

Nite Roundup

Local music
& nightlife newsBy Michael Witthaus
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• **Michelle Malone:** How did someone this good stay under the radar for so long? That's what comes to mind while listening to *Detris*, Malone's slide-guitar-punctuated collection of reckless youth, stalkers and one-night stands. It's raw Americana, a fist-in-the-face retort to the Stones' *Some Girls*, 30 years on. Malone and her band open for Indigo Girls, something she was doing in Georgia during the early '90s. Sunday, Oct. 4, Capitol Center for the Arts, 44 South Main St., Concord 7:30 p.m. Tickets \$12.50-\$42.50 More: www.ccaanh.com

• **Amorphous Band:** As the name implies, Portsmouth's Amorphous Band has seen a few personnel changes since forming in the mid-'90s. Their latest member is Lamont Smooth drummer-vocalist George Laliotis. The band's blend of jam-alicious jazz/blues-infused funk keeps dance floors — and their dance card — full. At Nashua Garden, Friday, Oct. 3, 9 p.m.; Peddler's Daughter, Nashua, Friday, Oct. 10, 9:30 p.m.; Barley House, Concord, Friday, Oct. 17, 9 p.m. and Stone Church, Newmarket, Sunday, Oct. 17, 9 p.m. Full schedule: www.amorphousmusic.com.

• **Emmylou Harris:** The doyenne of American roots music is much busier now than she was when Gram Parsons found her singing in a Washington, D.C., suburban bar. She recently toured with Shawn Colvin and Patty Griffin, and made a great album with Mark Knopfler in 2006. She even popped up on Elvis Costello's latest release. With collaboration behind her for the moment, Harris is focused on 2008's *All I Intended to Be*, her first solo work since 2003. Hampton Beach Casino, Friday, Oct. 16, 8 p.m. Tickets \$28-\$60. More: www.casinoballroom.com.

• **Brooks Williams:** If accolades were dollars, this acoustic guitar wizard would be a one-man stimulus package. Born in Statesboro, Ga., Williams defies easy categorization, blending a musical stew of blues, jazz, classical and folk. Take "Johnny's Song," an instrumental from *The Time I Spend With You*, which is a bit of Acadian ragtime wed to something out of Cold Mountain. Friday, Oct. 2, 8 p.m., Studio 99, 115 Main St. Tickets \$15 More: www.studio99nashua.com or call 562-5179.

• **Hip-hop festival:** Is New England the new Balkans? That's what rapper Serge Didenko seems to believe, so he's organized a "unity festival," with performers from New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Vermont. Does this portend a hip-hop assault on Maine? With Didenko, Man Terror, GMC, King Sterlz, Rizmut, Lunox & Astro, Queen City Cartel & S.I.C., DJ Danjah and host "The Beatgazo." Friday, Oct. 9, at 9 p.m. Milly's Tavern, 500 Commercial St., Manchester. Tickets \$10 (21+). More: www.millystavern.com.

'Junk rock' makes good

Fresh from America's Got Talent, Recycled Percussion comes home before a stint in Vegas

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It's Sept. 21, a Monday night, and Goffstown High is buzzing like the Verizon Center. Guards stand at backstage entrances blocked with crime scene tape. Only a fortunate few wearing laminated "Grizzlies" passes around their necks are allowed to pass.

Over a thousand lucky fans fill the bleachers, while a couple hundred more stand against the stage. The show won't start for another 45 minutes.

A small but eager press corps is stage right, waiting patiently for a word or an on-camera moment with the stars.

Earlier that morning Recycled Percussion, fresh from five weeks on *America's Got Talent*, announced plans for a free show to thank their hometown fans. It was to be held in the place where, 14 years earlier, bandleader Justin Spencer debuted his "junk rock" musical project at a school talent show. The band toyed with doing a bigger venue, but didn't think they could fill it on such short notice.

That turned out to be false modesty. One to a customer seats were snapped up in 15 minutes. Some fans started lining up at Shaw's supermarket three hours ahead of time. As the show drew near, crowds mobbed the gymnasium entrance, and police were stationed up and down Route 114, shooing away anyone without a ticket.

The can-banging, guitar-shredding, power tool-wielding band may have begun as local heroes, but now were rock stars that could play the Goffstown gym 10 nights in a row if they chose to. A humbled Justin Spencer said, "I didn't realize how massive the support would be in New Hampshire, because we were in L.A. for the past few months and were kind of detached from all the media."

Prior to the performance, Selectman Scott Gross came on stage and declared it "Recycled Percussion Day" in Goffstown. The City of Manchester did the same thing when the band's flight landed the previous Friday night.

State representative John Hikel also read a proclamation, on behalf of the New Hampshire House of Representatives.

Then the lights went down and the crowd's dull roar turned into pandemonium.

Recycled Percussion sprinted on stage and did an hour-plus of the material that's made them a national sensation. Within two songs, Spencer's white untucked dress shirt was completely soaked in sweat. Fellow drummer Ryan Vezina had done three vertical leaps over his makeshift "drum set" — stacked buckets with cymbal and microphone-festooned steel tubes duct-taped to them.

As Todd "DJ Pharaoh" Griffin spun a rock-steady backbeat, Spencer prowled the stage like a panther, delighted to have longer than 90 seconds of performing time. Guitarist Jim Magoon played a psychedelic "Star Spangled Banner" like he'd written it, not Hendrix, and Spencer fist-bumped him as he walked back to his drum kit.



Courtesy photo.

After a medley that touched down in multiple musical eras, Spencer walked to the front of the stage to recall the *America's Got Talent* experience for the crowd. He said that after they'd wrangled their way into the New York regional auditions, judge David Hasselhoff declared them "a five-dollar band that wouldn't go anywhere." The other judges split — Sharon Osbourne liked them, Piers Morgan didn't.

So the band packed up, and got halfway through New Jersey before they got a callback — "technical difficulties," they were told. After a debate about whether to try again or head to a paying gig — one of 300 the band does each year — they turned the van around.

They barely made it out of the second New York audition — Hasselhoff changed his mind, but so did Osbourne. Three weeks and one spinning dual drum set later they were on their way.

Then Spencer remembered his first gig at the long-ago high school talent show. On that night, his band finished in second place. "How," he wondered, "did we go from second in Goffstown to third place in the whole country?"

Later, Recycled Percussion leader Justin Spencer spoke by phone after a show in Delhi, New York.

You must be excited about America's Got Talent Live, the showcase opening for a 10-week run at Planet Hollywood Oct. 7.

It's amazing. They asked us to do it, and we're going to be one of the headlining acts on there. Our intentions are to be in Vegas for not just that show, but for many years to come.

Have you made firm plans beyond that?

I can't talk about that, but I can assure you that we're doing everything we can to stay in Las Vegas, that's for sure.

Given your commitment to an anti-substance lifestyle, it must be interesting to draw your sights on Sin City, U.S.A. if not the world?

[laughs] Yeah, right. You know, I've been around that my whole life. It's funny, I never got into drinking, never tried it. I've never really tasted beer before, never tried a cigarette. Back in the day, when everyone tried smoking dope and shit like that, I tried it and you know what? This isn't for me. I realized that for me to succeed at what I want to do, and where I wanted the band to go, we needed to leverage every edge possible. Coming from a small town in New Hampshire playing buckets, we had every disadvantage. We said, listen, this is the way we're gonna take it. We're gonna work out, we're gonna eat right, we're gonna be healthy, we're gonna not only play music but we're gonna try and inspire kids as well, and that's what we're doing. It brings us to Vegas, and that's fine too. Because the message goes wherever we go. Just because you're going to Vegas doesn't mean you can't bring the message with you.

How did it feel to be back in your high school, knowing the tickets had been snapped up in 15 minutes, and having it buzzing like the Verizon?

That's funny, because originally we were going to do it at the Verizon, and cut it in half and do 4,000 seats. I didn't think that many people were going to come out. I didn't realize how massive the support would be in New Hampshire, because we were in L.A. for the past few months and were kind of detached from all the media. Thousands would have come out if we'd been at the Verizon. We gave out 1,200 seats in 15 minutes [for the Goffstown High show] and I can only imagine how many more would have come in the next three to four hours if there were more tickets. We