

Arts & Entertainment

Milan Relocates to Crossroads, Shows its Own Reggae Heritage

By ERIC NIERSTEDT
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

GARWOOD—After their last performance at Garwood's Crossroads, rock-reggae band Milan not only showed the club's patrons another pronunciation of the famous Italian city (their name is pronounced My-lin), but they also performed a hard-rocking, groove-filled mix of Sublime-style rock, mixed with splashes of Hendrix.

The band took the stage in a charitable way, backing up opening act Tam Garcia on his last song (Mr. Garcia performed a solo acoustic set). After Mr. Garcia left the stage, the band blasted into its first song, during which

reggae rhythms.

He also showed an affinity for Jimi Hendrix, as he played one solo with his teeth and another with the guitar behind his back. This also came through in the bluesy guitar breaks during the song "PC Screen."

But Mr. Lazistan was not the only force upon the stage. Bassist David Sloyan demonstrated his own resemblance to Angus Young of AC/DC. The young bassist constantly danced and threw his body around the stage while keeping the groove solid, reminiscent of how Young famously performs during his solos. The only difference was Young only does this

together on the same drum set, as the crowd roared its approval.

Strong showings like this are one of the reasons the band has experienced much success recently. They won the 2008 Jersey Shows Battle of the Bands and were able to use the prize money to finance their new album, "The Sour Goat Confessions."

"It isn't done yet, but we've been able to put out an E.P. (five-song demo) of the album," Mr. Lazistan said. "Our label is kind of pushing us towards a single, and that's taking up a chunk of our focus right now. We'd like to have a good single and an album we can put behind it."

While working on that task, Milan is also experiencing good fortune on the touring circuit. They were on the lineup with Badfish, the arguably best Sublime tribute band today, at the Starland Ballroom on Saturday, and are part of an upcoming charity show with Scotch Plains native Pat DiNizio of the Smithereens.

"Those are just amazing opportunities to have," Mr. Lazistan said. "Sublime is one of our biggest influences, so to be able to play with a band like Badfish, that has earned a rep for truly embracing their music, is incredible. And Pat DiNizio...that guy's just amazing."

The band also mentioned talk of opening for '90's ska-punk band Reel Big Fish, but nothing is known as of yet. Talks are now handled by their new manager, Clifford 'CJ' Joseph, who is also president of the management company "2 a.m. Entertainment."

"I went to high school with these guys, but even if I didn't, I would be working with them," Mr. Joseph said. "Ska-punk is a music [form] that could be way bigger than it is now. It may be underground, but underground drives what people want to hear. And people definitely want to hear Milan."

More on the band, including merchandise, CDs, dates and ticket information can be found on myspace.com/milanj and milanj.com.

Les Malamut Presents Husband-Wife Team

UNION—The Les Malamut Art Gallery will present an exhibit of fine art and photography by Avi and Constantine Kiriakatis. The Kenilworth husband-and-wife duo has titled the show "His and Hers."

It will run from now through March 13. A reception and opportunity to meet the artists is planned for Saturday, January 10, from 1 to 4 p.m. The exhibit and reception are free and open to the public.

Mrs. Kiriakatis, a Greek-born, award-winning artist/teacher, has given art lessons to adults and youth at Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Westfield.

Once retired, Mr. Kiriakatis pursued oil painting and photography. He has exhibited and won awards at various shows in New Jersey, including the Union County Senior Art Show.

Both husband and wife are members of the Summit Art Group, Westfield Art Association, Watchung Arts and Somerset Art Association in Bedminster.

The gallery is located on the lower level of the Union Public Library, located at 1980 Morris Avenue, and is handicapped accessible. It is open during regular library hours. For more information, contact Barbara Wirkus at dmbbw33@yahoo.com or call (908) 851-5450.



Eric Nierstedt for The Westfield Leader and The Times
WHAT I GOT...Read about Milan's performance at the Starland Ballroom in Sayreville in an upcoming issue, as the local band pays homage to punk-reggae legend Sublime.

lead singer/guitarist Milan Lazistan III sang a chorus that perfectly summed up his band—"roots-rock-reggae with that East Coast sound."

Mr. Lazistan proved apt at mixing it up as he moved comfortably between hard-rocking riffs and relaxed

during his solos, while Mr. Sloyan never stopped.

During one memorable moment, Mr. Sloyan and drummer Edwin Estevez, Jr. (who played with the same incredible attention and discipline as Mr. Lazistan) began to play



Video Games Live
NJSPAC - Newark, N.J.

Composer Tommy Tallarico and the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra join forces for Video Games Live. Pictured below is Mike Fogg of Newton, dressed as Anthony Carmine of "Gears of War."
- Photos by Michael J. Pollack



NJ Symphony Orchestra, Tallarico Turn Event Into 'Multiplayer' Game

By MICHAEL J. POLLACK
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

NEWARK—Last month, the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra (NJSO) traded Mozart for Mario, Haydn for Halo. Paying homage to video-game music, Composer Jack Wall and Executive Producer Tommy Tallarico brought "Video Games Live" to the halls of a sold-out New Jersey Performing Arts Center (NJSPAC), engaging both children and adults at heart.

Evolving heavily from the monophonic monotony of Pac Man, video-game music has become as expressive aurally as the games themselves are visually.

Mr. Tallarico and Mr. Wall designed a show that depicts video-game music as ever-present and iconoclastic, not confined to a television set and speakers; rather, this music is evocative and exotic, worthy of the grandest of settings and the most bombastic of orchestras, which the NJSO provided.

What the golden age of radio was to the first half of the 20th century, digital media and video games are to the 21st.

No, this was not your father's symphonic experience; that much was evident from the outset.

Before the lights dimmed, kids galloped about the NJSPAC lobby dressed as Pac Man and Link. Everyone from grandparents to youngsters sampled games in the rotunda; eyes were transfixed on the "Guitar Hero" tournament, and fathers reminisced with children about childhoods spent in dusty arcade halls, a far cry from the grandiose experience that is "Video Games Live."

Children got their first taste of symphonic music, and grandparents gushed at seeing a younger generation flock—willingly—to such an event. Though one father remarked, "I had to pull my kids away from the Nintendo Wii just to come here," kids and adolescents were in their—sensory—element throughout.

Harkening to the nascent days of video games, the night began with the "bleeps and bloops" of "Pong" and ended with the highly thematic and romantic sounds of "Final Fantasy."

Showing the audience that video-game music has evolved from the computerized sterility with which it began, the night became an all-out interactive rock fest at parts. The winner of the aforementioned "Guitar Hero" tournament had the privilege of joining Mr. Tallarico on stage to perform Aerosmith's "Sweet Emo-

tion."

Mr. Tallarico, a cousin of Steven Tyler, displayed some serious chops, doing battle with the young "Guitar Hero," who dropped to his knees in true rock-god fashion as the stage lit up various neon colors.

On a night in which interactivity was more than a slogan, another young concertgoer, upon being chosen, got to leap, literally, on stage and play a game that was popularized likely before his birth.

The young man, through wireless sensors, was digitally inserted into the 2D classic, "Space Invaders." With the full backing of the NJSO orchestra, and the complete encouragement of his fellow gamers, the young man took on the role of the laser cannon, shimmying laterally left and right on stage to blast the waves of aliens that amassed before his two minutes were up.

Contemporary gamers chanted for "Halo" and "Metal Gear Solid;" vintage (see: older) gamers delighted in hearing the music of "Sonic" and the Schola Cantorum On Hudson choir's emphatic cry of "Sega!" at the beginning of a visual display that was synchronized to the lively sounds of the orchestra.

Whereas classic games employed livelier, airy percussion-and-key-heavy compositions, arousing the

imaginings of those in attendance, newer games used edgier, string-laden music that oscillated to become equal parts dirge, operatic Hollywood blockbuster and triumph.

Nowhere were the contrasting motifs of video-game music more evident than the transition from jubilant—and blindfolded—Internet sensation Martin Leung's buoyant rendition of the theme to "Super Mario Brothers" to his later knockout performance of the emotional "Final Fantasy" theme, a layered symphony in itself.

In all interviews prior to the show and at the beginning of the concert, Mr. Tallarico made a claim for video-game music's "cultural significance." By evening's end, he was not only preaching to the choir but to the orchestra and the full house that delighted in the "multiplayer" spectacle.

Art at SP Library

SCOTCH PLAINS—"Plainfield in '08 through the Eyes of Watsart," a free touring art exhibit of mixed media/digital art prints depicting randomly selected Plainfield scenes, is on public display at The Scotch Plains Library, located at 1927 Bartle Avenue, through January 31 during regular library hours.

Jersey Central Art Studios Presents Free Art Lectures

CRANFORD—Jersey Central Art Studios (JCAS) will present three free art lectures at the Cranford Community Center starting this January. The lectures will be held in January, February and March.

The first lecture, "Looking at Impressionism," is on Tuesday, January 13, from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. and will focus on the artistic movement of Impressionism, its origins, visual themes and artists. The artwork of Manet, Monet, Cassatt, Renoir and Hassam will be highlighted.

Impressionist artworks, viewable in major museums in New York City, Newark and Philadelphia, will be emphasized. The lecturer is Andrea Karanik, a Masters graduate of Rutgers College, Rutgers University and the Rutgers Graduate School of Education. Ms. Karanik teaches AP art history at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School.

"Attendees will be encouraged to

engage in the discussion and to voice their observations and questions," Ms. Karanik said.

The second lecture, "Modern Art," and the third lecture, "Painting Masterpieces," will be held in February and March. All of the lectures will emphasize works that are represented in the local area's major art museums.

In addition to the lecture, registered attendees will be invited to enjoy refreshments before each event at 7 p.m. "We're offering some time to get to meet other art lovers in the community," said Deb Leber, president of JCAS.

"Looking at Impressionism," as well as the upcoming lectures, takes place at the Cranford Community Center, located at 220 Walnut Avenue.

For more information and to register, visit the Cranford Community Center or go to jcas.org or call (908) 272-3743.

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