the Onyx Soundlab in Manchester, Connecticut, as they were polishing up their new release, "On Your Own."

Vocalist and bassist, Mondo Parente, was adding some fine-honed back-up harmonies to the final cut while band mates, Joe Bernier, Tony Tougas, and Rich Paquet, intently watched and listened from the control booth with fingers crossed that this final take would be the charm. Parente, with his dynamic emo vocals, was laying down the harmony track to the band's original and memorable song, "Lisa" and, after a few false starts, he quipped, "I could reach those high parts a lot better a few years ago." One thing about young vocalists, the deepening male voices might require some key changes along the way.

Undefyed has the youthful exuberance one would expect from such a young and talented group of musicians; but what's exciting is their drive and professionalism. To be starting out with so much raw talent is a sure sign of great things to come for this foursome. They've had success with two demo CD's and are well-seasoned and ready for this new, big city release. Aside from the obvious raw talent and drive these musicians possess, there's an underrated key ingredient that makes this band stand out and that is their relationship with each other. They tune into the same wavelength when they're performing; they feed off each other's enthusiasm like brothers. They've got similar personalities — not to mention that they have extreme fun. "We like to connect with the audience," said Mondo with a grin. "We sometimes just have to run down the aisles during the show and get everybody stirred up."

"One of the songs on our CD is entitled, "Halloween" which was a song we wrote as a joke," related Joe, referring to a slogan on his T-shirt that read "Am I Your Nightmare?" "It turned out to be a real crowd pleaser and now whenever we play, everyone expects us to do that song."

"Until you've been in the recording studio," said Joe Bernier, guitarist for the band, "you don't realize how much time and effort goes into the final product. We do it over and over again, if necessary, to get it just right." All the while, Connecticut Producer Jim Holden was ready at the end of each take with sage advice on phrasing,

breathing, technique, and attitude. "Don't forget," Jim reminded each musician, as they took their turn in the booth, "Emotions come through with your singing. What you're feeling is going to show, so it's an emotional and physical effort." He added, "Have fun in there; think about what you're singing about and let it out!" Tony Tougas, Undefyed guitarist, has a natural affinity for his instrument; teaching himself, for the most part, and listening to riffs from the Red Hot Chili Peppers and Kid Rock for inspiration. And from the sound of his licks, it's hard to believe that Joe Bernier, Undefyed's rhythm man, just picked up guitar just a few years ago. His dad plays guitar and he must have been paying close attention. Joe likes to point to Blink 182 as a major influence.

Rich Paquet is the hard-driving drummer for Undefyed and isn't afraid to talk about his humble beginnings. "I played the pots and pans when I was a kid," said Paquet. "Only I kept playing and I got fascinated with seeing drummers in movies — that really got me hooked." Paquet points to Nirvana as an influence. "I like the simple music of Nirvana, but I would like to see us reach for some more complicated and unique styles. It would be the next step for us to play The Webster Main Stage with a band that we look up to that has similar music to ours and the same fan base."

Undefyed has been playing the area in various shows, even teaming up with two other local bands to hold their own private concert in East Hartford's Cultural Center. They've got their eyes on the next level — they want to play the Meadows in Hartford or Toad's Place in New Haven. "We're playing the Webster with other bands," said Tony, "But we're a different style, and that can be a good and bad thing. The audience will get a variety, that's for sure." The band is looking forward to a full calendar of gig dates this summer without having to worry about working around their school schedules.

Their new release, "On Your Own" is now available on [CDBaby.com](http://CDBaby.com) (where you can hear sample clips) and you can check this band out at [www.Myspace.com/Undefyedmusic](http://www.Myspace.com/Undefyedmusic).

## susan dziedic

*Susan Dzedic is a freelancer and writes for numerous publications throughout Connecticut. She is also a contributing writer to for the Monthly Mixdown specializing in music reviews.*



# WHY SHOULD YOU SING?

## “Why should I make a fool of myself...?”

This is probably the most frequently asked question when the average person walks by a Karaoke bar. It's a foregone conclusion – one many people accept as chiseled fact, never to be questioned. Brace yourself...

There are a precious few who think they are better at singing than they actually are. This article is not for them. In my years as a producer I have found that the vast majority of people are better than they think they are at singing. I understand why many people avoid singing in front of others – no one wants to look stupid, or inept, or un-cool, or whatever. But many people who think they would never be caught dead singing in front of anyone are perfectly willing to go someplace where they can dance – and in front of other people at that. So what's the difference? By the same token, should I curtail my will to dance simply because I don't have a lot of confidence in my dancing? Maybe someone once told me I looked geeky dancing when I was twelve, so I should never dance again?

### Of course not!

Those who can sing all started singing because they like to sing. And somewhere deep inside yourself, you are not that different. Singing is fun, and everybody does it sometime. It might be in the shower, in the car at the top of your lungs, or humming lightly as you walk down the aisle at the grocery store. You hear music in so many places in your life, and sometimes your voice just instinctively follows along. Singing is unavoidable, like drinking water, breathing, love, and April 15th (or 17th this year, whew!).

So why not sing in front of other people? The only way to get over the fear of singing in front of people is to do it, just like you can't swim in the deep end without first getting in the water.

Do yourself a favor. Go to someplace where you can sing, and sing a song you like. It doesn't have to be in a Karaoke bar, although it might sound better there. The first time is harder only because it is unfamiliar. We humans often are wary of things we have never done before, but if you sing something you like, you do your best to forget about your self-consciousness, and you really try (instead of hiding behind your embarrassment, as we all have at one point or another in our lives), you will find that most people will react positively. Someone will applaud, someone else will smile, and you will realize that the windows didn't shatter, the lighting fixtures didn't explode, dogs did not come running and howling from miles around, and everyone did not suddenly pay their tabs and leave. AND – you probably sounded five times better than you thought you could. Plus it was fun. You might even get to be proud of yourself. Just getting up there takes courage, so face the challenge. Even if no one pays attention this time, you should be proud. The more you do it, the better you get, and on top of that, you will make some friends without even trying.

Some might think it is funny to talk about having pride in singing in a Karaoke bar (or wherever else you choose).

The thing is – if you can conquer this fear (while having fun), you can conquer other fears in your life. Confidence goes a long way – it can make you better at everything else.

So why make a fool of yourself? Don't. And if you don't set yourself up to make a fool of yourself, you won't. Don't apologize in advance, don't say you have a sore throat, don't tell everyone how bad you are, so they will all lower their expectations and you won't disappoint or annoy anyone. Just get up there and do it. That's it. No one else's opinion need be considered.

Sing something you like, do it as well as you can, and forget about everything and everyone else for five minutes. If someone else likes it too, all the better – and if they don't, so what? You just showed you are

braver than any coward who would say anything mean. You can bet they don't have the guts you have.

Sing because you will like it. Stop asking questions and do it. You can thank me afterwards. And it's okay if you end up humming a little louder in the grocery aisle as a result.

*James Holden is a Connecticut producer & owns PIMJAM Productions, a Karaoke and DJ service. He is also a contributing writer for the Monthly Mixdown, Excursionz Magazine.*





# GROOVY



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# The Space

## Makes Room For New Talent

### beatz on the boulevard

The Space, opens their doors on Tuesdays to up and coming musical talent with their open mic night, which draws creative souls from all over the state. With room for 20-25 musicians on a given night everyone gets in on the action with a diversity of sounds that inspires the novice to come out and the seasoned professional to remember when...

Artists of all ages are invited and even though they invite spoken word as well as music, the majority of artists come to play. With a diversity of tunes from traditional folk to punk rock, they attract a huge range of audiences. An authentic concert venue, they are immersed in creating a "listening room" where the music is central. The folks at The Space take new artists so seriously, that they insist on "no talking" while performers play only original material. Many musicians come there just for that reason. Their work is respected in a way that ultimately

makes this performance space inviting and unusual, creating a great dialogue between musician and listener, according to owner Steve Rodgers.

A \$5 admission gets you in the door at 7 p.m., and sign up for open mic is shortly after. They play til about 11 p.m. or 12 midnight, depending on how many people sign up. Spoken word gets to read three pieces or for

ten minutes, whichever comes first. Musicians have center stage for two songs.

In addition to open mic nights they host other performers on a regular basis. All kinds of music and local and national acts find a home at The Space with tickets ranging from \$10-\$25 with most being at the lower end of the spectrum. On occasion, if someone plays at open mic and they





are really good, Rodgers asks them to open for one of the shows. If they are REALLY good, they may get a show of their own. Headliners take over most weekends.

"There is a huge sense of community here. We created it that way. This is unique for the State of Connecticut. There is really nothing else like it," said Rodgers.

The environment has a retro feel not unlike a living room out of the 1960's. The "weird, kitchy, nostalgic" thing they have going on invites you to curl up in their overstuffed couches and kick back.

With a strong desire to provide a venue for all ages with an emphasis on the music, they opened in June 2003 intent on serving no alcohol. They are serving specialty juices and vitamin water these days if you're really parched and Red Bull if you need a lift.

Free parking and being alcohol free has presented some financial challenges as can be expected, but Rodgers says they're not going anyway anytime soon. This suggests the ongoing success of the much needed performance space. They have received great vocal endorsement from the Hamden Art Commission, as well as the music community on a whole.

One minor oddity discovered was that the State of Connecticut charges a ten percent admissions tax which would be waived if they sold alcohol. Go figure. Trying to create a safe, artistic, listening venue, costs more to operate in Connecticut, than serving up some Jose Cuervo and watching everyone get wasted, loud and obnoxious.

"We like to mix it up. One of our goals was to bring a lot of people together, all ages and backgrounds. It's exciting," says Rodgers. "I think it is a vitally important thing to be doing in Connecticut; creating safe

space for people of all ages without alcohol and the things that surround it."

Operating with the aid of about 30 volunteers, The Space grew up out of a location across the street where Rodgers lived and practiced with his band Mighty Purple. After 2,500 shows, opening for national artists, releasing eight albums and working on a ninth while touring the country, there is no better informed individual to understand the needs of musical artists than Steve Rodgers. He describes the music of Mighty Purple as American folk rock and is currently touring and writing as an all acoustic duo with his brother John.

The Space is growing in every way says Rodgers, and people are beginning to recognize the name. Open five nights a week, they encourage folks to come on by. For more information [check out their website at www.thespace.tk](http://www.thespace.tk).

By **Patricia Ann Chaffee**  
contributing writer for the Monthly Mixdown



## The Space

295 Treadwell Street - Building H - Hamden, CT, 06514

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Open Mic Tuesdays 7:00 - \$5.00 Admission



# BAD MOJO

Ziggy's Bar – Fairfield

So, are you ready for a night of ass-kicking, balls to the wall, **LOUD**, rock and roll? If you've answered yes to all of the above, then, please, step right up.

Bad Mojo has been around the local band circuit for about five years now. I've seen them countless times and am happy to report, to this day, they never let the crowd down. Bad Mojo has a loyal fan following, or should I say, loyal groupie following! What's the secret to their growing success? My guess is that in today's trendy local band scene of tributes, indie and blues, blues and more blues (not that there's anything wrong with that!), Bad Mojo gives us exactly what we are looking for on a Saturday night...a blended mix of old and new, hard hitting **ROCK AND ROLL**. Remember that????

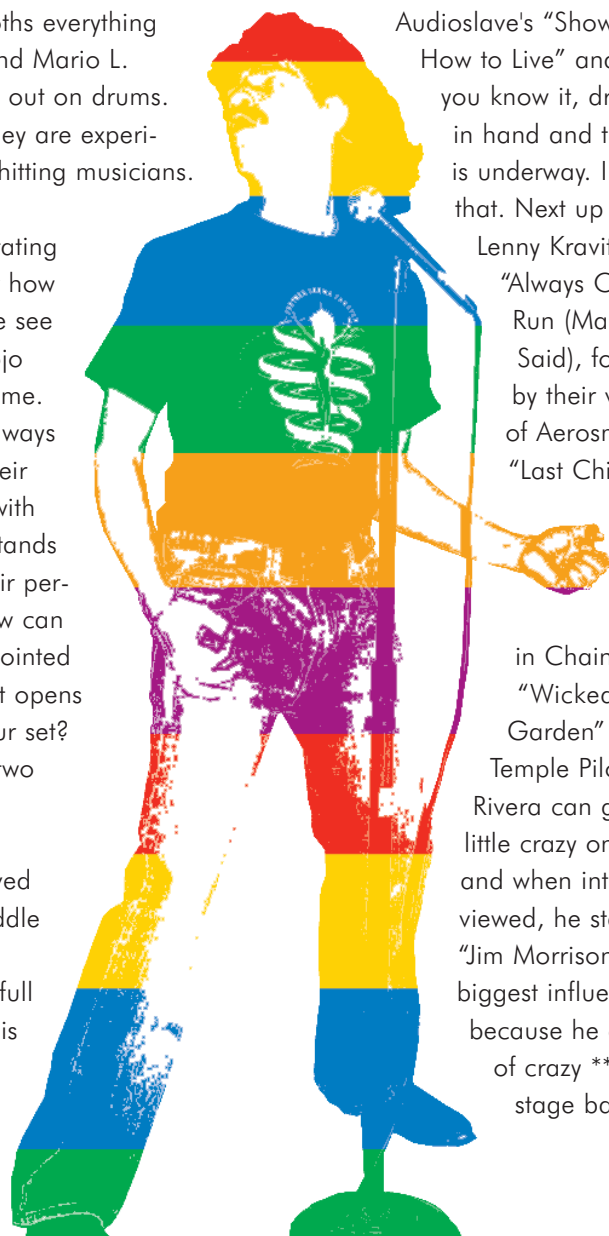
Bad Mojo's cast of characters is headed up by Junior Rivera, on vocals – you've seen him around years ago in bands like Paragon, Sanctuary and most recently, his new metal band, Crankenstein. Tag team on guitar are brothers Mark

Mychajluc on lead guitar and Mike Mychajluc on rhythm guitar. Billy Denigris smooths everything out on bass and Mario L. Pirulli bangs it out on drums. As a whole, they are experienced, heavy hitting musicians.

Let's start by stating that no matter how many times we see them, Bad Mojo is THE good time. The band is always on cue and their camaraderie with one another stands out during their performance. How can you be disappointed by a band that opens with a two hour set? Yes, I repeat, two hour set.

When we arrived during the middle of the first set, Ziggy's had a full house. See, this is what I mean, as

soon as you walk in, you are getting a little ear candy with a little Audioslave's "Show Me How to Live" and, before you know it, drinks are in hand and the party is underway. I love that. Next up was Lenny Kravitz's "Always On the Run (Mama Said)", followed by their version of Aerosmith's "Last Child," "Man In The Box" by Alice in Chains and "Wicked Garden" by Stone Temple Pilots. Mr. Rivera can get a little crazy on stage and when interviewed, he stated that "Jim Morrison was his biggest influence because he did a lot of crazy \*\*\*\* on stage back





when no one was doing that.”  
He follows suit by doing the same.

By the time the second set rolls around, and several cocktails later, Bad Mojo rocked out with “Same Old Song and Dance” by Aerosmith. Rivera has the most Steven Tyler-esque interpretation of this song, as well as any other Aerosmith song. To give you the visual, at this time of the night, the girls are on the dance floor, drinks are swaying, etc. You

get the picture. Also of note are Bad Mojo's covers of “Rebel Yell” by Billy Idol. The jump was on for “My Own Worst Enemy” by Lit followed by a pile of hits – “Are You Gonna Be My Girl” by Jet, “Mama Kin” by Aerosmith, “Slither” by Velvet Revolver, “Sweet Child of Mine” by Guns and Roses and finally, “War Pigs” by Black Sabbath. By this time of night, one is barely standing!!!

There were some special guest vocals by Mike Urbano, formerly of the Drunken Bozos and an extra special guest appearance by former Bad Mojo Drummer, Vic Chiapetta.

**Bad Mojo doesn't disappoint!**

*–Barbara  
Traver*



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Merle's

RECORD RACK

# CLOSES

Merle's Record Rack, Guilford's local record store, is gone. The front door cries on its hinges like saloon shutters in a gusty ghost town since its last day in June of 2006. The cheery storefront sign, once lovingly crafted, has been hauled to the dump. The many discs of varying sizes from CD to DVD to 45 and 33 rpm, once waiting to be chosen like puppies from the shelter, have all been orphaned, perhaps even neglected somewhere dark, experiencing for the first time life in a haphazard heap with only a memory of their once happy alphabetized existence. Gone are the sounds of plastic casings colliding gently with others in line as expectant fingers flipped through stacks marked, "Beach Boys," "Public Enemy," "Ray Charles," and "Spyro Gyra." The rock posters once offering macho glimpses of Kiss in full face paint, and Madonna with "crotch" hand and Frank Sinatra with a tilted, come-hither fedora have all been relegated to tag-sale state of embarrassment, along with other titillating tattoo, midriff and studded leather poster poses. There's a clarinet for beginners book whose pages will never reach the tiny fingers of second graders, and the rudimentary drum exercises whose notations will never inspire young drummers to Krupa-hood.





Glass casings stare back with echoing emptiness and their tiny, once proud locks sit confused like aging watch dogs with nothing to protect. Psychedelic guitar picks will never find their way into the small hands of a would-be Hendrix. Tee shirts once signaling hip allegiance to AC/DC and Metallica are piled in a corner, hopelessly wrinkled and awaiting their trip to Salvation Army or perhaps one more chance at life in a museum. These take-for-granted accoutrements of music's evolving legacy have vanished, consigned to dusty antique shops and the fading memories of aging fans.

curiously at one another from across the unlikely landscape.

Remember the space probe we sent up with earthy artifacts? It's heading out into the universe in hopes of being spotted by some advanced, alien civilization with a capacity to decipher its contents. Could it be that when the Plute-thelians dust off the disc of Chuck Berry's, "Johnny B. Goode," they will regard it as nothing more than a tasty snack? How far removed is an earthly seven year-old from that scenario?

tried to convince us otherwise. An accidental hiccup during the manual maneuver of needle to vinyl would often result in a permanent "skip" in the music, or worse, the repetition of a word or riff indefinitely until the listener pressed gently down on the needle arm to "dig" through the problem. "...alkin' 'bout my gir...alkin' 'bout my gir...alkin' 'bout my gir..." had its own Murphy's Law file in the folder labeled "untimely romantic intrusions." No wonder today's iPod-toting, Amazon dot comming, Wal-Mart browsing, techno-savvy generation has trouble fathoming a nostalgia for such an "inconvenient" technology.

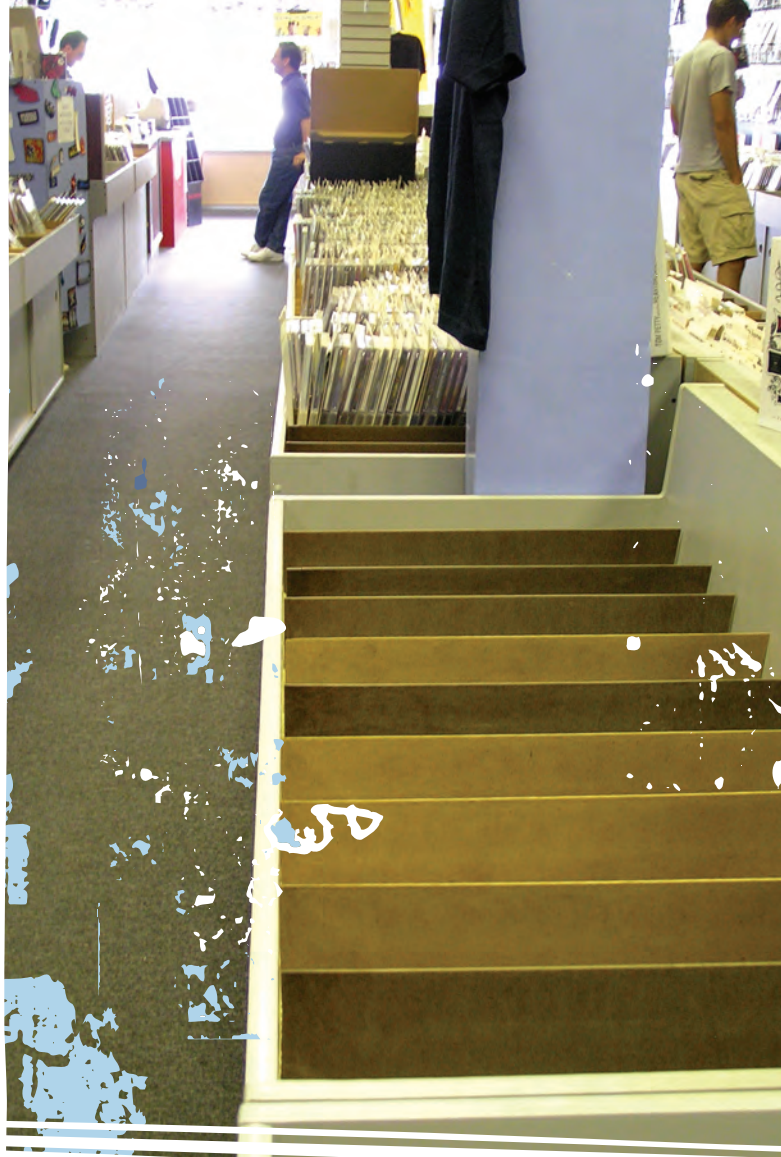
Records! Progress! You can't have 'em both. The physical and graspable record is now an anachronism whose feasibility and usefulness has already triggered questioning looks from the millennium generation. To think that Al Jolson, James Brown, The Andrews Sisters and Steppenwolf all used the same vinyl technology in route to their role as contenders in orderly record bins placed mere inches from each other. These disparate discs attracted a multicultural mingling of the crew cuts, the long hairs, the beaded, the blinged, and the pierced all on their own stylistic missions, smiling

Records! Ancient artifacts! But once upon a time the 45 rpm was our local embodiment of Elvis, The Coasters and The Doors. They lived inside these spinning relics, their voices forever fused with scratches, hisses and tinny fidelity eked from portable, briefcase record players and squeezed from dashboard car radios. Or maybe you were lucky enough to have your spinning surface sitting atop a monolithic console, substantial "furniture" with guts of glowing tubes – Flash Gordon-esque. Either way, without knobs to adjust for equalization we barely knew, there were bass players in those days, despite the fact that the words, "Ultra High Fidelity,"

Record stores! "Well, if ya can't tell me the name of the song or the group that does it, you're gonna have to sing it for me," quipped the man behind the counter. At age nine I geared up for my first public singing performance. With surprising ease the notes of "Come Go With Me" magically aligned in the recesses of my inner ear: "dum dum dum dum dum, dum bee doo bee dum, wah wah wah wa-aah." "Hey, that's not bad" said the record clerk who turned with a hearty laugh to pull the small, thin platter and its matching sleeve from the "D" cubby where a modest stack of Dell-Vikings' 45s resided. It cost 79 cents back in the day. And surely, other nine year olds were offering their best renditions for the clerks in Pasadena, and in Cleveland, and in Topeka, day after day, decade to decade. Too bad about retailing. Which of the traditional storefront hopefuls is truly safe from the nibbling of micro-chip marauders? "I'll have my Wheaties FedExed, please; and make that a side order of Allen wrenches, too."



BUT, REMEMBER THE LURE? HOW MANY TIMES DID WE RE-CRUISE THE AISLES, LEANING OVER PSYCHEDELIC ALBUM COVERS, READING THE LINER NOTES, LEARNING THE NAMES AND FACES OF THE BAND, SURROUNDED BY NEON ADS AND RECORD COMPANY BANNERS, SOUND PROOFED SAMPLING ROOMS, HOOK-HANGING HEADPHONES AND RACKS OF STEREO CORDS, GUITAR STRINGS, SAX REEDS AND REPLACEMENT STYLUSES. THERE WAS THE "SPOT" NEAR THE "USED R&B" WHERE FRIENDS MET TO DISCUSS THE MERITS OF SINGERS, DRUMMERS, DJs AND DANCE MOVES. THE AMBIENCE GAVE US PERMISSION TO WHEEZE, GROAN, SPOOF AND MIMIC OUR MUSIC IDOLS WHILE CALMLY IGNORING THE BING-CROSBIED ADULTS WHO RAISED A CALLOUS EYEBROW TOWARD OUR LIBERATED ANTICS. AND LIBERATED WE WOULD BE. HERE WAS OUR CHILDHOOD THEME PARK, OUR MULTI-SENSORY THRILL RIDE, OUR ALICE-IN-WONDERLAND PORTAL TO THE WORLD, OUR MUSIC EDUCATION. NOT BAD FOR A SHORT TRIP DOWNTOWN.



All right, I'm 'fessing up to my role in the record store demise. Darn, if I didn't get hooked on the iPod. I'm downloading the one preferred song from a 12-cut CD. What a concept! No more wasted cash on eleven loser cuts. And, if I happen to be at the mall, it's already old hat to head phone-sample all the tunes with a simple swipe of the CD barcode. How curious that we remain insular despite our public presence. The chatter and the laughs have likewise landed in the "used" bin, but you can't deny that the technology makes complete sense.

Except that I am good friends with Sal and Robert Gaetano, the co-owner brothers of the former Merle's Record Rack. They once boasted a five-store

chain, opening the Guilford site back in '85. I have commiserated with both men over the past few years as the millennium crew progressively turned toward laptops, box stores and satellites. Ultimately, the couch ends up being a mighty fine place to buy your music, positioned nearby your chat room, MySpace and refrigerator. Yes, the handwriting had been on the wall for a while, and the Gaetano brothers only stemmed the tide by offering up mega doses of courtesy and insiders' connections. In the end, even customer satisfaction was no match for instant gratification.

Merle's is gone. The storefront standard for hip marketing has gone the way of "old fashioned," dragging with it customers of a bygone era.

Yeah, the record store was there, always out of the corner of your eye, so reliable a fixture that it could casually be ignored; but now with its passing, you wonder if you might have paid a bit more attention. There's a longing that resides in the bins marked "missed opportunities" and "second chances." Pieces of our personal rainbows quietly fade away and the memories are often sweeter and more vivid than we can bear.

*Merle's is gone, and the door cries on its hinges, echoing my despair, as I once again adapt to vagrant changes and struggle to stay one step ahead of the sorrow.*

**BRIAN GILLIE**





# Calamity's Child

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# New Rhythm Groove

◀◀ *Replay II*

Theatre Center Stage One, Fairfield

I took in a powerhouse set of the New Rhythm Groove Band at a relatively new venue, Fairfield Theatre Center Stage One, located right in the heart of downtown Fairfield. The venue is very intimate and there's not a bad seat in the house. I'm not sure if it was the acoustics or the sound system, but the sound that evening was slightly distorted. I am sure in due time the theatre will work out the bugs. That being said, the Theatre has plenty to offer and the wonderful staff made up for any shortcomings on the sound. Fairfield Theatre Center Stage One's personnel are friendly, inviting and extremely well-informed.

New Rhythm Groove's lineup is composed of some very talented artists in the tri-state area; Nicole Hart on vocals, Lance Ong, on multi-keyboards, on lead guitar is Rich Cohen, on bass is Vonnie Hudson and pounding away on the drums is Joe Piteo. NRG has a great stage presence and clearly is having a great time doing what they love on stage. NRG played a short set which included a blend of originals and covers.

I had the opportunity to interview their lead singer, Nicole Hart, prior to the gig and she let me know that she has been belting out the tunes since "the doctor took her out of the womb and smacked her on the butt!" She has been surrounded by music since she was a little girl as her father was an accomplished opera singer and

couldn't wait until she was in the second grade so she could join the choir. Ms. Hart sang and studied up and through her high school years and began writing songs. Impressively, she makes her career in the music industry singing professionally in commercials and music videos and with her current project, New Rhythm Groove band.

Ms. Hart confessed that although she didn't grow up listening to rhythm and blues and soul music, she draws her inspiration from the holy trinity of female artists – Aretha Franklin, Chaka Khan and Ella Fitzgerald, who she classifies as the "epitome of female vocalists" and stated that "no one moves her like Aretha." Ms. Hart feels that yesterday's rhythm and blues is a "pure American art form" and sets the bar for her as far as communication in reaching the audience.

When asked if she felt it was difficult to be a woman in the music business, she answered, "yes and no." It was difficult when she was young and had to learn the ropes. "Once I figured out how to interact with all those men in a way that they respected me," she learned to "own her talent" and states that "ability starts to become a community more than a male/female thing."





Ms. Hart's career highlights include singing with Michael Bolton and Harry Belafonte. While a former boyfriend was auditioning for a guitarist spot, Ms. Hart was approached because they "liked her look" and asked if she could sing. The following day, she was auditioning for Billy Joel and wound up singing live in studio and appeared in the "River of Dreams" video. Talk about being in the right place at the right time.

Ms. Hart is quite a busy chick. She records jingles for commercials, heads up vocals with New Rhythm Groove all while collaborating with band mate, Lance Ong, in a compilation of songs which has been recorded as a 24-track CD for television and movie scores.

As for the rest of New Rhythm Groove – these guys just cannot be unnoticed – notably, the band is under the direction of Lance Ong – also doubling as the multi-keyboardist, producer and arranger. Ong has played with legendary artists such as David Sanborn, Grand Funk Railroad and the Pointer Sisters. He's an amazing artist to listen to and trust me, your eyes will be glued to his performance. Ong's performance during "Treasure" was

electrifying and magnetizing and demonstrated great chemistry with fellow guitarist, Rich Cohen. "I Heard" provided a funky upbeat start collaborating with Ms. Hart's very soulfully charged vocals. Vonnie Hudson, on bass, provided a smooth and steady groove during the entire set. Guitarist Rich Cohen provided an unbelievable guitar solo which reminded me of guitar great, Carlos Santana. NRG's cover of James Brown's "Cold Sweat" was fueled with strong funky guitar notes and raw vocals.

Lance Ong is fondly nicknamed the "keytar" player because he plays the keyboards strapped across his shoulder, like a guitar. That is the first time I have witnessed anyone like him. Is he a keyboardist or a guitar player?!! In any event, NRG brought "Goin Down" to a musical climax which was extremely energized – sending the band into a hard-edged psychedelic musical frenzy!

NRG closed their set with a duet of "Can't Find My Way Back Home," with special guest vocalist, Danny Irving.

For more information on NRG, please check out [www.nrgband.net](http://www.nrgband.net).



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