

Music and Talent on Display at the Motif Music Awards

The weather was nearly perfect. And it was a Tuesday night. Two things that should each result in people not piling into a crowded music venue for the evening. Yet that's what they did on May 8 to witness and take part in the annual *Motif* Music Awards.

It is a rare and wonderful thing, producing a sort of musical talent higher consciousness feeling in music writers, to have as much talent and love of music in one room as we had that night. All manner of music professional was represented - venue owners and booking agents, photographers and sound engineers, lead singers and drummers and everyone in between.

Seeing hardcore and hip-hop and folk and alt artists interact for perhaps the only night of the year was especially exciting to the *Motif* hosts. "We usually only get to interact with the other people on a bill," said one folk artist (who didn't realize she was being interviewed). "When you're gigging as much as possible, you can actually lose touch with other musicians."

The point of the *Motif* Music Awards is not to proclaim winners. We do that because it's fun and because every project needs a climax, but the point of the evening is to get those remarkable individuals together in a room. And the point of the process is to get people on and voting and appreciating how much amazing music is being produced locally, and maybe exploring some bands they'd never heard of before, or remembering some great ones they already knew. The RI Music Hall of Fame chronicles the musicians who've gone on to national greatness in RI's musical history. We aim to chronicle - and help - the ones who might be heading there. Or at least, who maintain RI's heritage with their musical mastery performed locally or beyond.

So we were thrilled to see a record number of voters - 6,363 took part this year, up from 5,003 last year. This did produce a little drama - the best Americana act was decided by a single vote! Funk Underground upset all expectations by taking the hip-hop category by storm, and we had our first-ever write-in winner, Eric Johnson, in the brand new category of Club Photography. That's a category we'll be repeating by the way - if you voted, we hope you took a minute to look at some of their amazing collections of photos - there's a lot more talent out there to be recognized in future years.

Overall, there was a spirit of boisterous excitement and mutual respect among the attendees, "I'm pretty pumped man. Every band in that category is so good. I never expect to win anything," said Eric of Eric + the Nothing.

"I was the only one who came because nobody thought we'd win in a million years. I'm shocked, the competitions pretty crazy. I was shaky," said Matt Di Chiara of The Copacetics

Attendance at the evening was also bracing, with more than 200 musicians at our peak, and roughly 300 to 350 over the course of the evening (it's hard to get our fast-moving music community to hold still for counting).

The **Seekonk School of Rock** kicked off the evening in style with a set that showcased the amazing talents of these teens, who we're sure will be bringing fresh blood to many local bands in the years to come. They produced a standing ovation and got the night rolling with a bang.



MCs John and Bettysioux

The evening was hosted by ever-riffing seasoned co-hosts John Fuzek (musician and *Motif's* Roots Report writer) and Bettysioux Tailor (burlesquercise instructor and all around arts MC and performer). And our presenters each brought their own flavor to their presentations. We want to thank them for their time, energy and enthusiasm in supporting local music: Neighbor BJ Mansuetti of Narragansett Beer; Erin Young of Common Fence Music; Christopher Johnson, spoken word poet; Russell Gusetti of Blackstone River Theater and the venerable Pendragon; John "Cyco" Difruscio and Windsong Hadley, venue managers, promoters and owners of the new music spot Askew in PVD; Mark Lahoud of Java Madness in Wakefield; Crissy Stewart of the Dean Hotel and the Grange; Katie Lewis, *Motif* Contributor; Rudy Cheeks, *Motif* Contributor and MC of just about everything at one time or another; *Motif* Contributor Crimson Al-Khemia and Scar, both of Providence Roller Derby; Mark Clarkin, *Motif's* music editor; *Motif* contributor Mike Delehanty, of The Met and What Cheer Tavern; and Mark Diprete of National Sound Studio.

Digestibles were provided by "the place next to The Met," aka BOOM, which stands for Brick Oven on Main, where both the wraps and pizza received rave reviews.

National Sound Studio, a new sponsor this year, also added to the mix with another Music Awards first - prizes (beyond the trophies, we mean). Each winner received four hours of studio time, and the three final winners each won 50 hours, arguably enough to cut an album each. Thank you also to sponsors The Met and Narragansett Beer, who supplied - well, you can probably guess. We couldn't do it without them.

The whole evening was further enlivened by two more musical performances. Cowboy and Lady not only stunned the crowd, but may have produced the purest moment of crowd silence during an epic guitar riff by Tyler Kelly that caused an entire room full of professional musicians to just stop and watch, more than a few with slack jaws, as he manipulated the strings into unprecedented musical contortions.

Hope Anchor not only got the crowd up and dancing at the end of the night, but inspired everyone with a performance dedicated to lead singer Pip (Paul Everett)'s son, who passed away last year,



Hope Anchor

and who last saw his father perform in that same venue. Hope Anchor also took home two recognitions for favorite post-punk act and favorite alt album, *Beautiful Corpses*.

Thanks to all who came out and all who voted – and now, let's meet some of the bands and performers you selected this year...

Americana

Overall Americana: Ian Fitzgerald and Something Else - JF

Ian Fitzgerald is our own Bob Dylan. He has a similar musical and vocal style, but has a look all his own. That look has evolved over the years, but it is



Ian Fitzgerald

unmistakably Ian. Fitzgerald has been working the music rooms across the country for well over a decade and has made a name for himself in the process. He often performs as a solo artist, but he also has his backing band The Something Else. Catch them when you can. They are always touring! Ian has a dry sense of humor that works well with his banter and lyrics. It also transfers into his gig notices. ianfitzgerald.com

Americana Singer/Songwriter: Briana White - JF

To be honest, Briana White was not on my musical radar. Until her name appeared in the *Motif* Music Awards I had not even heard of her. It



Briana White

happens. Musicians can have an underground following and boom, they pop like the cherry blossoms at the Washington Monument. I met her briefly at the *Motif* Awards but booked her the following day for a spot on the opening night of the Downtown Sundown Series. She has a perky acoustic pop sound. You should check her out live and put HER on YOUR radar! reverbNation.com/brianawhite

Female Vocalist: Tara Hansen - MR

The Wife in the band Man and Wife, Tara seems to stand, quite literally, in the shadow of her Viking Giant Husband - Kris Hansen of Viking Jesus. But



Tara Hansen

musically, they each shine in their own projects and together. A former cobbler and leather crafter, she credits her husband with "getting me away from the piano in the basement and out into the real world," where she has charmed so many eardrums.

See info about upcoming gigs as they come up at fb.com/ManAndWifeRI

Male Vocalist: Mark Cutler - MR

We're not sure what there is to be said about Mark Cutler that hasn't been said before (but that can still be said in a few meager paragraphs). We're fairly sure not a music award event has passed where he didn't pick up an award for something, and every year he gets nominated for so many things, in so many different categories, that we had to implement what we call the Mark Cutler rule - that no artist can be nominated for more than four awards in the same year. Mark doesn't need more awards - yet he comes to the show whenever he can, because he loves to support other musicians.

His support of good causes, working with the disabled and benefiting worthwhile causes is legendary, and his support of art projects of all kinds, including film and other media, is also well known. Former front man of the Schemers and the Raindogs - two bands that reached national prominence and with which he has become one of the few active musicians to be inducted into the RI Music Hall of Fame - he is also known to play in any configuration where good tunes are welcomed, be it solo, with his Men of Great Courage, or with some other organic combination of musical ingredients.

He's been playing stages of all sizes since the '70s, although to look at him you wouldn't think he could go that far back - and he has no intention of slowing down, which is part of what makes him an inspiration to local musicians of all ages.

You can catch Mark in the near future at the Ocean Mist at 3:30pm on Sat, May 19, and at the Parlour Sat, Jun 30, at 9pm. And most likely other places soon to be announced on Facebook.

Breakthrough Act: How's About Charlie? - MR



How's About Charlie?

This trio of harmonious women has recently gone from complete obscurity to appearing everywhere among the venues of greater Providence. Mostly acoustic, they weave their voices together to reinvent familiar classics and to create hypnotic new material. Called The Fates when they started jamming together in 2015, it appears the universe had other plans for them. Last November they took band name

advice provided in comic form by AS220 artists at last summer's Foo Fest. Their new name and logo became unstoppable, as they retrenched and renamed themselves How's About Charlie? Their debut album, *Waves*, came out in January, and can be found through fb.com/howsaboutcharlie

How's About Charlie? may not be a question we can answer, but can say that the millennial songstresses are **Bethany Killian**, **Amanda Marie** and **Nicole Gauthier**.

Bluegrass Band: Cactus Attack - JF

Hardcore bluegrass fans probably wouldn't call them a true bluegrass band, but these days the lines between categories are very blurred. Their lineup boasts members with interesting nicknames: **Ryan "Ol'e Pappy" Jackson** - guitar and vocals, **Taylor "Bloodhound" Brennan** - guitar, banjo and vocals, **Derek "Pretty Boy" Pearson** - guitar, banjo and vocals, **Doug "Fantastabass" Day** - upright bass and vocals, and **Chris "The Milkman" Hickman** - percussion and vocals. They cite gin, smokes, bonfires, whiskey, beer, the open road, fireworks, freestylin', weed, women, Peruvian marching powder and murder as influences and claim 100 proof Hell on Wheels. cactus-attack.com

Blues Act: Popa Chubby - JF



Popa Chubby

Born Ted Horowitz, Popa Chubby became a hardcore blues rocker in the early '90s and continues to keep the flame lit as he travels around the world playing. He is an imposing figure with a shaved head, tattooed arms, a goatee and a performance style he describes as "the Stooges meets Buddy Guy, Motörhead meets Muddy Waters, and Jimi Hendrix meets Robert Johnson" and with his band he plays "Hard Swinging Blues Rock." popachubby.com

Choral Act: Providence Gay Men's Chorus - MR

This is an incredible eighth *Motif* Music Award win for the Providence Gay Men's Chorus. This stellar choral group strives to show the world through its beautiful harmonies that we, too, can live in harmony with people from all walks of life. And audience members walk away thinking all they experienced was a delightful and fun concert.

Folk Act: Wilbur Hill - JF

I wondered where the name of this band came from until I saw the street sign near the house of one of the band members. Wilbur Hill rose from the ashes of past *Motif* Award winners, The Rank Strangers. Members are **Chris Monti** - guitar and harmonica, **Dan Parker** - upright bass, **Harvey Marcotte** - mandolin and fiddle, and **Pete Vendettuoli** - banjo and mandolin. You can often hear their "Bonafide String Band Music" at Nick-A-Nee's Bluegrass tHrOEDOWN. They play traditional, originals and offbeat covers. [fb.com/WilburHillBand](https://www.facebook.com/WilburHillBand)

Favorite Jazz Act: Dan Moretti - MR

This guy from Narragansett has entertained the world with his saxophone stylings, touring all over and performing with some of the greats of jazz and R&B. He also is a composer and producer, and has released 18 original recordings. Before his 2018 *Motif* Music Award win, Moretti was inducted into the RI Music Hall of Fame in 2017.

Best R&B Act: Steve Smith & the Naked's - JB

Until the end of time, R&B will be associated with its hip-hop sibling, and rightfully so. This year's winner for best R&B act goes to Steve Smith & the Naked's. This 10-piece rock and R&B band have been putting in work for decades and will only add to their acclaimed career with this award as they are also members of the Rhode Island Music Hall of Fame. Head over to TheNaked's.com for all of their music and information and to check out their musical (and caricatured) appearance on TV's "The Family Guy."

Catch them on May 25 at the Ocean Mist in South Kingstown.

World Music: The Gnomes - MR

It's hard to imagine a group more suitably described as "World Music." The Gnomes play folk and folk-rock from the Celtic, Scandinavian, Eastern European, Asian, African, Caribbean, Native American and Klezmer traditions - and we're pretty sure that's just a solid warm-up for them. They came together organically over a dozen years ago, and have grown (gnomes do grow) renowned in the local folk community, and each of their members is equally prolific with other groups, bands and musical combinations. They're also taller than you'd expect from their gname.

From the sly leprechaun glint in **Phil Edmond's** eye to the reassuring, comforting Earth-mother vibe of **Cathy Clasper Torch**, all of The Gnomes seem to be in perpetually good humor - even though they've probably logged about 100 performance years between them, they clearly still love bringing the music.

Phil Edmonds is from South Providence by way of Ireland, plays the tin whistle and button accordion, and is also the author of a number of books about his travels around the world. Cathy Clasper Torch expresses herself with the violin, fiddle, erhu, piano and cello, and also spent part of her youth growing up in other parts of the world - Burma and Hong Kong. **Peter Breen** brings the bass and vocals and performs with a number of reggae and zydeco bands. **Mike Fischman** works the guitar, mandolin and banjo; he grew up in the foreign nation of New York City. Percussionist **Matt Demick** rounds out the group with his extensive jazz experience.

We caught up with Gnome Cathy Clasper Torch to ask a few questions:

Motif: How did you get the name Gnomes? Were garden ornaments involved?

CCT: We'd been playing as a rotating group of five musicians at India in Warren. We decided we needed a name ... especially when we made our first CD. We did a lot of fusion kind of ideas with the names of different styles of music. We wanted something international, combining different cultures, and at some point we mentioned gnomes. They're not really devious, but kind of unpredictable. With an element of lightheartedness - we don't take ourselves too seriously.

Motif: Do you ever pull out a map, throw a dart at it and start playing music from there?

CCT: That's a great idea - unless they miss and hit one of us.

The Gnomes mix tunes from all over the world in their standard set. Recently, one audience member, overwhelmed by the diversity, told Cathy, "I don't know what just happened, but I really enjoyed it." She told him, "I think you just got Gnomed, sir."

Find out more about this world-embracing supergroup at thegnomesband.com, or catch one of these upcoming shows: Sat, June 16, noon at the Blackstone River Theatre's Summer Solstice Festival or Sun, July 29, 3pm at King's Park in Newport.

Brass Band: Brass Attack - JF



Brass Attack

Now in their 35th year, Brass Attack is one of the area's best dance bands. They have performed for two US presidents as well as for many Fortune 500 corporations, weddings, parties, concerts and clubs. Brass Attack is a nine-piece band featuring four horns, a rhythm section and five lead vocalists. The band's unique instrumentation, custom musical arrangements and high degree of musicianship lend to the band's versatility and professionalism.

Over the years, members of the band have performed with prominent national acts such as The Tonight Show Band, Tavares, Ray Charles, Tom Jones, The Four Tops, The Temptations, NRBQ, Dizzy Gillespie, Gary Burton, Wayne Newton, and Aretha Franklin to name just a few. The band has shared the stage with Earth, Wind + Fire, Aretha Franklin, Gladys Knight, Kenny Rogers, Michael Bolton, Harold Melvin

and the Blue Notes, Katharine McPhee, Kristin Chenoweth and NRBQ. brassattack.com

Best Open Mic: Open Mic Night at the Parlour - JF

This is another repeat winner that clearly has the hearts of the fans fully engaged. Although it looks like a neighborhood dive, the Parlour has been full of surprises since it picked up where the Penalty Box left off five and a half years ago. The food is far, far above normal bar comfort food, and worth a visit in its own right. And the place is co-owned by musicians and music lovers - two of them, **Gregory Rourke** and **Aaron Jaehnig**, are in active bands. "We try to keep the place very unintimidating, so everybody feels welcome," says Rourke. "It's very diverse, very loose. We want to keep that open vibe going."

The night was started shortly after they opened by Nick Smyth (Consuelo's Revenge), and it's now moderated by Ryan Jackson every Tuesday. The performances are mostly acoustic, but there are guitars and keyboards, and it's open to spoken word, poetry and other types of performance. Signups start at 7 each night, on a first-come, first-served basis. theparlourri.com

Americana Album: John Juxo, "Long Distance Driver" - JF



John Juxo

John Juxo has been part of the RI music scene for DECADES! He is the consummate sideman on keys or accordion and has been part of many, many bands over the years. Some may remember him from the Flying Ditchdiggers or the Mumbling Skulls. He gave me a copy of his CD a couple of months ago and I really enjoyed listening to it! He takes a twist on Route 66 with his own Route 44 song. Lots of great stuff here. Everyone loves Juxo and his win testifies to this! [fb.com/johnjuxo](https://www.facebook.com/johnjuxo)

Best Americana Fest: Newport Folk Fest - MC

Look, I don't agree with every assignment I'm given. Newport Folk Fest - sure it is great! Love it that they slip in locals, too. But on a local music poll? Yeah, they win on name recognition, but is that what we are here for? I don't know. Let's talk about what is great about the Newport Folk Fest: They bring amazing musicians to Newport who come here for mostly the history when they could be making a lot more elsewhere. Sorry Fusion Fest or whatever came in second, I love going to the Newport Folk Fest.

Alternative



The Copacetics

Best Act: The Copacetics - MC

When we were going through the nominations, of course The Copacetics were nominated, but where to place them? They have a dynasty of the ska/ reggae category, which are two different things. Maybe a 33 versus a 45, so I wanted something different and threw them in best band to see what happened. The Copacetics won. They won, not because they are “The Best Ska Band” in the state, but because they are the best band; if you are throwing a party and need a band, keep it copacetic and hire The Copacetics. They rocked sold-out shows with The English Beat and frankly, this “Best Act” shit is just overdue validation for what The Copacetics have been skankin’ to the party for years.

Best Live Act: Eric & the Nothing - MC

My favorite garage band without a doubt, err sorry I read the cue card wrong. I love Eric & the Nothing; I know we put them in for garage band and it’s cool, but I don’t have a garage. One day...



Eric and the Nothing

I've always been thrown off by "The Nothing" when they have **Bob Guisti** playing drums and he was on Frank Black (from the Pixies) solo albums. They remind me of a cross of Ricky Nelson meets The Sonics at a Dairy Queen. Eric & the Nothing have their debut album in the works coming around the bend, and that is something that I'll keep talking about. It is an Eric & the Nothing summer.

Album: Hope Anchor *Beautiful Corpses* - MC

This is the first and only album I reviewed twice ... because I just didn't think I fully covered it the first time. Hope Anchor have been nominated for stuff before, and they should be, but everyone thought a younger band would win. They were booked for the *Motif* Awards because they delivered this performance that had Mike D's and my jaw on the floor. Guitarist **Terry Linehan** described this to me as their goth album, but "Dead and Gone" and "You Alone" rock my world. I've been doing this for more than a decade, and this the first time I've been excited for a record winning this category.

Reggae/Ska: Natural Element - MR

A staple at The Parlour's reggae night, Natural Element has been killing it for years. The band draws on influences like hip-hop, jazz and Afro-beat, to create a truly immersive experience.

The band began as a house band for Foundation Mondays reggae night at The Parlour in Providence, and evolved into something more. "At first it was just me and Matt [Odabashian] fooling around. Djim Job and Osi Brathwaite joined us, and then Becky Bass and Vere Hill - now we're a collection of musicians. We're merging DJs with live performance, which is a standard mix in Jamaican culture but unusual up here. Now we're getting gigs pretty regularly. We opened for Yami Bollo and backed up Warrior King. We've gotten a lot more active, so it's grown into a more serious project," said band member **Gregory Rourke**. They also have their first CD of all originals coming up.

Vibe on. Catch them in their element every Monday night at The Parlour (two sets starting at 10pm), where you can also check out something called "Upsetta International: Selectors Chancellor and Pauly Dangerous."

Jam Band: Daddie Long Legs - JB

Daddie Long Legs is favorite of jam fans around these parts, and their mix of funk and groovy rock keeps audiences moving. This is not the first *Motif* win for **Tim Doyle, Adam Smith, Dave Faustino** and **Matt Nilsson**. Catch them at The Met every once in a while.

Garage Band: Eric & the Nothing - JB

"I never expect to win anything." Humble words from the band becoming the Daniel Day-Lewis of the *Motif* Awards. The crooning '60s-style rock band scored a win for Breakthrough act in their fresh-faced days in 2016, and another in this category last year. Recently, they have really rounded out their sound by adding drummer **Bob Guisti** and **switching Billy Moretti** to guitar, becoming a quartet. Word on the street is E&TN are putting out a record soon, and they'll be at AS220 on Jun 22.

Pop Punk: Senior Discount - JB

It's been a long and successful run for Senior Discount, another repeat winner, who released their first album *There Were Four Who Tried* back in 2006. They've shared the stage with the likes of Gym Class

Heroes, Girl Talk, Boys Like Girls, The Bravery, Guttermouth and Less than Jake. Check them out this Thursday at the ONCE Ballroom in Somerville, Mass. If SD's Facebook page is to be believed, the show will be "packed and crazy."



Hope Anchor

Post Punk/Goth: Hope Anchor

Motif Music Award attendees were treated last week to a high-octane performance from the Post Punk/Goth winners. Hope Anchor is made up of RI-area rock veterans, and all the experience really shows. They're great at the brooding, Cure-like tunes that'd you expect given the category, but they've also got some more upbeat rockers. Check out last year's excellent *Beautiful Corpses* to see why the Rhode Island masses have decided to bestow this honor.

Punk: Hairspray Queen - JB

More and more, Providence seems like the place to be for high-quality punk rock, with Downtown Boys striking it national earlier this year. Hairspray Queen takes



Hairspray Queen

the noise crown for the second year in a row. This music is fast, brash and not for the faint of heart, but the band is very skilled at creating melodies underneath all the discord. Check out their EP and live

album at their Bandcamp: hairsprayqueen.bandcamp.com

Hardcore/Metal: Olneyville Sound System - JB

Olneyville Sound System is a heavy experimental noise band that has been wowing audiences for 20 years. The band consists of only drummer **Adam Autry** and bassist **Dan St. Jacques**. Plumbing the depths of the power that lies in pure low end has made this duo a Providence original. Check out "It Ain't So" from 1999 for a true assault on the eardrums: youtube.com/watch?v=_akGXzVniwI

Female Vocalist: Malysa BellaRosa - MC



Malysa BellaRosa

The chanteuse of Fall & Bounce, the brains behind Malysa & The Liberators, takes home "Best Female Vocalist." Ms. BellaRosa didn't wake up in this position, she made it happen. Through years playing acoustically or rocking it out, she's been a staple.

I'm a hater; yeah I support artists, but I think people blur the lines of good or bad. Like, this grapefruit is good because it is local. But I got sick. Doesn't matter, it is local.

Malysa BellaRosa is not that grapefruit. It doesn't matter that she is local, she is powerhouse of song and melody that we need in these times.

Male Vocalist: Steve Delmonico - MC

He might be the best single supporter of local music because he is everywhere. Recently he sniffled at me, "baby Deer Tick," and I said, "Who said that?" Of course it was me. I think I meant it in a flattering way. I love Steve as a performer because he brings it, whether with The Quahogs or solo. He is more rock 'n' roll than any of us can hope to be in our wet dreams. Steve went through a period where he didn't know if he'd lose it all. He came back and triumphed and brings his raspy voice to tell the truth.

Breakthrough Alt Act: Sugar Cones - MC

After a few lineup changes and years honing their sound, the Sugar Cones broke on through to the other side with their debut Self-Titled EP big time this year. The Sugar Cones' spirit of adventure bleeds all through the EP from the spy noir surf guitar lead on "Pretend" to the cello on "Good Time" coloring the backbeat. To experience the Sugar Cones, one has to see them live because that is where all the dimensions come alive. From the roots to the rock, a Sugar Cones show is a like a 45-minute demon exorcism. Check out the Sugar Cones online at malysabellarosa.com/sugarconesband where their

debut EP is available for order.

Tribute Band: Dirty Deeds - MC

Sometimes I joke about dynasties when an act keeps winning over and over, but that would undersell Dirty Deeds. They win because they make people's nights, their weeks, months and sometimes their years. AC/DC is a universal thing, and even though their members have been dropping like flies in recent years, we still want to hear those songs that spurred Axl Rose into action, and as much as I love Axl, he really doesn't help anyone. Dirty Deeds, on the other hand, kicks out those jams all night, all year, and shakes you all night long.



Sybil Disobedience

Cover Band: Sybil Disobedience - JB

It's no coincidence Sybil Disobedience is a perennial favorite in this category. Frontwoman Sybil Castellone has a dynamic stage presence and a great voice, and SD's musicians are stone cold professionals. Their repertoire is large, moving from "Uptown Funk" to AC/DC. Catch them on Friday, May 25 at Lou's Café in Manville, and June 1 at The Joint Bar and Grille in Cranston.

Alt/Rock Festival: PVDfest - JB

Now in its fourth year, PVDfest may be the biggest, most ambitious festival the city has ever attempted. And by all accounts, it seems to be a success. It's not really a rock, or even a music festival - think of it as an everything festival. Art, music, theater, street performances and installations come together for an immersive experience celebrating the capital city. Of the acts announced so far, some to watch are: **Consuelo's Revenge, Tiny Diamond, Blackletter**, and Brown University's premier faculty rock band, **Dirty Filthy Basement**. More info at: pvdffest.com/artists-2018 and **on page 10**.

EDM/Hip-Hop



The Funk Underground

Best Hip-Hop Act: The Funk Underground - Louie

Providence-based The Funk Underground consists of **Syde-Sho, Kevin Rodriguez, Taki Bano, Osmoses & KelKeyz**. The groundwork they've put in so far is incredible, so be on the lookout for their debut project to be released this spring on thefunkunderground.com!

Breakthrough Hip-Hop Act: Toad and the Stooligans - Louie

The members of the five-piece hip-hop band from Providence have been building group chemistry since their early high school days, and it's great seeing the award go to a group like this. Check out their project, *Very Handsome*, full of rocking alternative hip-hop jams on Apple Music, Spotify and other streaming services.

Best EDM DJ: DJ Venom - MB

For the sixth year in a row, DJ Venom has been named *Motif's* Best EDM DJ. Over two decades ago, he first sank his fangs into the Northeast's rave



DJ Venom

and hard dance music scenes. Venom currently heads up Freq, a weekly dance night at Alchemy. He also runs Morlock Music, an artist collective and production company, and produces once-monthly “Hard Dance Nation” podcast episodes on Soundcloud, which are unique, long-form hardstyle mixes.

Best Club DJ: Pauly Danger - MB



DJ Pauly Danger

This year’s Best Club DJ is Pauly Danger, AKA Paul Bedrosian. Pauly’s passions are reggae and dancehall, but he also spins other genres, including world music, R&B, Latin, and hip-hop. Describing his approach to DJing, he says, “It’s all about the vibe. Reading the crowd’s energy and playing for the room is key, but I also try to expose the crowd to new music and sounds that come from the heart ... I’m humbled to have won and I appreciate the love and support from my city. Providence, I love you.”

Karaoke Night: Friday at the Parlour PVD - MC

As the 2005 Karaoke King of Providence, I'm more judgmental than most on this category. But that time is gone and so I'm not sure if I'm supposed to write about how The Parlour has the best woman doing the best version of "You Ought Know" or if I should just talk about how there may be too many categories. I don't know. The Parlour has karaoke every Friday. Every Friday, not just those "Good Fridays," and is one of my favorite places to hang.

The night is run by **DJ Big Sean** and has been running for 11 years straight - a neat trick at a club less than six years old (the night ran at the previous Penalty Box as well). **Gregory Rourke**, one of the Parlour owners, who is dedicated to keeping the night "diverse, open and driven by a good sense of humor. We have people who come from pretty far away - Salem, Worcester. I think they come for the vibe," he explained. "We welcome the tone-deaf drunken college student and the pro [vocalists] equally." Karaoke starts at 9:30pm. more at theparlourri.com

Best Dance Night: Soul Power at Dusk - MB

"Soul Power" dance party happens the second and last Friday of each month at Dusk. For 15+ years (!), run by **Ty Jesso**, "Soul Power" has featured vintage rock 'n' roll vinyl along with special guest DJs and (sometimes) a live band. Speaking of this accomplishment, Jesso says, "My co-DJ **John O'Leary** and I are very honored ... We love the music we spin and believe Providence deserves an alternative to the Top 40/Pop/EDM dance scene. We are glad people enjoy what we do!

Club Photography: Eric Johnson - MR

Eric Johnson is the first ever *Motif* Award Winner who won by a write-in vote. Of his unique victory, Eric said, "I guess I have a lot of friends!" Johnson started photographing live shows for local act Sybil Disobedience, then began getting calls to shoot other band's shows. He said of his work that "I make enough money to put pizza in my belly and pay for my big camera." What more could a photographer ask for?

Thanks again everyone!

For more photos, click here to see our Music Awards Cover Guide.