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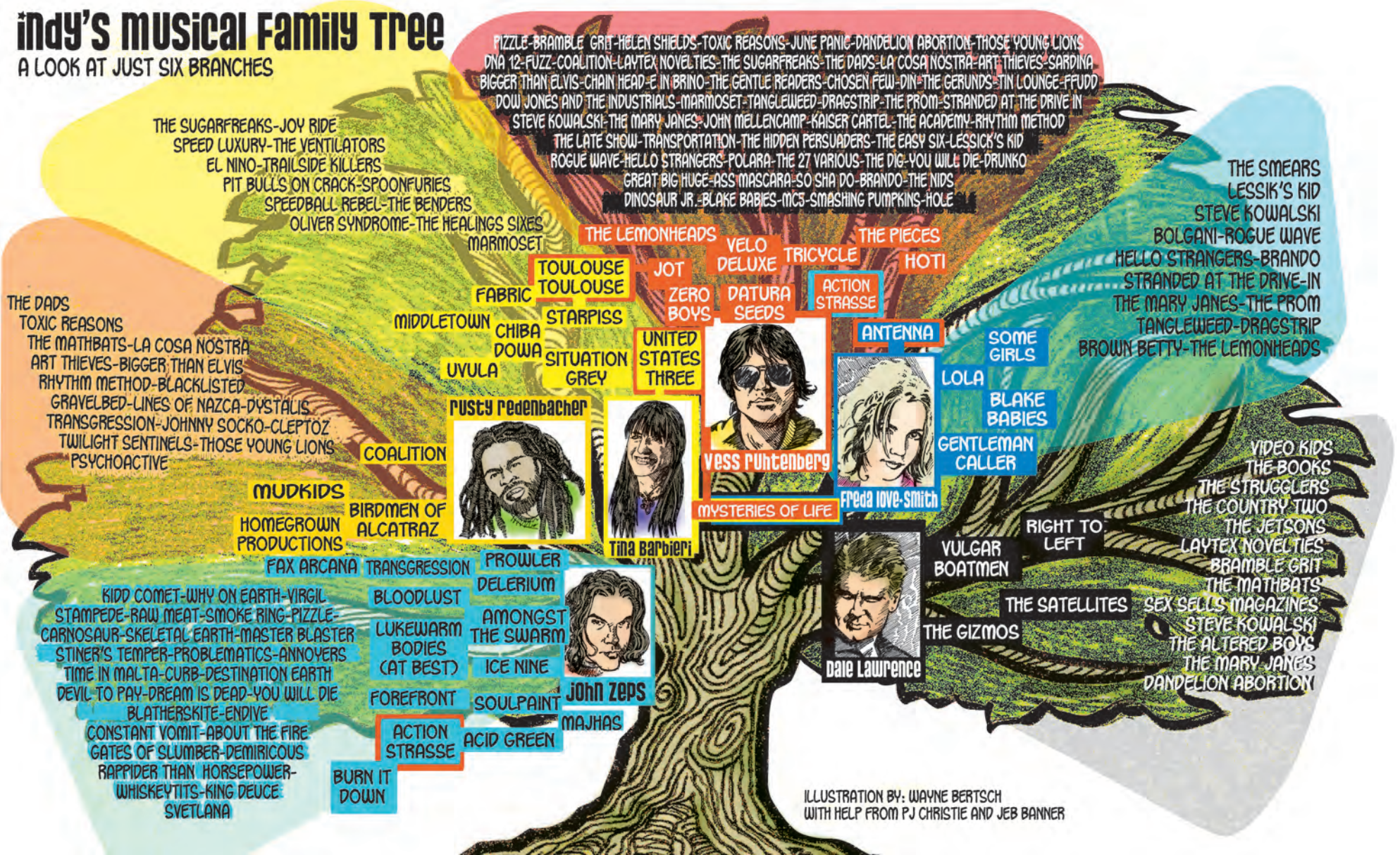
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## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Highlights of Indy's rich musical past...and future

By Mel Duncan, Nora Spitznogle, Jeff Napier, Matthew Socey, P.J. Christie and Jeb Banner; edited by Leslie Benson

### indy's musical family tree A LOOK AT JUST SIX BRANCHES



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BY MEL DUNCAN, NORA SPITZNOGLE, JEFF NAPIER, MATTHEW SOCEY, P.J. CHRISTIE AND JEB BANNER; EDITED BY LESLIE BENSON  
PHOTOS BY KRIS ARNOLD, GILES CLEMENT, JEFF BEDEL AND MELONSHE

**onnuvo.net**

**/VIDEO /PHOTO**

- Music round table discussion at the Music Mill by Leslie Benson, Tim Barrett, Mitch Reeves and Jenna Baker
- Radio Radio reunion show of The Pieces, Action Strasse and Those Young Lions March 17 by Mitch Reeves
- Burn It Down and Ice Nine live video footage
- Digital galleries of all the bands

**H**ow do you sum up 30 years of Indianapolis' rich musical culture in less than 8,000 words? The undertaking became organic, growing of its own accord, through winding branches and roots off one gigantic tree of musical history.

If you were ever a 15-year-old with nothing better to do on a Saturday night than hang out in front of the Emerson Theater or Punk Rock Night at the Melody Inn, you'll revel in this issue. If you know where The Secret Location is, you're among the elite, and if you claim to have met Rusty from the Birdmen of Alcatraz, you've probably been a fan of the local music scene for more than a few years.

### ARSON GARDEN

Genre: Indie rock  
www.myspace.com/arsongarden  
www.myspace.com/jamescombsmusic  
www.myspace.com/aprilcombsmusic  
www.myspace.com/theplushinteriors

If the measure of a band is based on artistry, energetic shows and steady success, then Arson Garden was the top band in Central Indiana. James Combs on guitar and Joby Barnett on drums started with a sound and a mutual appreciation for intricate rhythms and breaking new ground. They built up the band with James' sister, April Combs, and bassist Clark Starr. Their first gig in 1987 was held at Second Story in Bloomington, at the event known as Er Night, and later that year they opened up for the Replacements at Alumni Hall. From then on, the band enjoyed a loyal following and a wild ride

One of the most universally loved forms of art, music creates a sense of community — of family and artistic connection. Discovering highlights of Indy's musical past (and future), NUVO encourages you to claim ownership of locally produced music and its ambitious purveyors. Only through community support does our creativity continue to thrive.

Beneath the drama and the politics of the music business, you'll find people devoted to their art. We will take you through some of the stories of local musicians over the past 30 years and uncover where their roots were planted and where their branches have led them. And for those we were unable to mention at this time, we still want to honor you. Please share your perspectives and stories about Indy's complex musical past by e-mailing [wherearetheynow@nuvo.net](mailto:wherearetheynow@nuvo.net). You can hear some of the bands' music at [www.nuvo.net](http://www.nuvo.net) and at [www.musicalfamilytree.com](http://www.musicalfamilytree.com). Our second installment of this product will be published this fall, so we're happy to hear from you. Now, on with the stories!

along with guitarist Michael Mann, who joined while also playing in the Opiates.

"People in Bloomington at that time were really interested in music," James says. "Our earliest songs received amazing feedback, and we had this instant connection to the crowd." Arson Garden's early music (1988's *Arson Garden*, produced by Paul Mahern, and 1990's *Under Towers*, recorded at Paisley Park by Tom Herbers) was a unique blend of Midwestern guitars, poetic lyrics and adventurous rhythmic arrangements.

Frequent touring, better record deals, a Peel Session performance, a slot at Lollapalooza and airing a video on MTV's *120 Minutes* soon built the band's self-confidence and international notoriety.

April recalls a Red Hot Chili Peppers performance giving her bigger ideas about her stage pres-

ence. "The wilder I was and the more I jumped around, the better," she says. "It was never about beauty for me; it was always about art, performance and energy. Connecting to the audience ... I loved it!"

As the band began rehearsals for *Wisteria* in 1991, the guitars became a greater focus for them. According to James, he and Mann were working on a song called "Pact," during which they both began writing intricate guitar parts and pushing the sound as far as they could imagine it.

Their final album, *The Belle Stomp*, should have launched them into the national indie-rock mainstream. When recording *The Belle Stomp*, Arson Garden had the freedom to explore a less bombastic new sound within the context of the full band. It was the most ambitious album the band had made, and with the emergence of new independent bands into international superstars, the world seemed wide open to a creative group of free thinkers with a powerful live show. "Prophetically, our record came out the week Kurt Cobain died," James says. "Everything just seemed to kind of stop."

—P.J. Christie



### ARSON GARDEN

PHOTO BY DANIEL CORRIGAN  
Press photo (circa 1990s)  
From front left:  
Joby Barnett, James Combs,  
April Combs, Clark Starr and  
Michael Mann



### TINA BARBIERI

ABOVE SUBMITTED PHOTO  
(Clockwise from top):  
Chris Kupersmith, Tina  
Barbieri, Scott Ewing

PHOTO BY GILES CLEMENT  
Tina Barbieri (2007)



### TINA BARBIERI

Genre: Indie rock  
[www.nuvo.net/band/uvula](http://www.nuvo.net/band/uvula)

Tina Barbieri has been around the block a few times, musically speaking. Between Bloomington and Indy, the vocalist and bassist is best known for her stints in the indie-rock cover band Situation Grey and one-time major label hopefuls Mysteries of Life. Interestingly enough, it was neither of those two bands she sites as personal favorites.

"I had the most fun in Uvula," Barbieri says of the Sonic Youth-esque band she founded in the late '90s. "Fabric too," she adds, referring to the tripped-out electronic band. "Fabric was great because I actually had input."

When asked about her involvement in Mysteries of Life, the "lots of free sushi" when they were being wined and dined by RCA records seemed to be a fond memory. "Our A&R guy was awesome; there was just no support from the label. They just really dropped the ball, like the single they chose to put out ['Going Through the Motions']. It's a good song, but of all the songs on that record ... they could've done more."

In the midst of major label chaos with Mysteries of Life, Barbieri had a tough choice to make with her other projects Uvula and Fabric. Ultimately, the latter two won, and she quit Mysteries. Even though the group continued to tour in support of the albums *Keep a Secret* and *Come Clean*, it was eventually dropped from RCA and found a home on the No Nostalgia label with the 2001 release *Distant Relatives*.

Recently, Barbieri has been paying the bills as a massage therapist but is also working on a new project entitled Toulouse Toulouse with longtime friend and collaborator Chris Kupersmith (currently playing guitar for Gentleman Caller) and Jason Cavan (bassist for You Will Die).

The project is a little more pop rock than some of her past ventures, but the demos show promise, and it's great to know that such a talent is still contributing to our scene.

—Mel Duncan

**BIG MF STICK**  
Genre: Hip-hop/rock  
<http://cdbaby.com/cd/madpoets>

If you own Big MF Stick's first album, *Discombobulator*, or the *Ate Up* compilation, you understand the power of "Parasite," an instant classic. How could it not be with the lyric "lookin for lovin', but all I got was the crabs"?

In the mid to late '90s bands, like Big MF, the Birdmen of Alcatraz, Sucka and X-Up played a style of music that wasn't just rock, nor was it just hip-hop or funk. The style became known as "rip hop," an alternative to the alternative. Jazzy grooves and lyrical flows would give way to distortion and screams. It was a revolution of sorts, and it was the first time some people really started to pay attention to what was going on in the local music scene.

Big MF Stick was conventional in the sense of having a drummer, bassist and guitar player, but with three singers, the band stood out. Johann, one of the vocalists and the guy usually seen sporting a Pacers' jersey on stage, chatted over a couple glasses of Blue Moon about how the band came together and how it eventually came apart.

"It would seem like there would have been more personality clashes with six people in the band," Johann says. "But we all liked hip-hop, and we all liked metal so it just came together."

The band may have clicked, but club owners weren't as excited. "Having three singers was a nightmare for the sound guy," Johann laughs. In the band's prime, the

other two vocalists were known as Papa G and Evergreen the Eye.

Big MF Stick's second album, 1997's *Attack of the Peanut Butter and Jelly People*, was released to a beyond-capacity Emerson Theater crowd. "That might have been the biggest crowd we played to," Johann says.

After completing a few semi-successful tours, the band was road-weary, but the excitement of homecoming shows were enough to push them back into the studio for what would have been the third album, *A Horse Named Future Glue*. Unfortunately, only three songs were recorded, and that was basically it for Big MF Stick.

"We were just bored and the songs weren't coming as easy as they used to," Johann says.

Because they just stopped playing, fans outside the loop were left wondering what happened. In late 2002, the band played two more shows, a warm-up gig at Birdy's Bar & Grill and its final performance at the Vogue.

Rising from the ashes, Johann, drummer A-dub and vocalist Papa G recorded an album and played shows under the name Mad Poets Society, a straight-up hip-hop band with live drums and programmed synth. The last show was part of the 2004 Midwest Music Summit.

Big MF may be gone but it's not forgotten. "Man, there's always someone coming up and saying, 'Weren't you in that band?' I'm happy that we did something, ya know, left our mark," Johann says. "Everything about that whole band was just an accident that worked."

—Mel Duncan



FILE PHOTO  
Rusty Redenbacher (right) of Birdmen of Alcatraz and the Mudkids

**BIRDMEN OF ALCATRAZ**  
Genre: Hard rock/rap  
[www.myspace.com/birdmenofalcatraz](http://www.myspace.com/birdmenofalcatraz)  
[www.myspace.com/mudkids](http://www.myspace.com/mudkids)

In the late '80s, it seemed the combination of rap and hard rock was limited to Run D.M.C./Aerosmith and then Anthrax/Public Enemy. In Indianapolis, the Birdmen of Alcatraz proved that you didn't need a video or record contract to combine the two powers.

From 1989-1996, the Birdmen toured North America and represented the city's music scene. Singer Rusty Redenbacher (aka, That Dread-Locked Guy at Northside News) graduated from guest rapper to band singer. He was excited to be part of the experience.

"I had no idea how blessed I was. A lot of people gave me legs," Redenbacher says. "That band set us apart. When we first came out, we were a little more funk-based. We got compared to the [Red Hot] Chili Peppers. I would freestyle a lot."

Before MySpace.com and the Internet, the band would spend hours at Kinko's working on flyers and posters for the mailing list. Then they hit the road.

"We usually went out for a week or two," he says. "Sometimes a month. That got to be harder. It was all DIY shit. You play shows out of town and met other bands. Traded shows with others. It was a real grind."

The band took a "much needed break" in 1996, and Redenbacher formed the Mudkids in 1997. "We always try to get together when we can," he says. "The music was so good. I still get good feelings."

The Birdmen have resurfaced for one-off shows for special events, including the Midwest Music Summit and the closing of the Patio.

"That Patio show; I paid for it. I was so sore," Redenbacher says. "I'm not in the same shape to do what I did in my 20s, but you can't cheat the audience. They're expect-

continued on page 28

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"Birdmen" continued from page 27

ing that kind of shit from the Birdmen."

Fellow Birdman Richard "Dino" Codalata says he still gets feedback from Birdmen fans.

"We still hear about it daily," he says. "A lot of bands playing now are saying how much we influenced them."

Codalata says he's ready to perform live again with his band, Stepchildren, featuring singer Lucinda Russell. "We do real old Heart and Fleetwood Mac stuff," he says. "I've had to put everything on hold for three and a half years, and that's all about to change."

Codalata is adding guitar to Redenbacher's dark new *Lazarus* project, and the two will collaborate on a future funk project.

The Indianapolis music scene family tree is bound to wind around the Birdmen of Alcatraz. When you least expect it, or when you need it most, don't be surprised if the band soars again, even if it's for one night and for the right cause.

"I love the fuckin' Birdmen, dude. I got nothing but hugs and smiles to them," Redenbacher says. "I love those dudes."

—Matthew Socoy



#### BLAKE BABIES

Genre: Indie rock  
[www.blakebabies.com](http://www.blakebabies.com)  
<http://members.aol.com/autobeatnik/>  
[www.some-girls.com](http://www.some-girls.com)  
[www.flatearthrecords.com/jps/](http://www.flatearthrecords.com/jps/)

Read the full interviews with John Strohm and Freda Love on [NUVO.net](http://NUVO.net).

The Blake Babies were born on the cusp of the indie rock explosion. Allen Ginsberg bequeathed their name, a reference to English poet William Blake, when they asked him to name their band following a reading at Harvard.

The Blake Babies released a string of successful albums and EPs on Mammoth Records in the late 1980s and early '90s. With Juliana Hatfield on bass and vocals, John

Strohm on guitar and vocals and Freda Love on drums, the band was a college radio darling and gathered a respectable fan base around the world.

Strohm and Love were high school sweethearts while growing up in Bloomington, Ind. Although Love started out with violin, she eventually found the drums at age 17, with the help of Strohm, who was already playing and touring as a drummer in local punk bands. In 1986, when they were freshmen at the Berklee College of Music in Boston, Mass., they ran into Hatfield. Strohm recalls, "Freda and I thought Juliana looked like someone we should be in a band with," he says. "[It] turned out she thought the same about us." Within a month, the new band had a full set's worth of material.

Early on, the Blake Babies adopted the DIY attitude of the Indiana punk scene. "We didn't think anything of playing in a used clothing store," Love says, "or putting out our own first record and selling it ourselves through 20 different distributors." When the band's success began drawing interest from labels, Strohm's experience with the industry helped them navigate the waters and score a deal with Mammoth Records, based out of North Carolina. The relationship was successful enough for the label to release future projects, including *Antenna*, *Hatfield and Velo Deluxe* records.

As the band's success grew, so did the pressures within the group. Hatfield and Strohm didn't always share the same vision for the band's future, which eventually led to its breakup in 1991. Looking back, he recalls his only real regret: "We were offered the first leg as main support on Nirvana's *Nevermind* tour," he says. "The band was breaking up, and we just couldn't get it together. We were huge Nirvana fans from *Bleach*, but at the time, it just seemed like another tour."

After finding success in various solo and group projects, the trio reunited in 1999 until 2001, with the help of sometimes bandmate Evan Dando, to record and tour behind *God Bless the Blake Babies*. Both the tour and album were met with approval by fans and critics of the band. The project and tour were seen as a one-off by the band and they have no plans to re-unite in the foreseeable future.

All members of the Blake Babies remain active musicians. Love recently moved to England with her husband Jake Smith and their two sons. Love and Smith's band, the Mysteries of Life, recently released its fourth full-length album, *Beginning to Move*. Strohm is now an entertainment lawyer in Birmingham, Ala., and is married with two children. He is planning his third solo release in spring of 2007, titled *Everyday Life*. Hatfield continues to write and record music, as well as actively tour. Her band with Love, *Some Girls*, recently released its second album, *Crushing Love*.

—Jeb Banner

#### CHOOCH AND THE ENCHANTERS

Genre: Soul  
[www.mariekennedy.com](http://www.mariekennedy.com)

In 1977, Jim "Chooch" Kennedy was working on a song when a couple of friends sat in on the recording. One thing led to another, and Chooch and the Enchanters were born.

The original members consisted of Kennedy (guitar, harmonica and lead vocals), Fred Yde (keyboard and trumpet),

Dan Pachyinski (bass), Don Weddle (drums), Paul Puntteney (pedal steel) and Mike Brady (saxophone). Kennedy no longer plays with that lineup. "Some got real jobs, some retired, some moved on and some died," he says. "I could tell you lots of stories about the band and its escapades, but it might be better left unsaid and only remembered by those present. We had a couple of successes and a hell of a lot of fun."

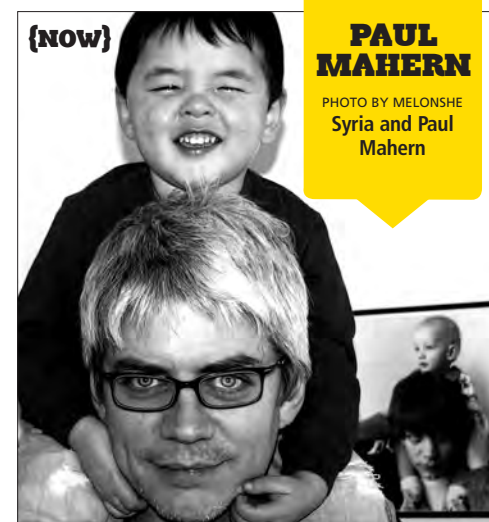
One of the first local bands to play the Vogue, Chooch and the Enchanters shared the marquee with Tammy Wynette. While the band often played the Patio, Crazy Al's and the Ritz, Kennedy's most memorable gig was during the blizzard of 1978 when the band performed live on WNAP with Adam Smasher. "Just to get everyone there was a real chore, but we all got there with the help of four-wheel drive vehicles and perseverance. The show was great and it is a hoot to listen to 30 years later," he says.

"Very happily married" with a 12-year-old son who can sing, Chooch Kennedy is still playing music for a living. "I have sung in Las Vegas; you might hear my voice on a *Bob & Tom Show* song, on a commercial or hear me in a supper club."

—Nora Spitznogle

#### DATURA SEEDS

Genre: Indie rock  
[www.musicalfamilytree.com/bands/datura\\_seeds](http://www.musicalfamilytree.com/bands/datura_seeds)



When the Zero Boys imploded in the mid 1980s, musician and producer Paul Mahern kept himself busy first with Dandelion Abortion, a short-lived outfit that merged the Zero Boys' hardcore fury with a mish-mash of styles from a more angular approach, à la Television to Sonic Youth-meets-Jello Biafra noise. One of its songs, "Stab 'Em," could've even been on a Devo record.

However, while working with Jonee Quest at Indy's Hit City recording studio, a high school girl named Lee Cuthbert brought in her band to record, and as Mahern puts it, "I fell in love with her personality and songwriting skills and asked her to join us." Having already cut a few demos with Quest and a Linn 9000 drum machine, they recruited a drummer named Tom Downs and thus formed the Datura Seeds.

Mahern's flower child persona came to the forefront as the band created powerful pop masterpieces that ranked as some of the best stuff coming out of Indiana at that time. The band's sole album, *Who Do You Want it to Be?*, created a minor national buzz due to the strength of tunes like "Half Asleep" and the infectious "S&P '69."

Unfortunately, the ensemble only lasted a few years. Towards the end, after his band, Jot, broke up, Vess Ruhtenberg joined, and shortly thereafter, he followed Mahern as he reformed the Zero Boys. The chemistry between the two carried over to the Zero Boys' third album, *Heimlich Maneuver*, which featured artwork by Quest, who went on to become one of Indianapolis' premier sound engineers. Cuthbert went on to moderate acclaim as a member of the Gentle Readers.

"I haven't seen Tom in years," Mahern says. "Lee has a furnishings store in Atlanta, Jonee is still in Indy doing his Questy thing, Vess is a Lemonhead, among other things, and I am meditating somewhere."

When asked if a reunion or reissue of the band's recordings were a possibility in the near future, Mahern turns coy, simply stating "Anything is possible."

—Jeff Napier



#### THE LATE SHOW

Genre: Pop  
www.thelabelmusicgroup.com

The first incarnation of the Late Show began in 1972, when four North Central High School students formed a band. Mark Cutsinger, Kevin Kimberlin, Don Main and Mark Moran performed under the band name Clayburn. They played originals and music from the 1960s.

The musicians moved to New York City in late 1974 and officially became the Late Show. Kimberlin left the band a year later, but stayed in NYC, where he still lives. The band continued to play with the other three core members.

By 1979, the Late Show was back in Indianapolis, Rick Clayton and Scott Fletcher played with them, and Chris Pyle replaced Cutsinger as the drummer.

A popular Indianapolis and regional band, the Late Show often performed at the Patio and the Vogue. Pyle remembers a favorite show in 1982. "We got a last minute gig opening for the Pretenders on their first U.S. tour, in Columbus, Ohio. We took the slot for the exposure and did not know what to expect," he says. "The place was packed, and no one had any idea who we were. People were going crazy over us. We had to quit playing encores so the Pretenders could take the stage."

The band underwent a few name changes (Recordio and Rock House) and stopped playing in 1991.

Moran is still playing music. He brought the Late Show back in 2006 (he is the only original member), and the band performs nearly every weekend. Cutsinger is still working full-time as a drummer; he

toured and recorded in Europe last autumn. Main owns and manages Puccini's Smiling Teeth Pizza. Pyle is a session drummer, plays with several bands and is a nationally acclaimed illustrator.

—Nora Spitznogle

#### DALE LAWRENCE

Genre: Punk



#### DALE LAWRENCE

SUBMITTED PHOTO

The Gizmos'  
Dale Lawrence and  
Billy Nightshade, 1979

If Dale Lawrence had done nothing else with his life, he could have hung his hat on fronting Indiana's first punk band, the Gizmos. The kids and scenesters that talk now about "boring Indiana" should appreciate life in Bloomington, circa 1979. With no local music scene to speak of, and certainly no other punk bands around to play shows with, the Gizmos, along with Purdue's Dow Jones and the Industrials, eventually got a following around Indiana. But in a place where even the Ramones (with whom the Gizmos played) weren't understood, the group packed up and took off to NYC. That didn't exactly pan out either, and the band broke up soon after.

Thankfully, Lawrence still had it in him, though for his next venture, he chose a different path in the form of Right to Left, a groundbreaking alternative band that became the Vulgar Boatmen.

The story of the Vulgar Boatmen, to this day, stands as one of the most interesting arrangements in rock 'n' roll history. Two bands, two cities, one name: the Indianapolis version that Lawrence fronted and the Gainesville, Fla., version fronted by professor and scholar Robert Ray. The two met at IU. "I was an undergrad, and Robert was a grad student helping teach a course I was taking — as fate would have it — on song lyrics," Lawrence says. "We became friends, though neither of us were in bands at the time and didn't start writing together until much later."

The plan wasn't to create two separate, yet identical bands. "As Robert and I wrote more together, the two bands' repertoires started mirroring each other," Lawrence says. "When it came time to make an album, it just made sense to pool everybody and call the whole thing the Vulgar Boatmen."

The albums, 1990's *You and Your Sister* and its follow-up, *Please Panic*, released in '92, were met with local praise and caught the attention of music critics nationwide. The band's sound came from its respective geographic locations. East Coast art-rock met with Southern R&B — with punk, country and folk thrown in the mix. The tours were handled primarily by the Indy lineup, though a handful of shows saw the two incarnations blend together on stage.

When the band was signed to Warner Brothers' U.K. division, its third album, *Opposite Sex*, was released in Europe. This led to interest from Elektra, a division of Warner, but the president of that label cut the Boatmen from its roster before *Opposite Sex* could be released stateside, thus ending the Vulgar Boatmen's major label hopes.

It was a situation that Lawrence says is all too common. "Signing with a major either makes things really go or, more often, kills them," he says.

Since the band's three albums are out of print, a self-released compilation, entitled *Wide Awake*, showcases Ray and Lawrence's favorite cuts from their career. It is available on the No Nostalgia label.

While the Gainesville incarnation has all but stopped playing, Lawrence and company still play around and were seen last year at Locals Only for the Midwest Music Summit.

—Mel Duncan

# In Tufty's shoes

Rock icon remembers local music "firsts"

BY JEFF NAPIER • MUSIC@NUVO.NET



#### DALE "TUFTY" CLOUGH

SUBMITTED PHOTO

RIGHT PHOTO BY RONI DONALDSON  
David "Tufty" Clough of Toxic  
Reasons and the Zero Boys

David "Tufty" Clough has been one of Indy's shining beacons in the local rock scene for the better part of three decades. He has been the bass player in Toxic Reasons, the Zero Boys and Bigger Than Elvis. His fluid, yet blindingly fast bass lines made up the cornerstone of all these groups. That unique sound (as well as his Liverpudlian accent and gregarious personality) has made him one of the most recognized and respected figures in town.

Tufty also helped start the alternative Future Shock store in Broad Ripple and slowly built it into one of the most successful and long-lived independent businesses in the village. More recently, he has built his Fountain Square nightclub, Radio Radio, into one of the hippest rooms in town, acting as sort of Indianapolis Knitting Factory, bringing a wide range of eccentric bands to town while hosting several "firsts" — regularly adding video and movies to the mix and making Radio Radio a non-smoking venue.

**NUVO:** Was it hard at first to balance your ambitions as a businessman with that of a rock and roll bass player?

**D.C.:** Yes, and it still is. Part of me wants to be the artistic musician and just concentrate on the creative side of things, and the other part of me wants the security of being financially stable and independent.

**NUVO:** What is your fondest musical memory?

**D.C.:** The first time we went to L.A. with the Zero Boys. We played with the Dead Kennedys and Minor Threat. There were about 3,000 people there. The intensity of the crowd and the reception we got was overwhelming after playing to just a few people in Indianapolis.

**NUVO:** Of all the bands you've played in, which one are you most proud of?

**D.C.:** I would say the Zero Boys, because I got goose bumps when we recorded *Vicious Circle*. I still get chills to this day when I hear or play that record.

**NUVO:** Bruce Stuckey, Paul Mahern and Danny Thompson are all strong frontmen you've played music with. What have you learned from these guys, and have you ever had the desire to front a band?

**D.C.:** It's a tough job being the

spokesperson for a band. I sang four or five songs a night in Toxic Reasons, and that was enough for me. I wouldn't want to put people through anymore than that.

**NUVO:** Do you have any regrets?

**D.C.:** Having the Toxic Reasons guys talk me into joining Toxics, quitting the Zero Boys and spending 10 years of my life in a van when I should have put that energy into the Zero Boys — where there was a lot more potential for success.

**NUVO:** What lessons have you learned from running Radio Radio?

**D.C.:** Running a club is a lot harder than I thought it would be. It's hard to make everyone happy. It's a tricky balance between being a businessman and being an artist. Sometimes I get it right and sometimes I don't.

**NUVO:** What future plans do you have?

**D.C.:** I don't know. The last couple of years, I have been studying filmmaking, so I'd like to do something with that. Danny and I have been talking about taking Bigger Than Elvis to Europe. We've had more people ask about Zero Boys shows. Who knows? Maybe we'll sell everything, Roni and I will get married and we'll move to Hawaii. ■



**ROADMASTER**  
Genre: Rock

Roadmaster can trace its musical family tree back to 1967 when Asher "Adam Smasher" Benrubi met Michael Read while attending Shortridge High School. With the addition of Rob Swaynie, they formed the widely popular college band Pure Funk. By 1971, the lineup included Rick Benick (guitar), Toby Myers (bass) and Stephen Riley (drums).

After Pure Funk evolved to Roadmaster, Todd Rungren, front man for Utopia, invited the band to New York to record a demo. That led to a contract with Indianapolis label Village Records and the release in 1976 of the self-titled album. When Benrubi left the band, Steve McNally took over lead vocal duties. The band added cover tunes by J. Geils Band and Utopia to the R&B music they were currently playing.

Riley left the band in 1977 and Bobby Johns took over on drums. By the time the

second album was recorded, Village Records had become a subsidiary of Mercury. The summer of 1979, Roadmaster toured as the opening band for Pat Travers and Blue Oyster Cult. It was often included on the bills of huge outdoor shows on its off days. One of Myers' favorite memories is from a Columbus, Ohio, show. Touring in a Winnebago, that day the band went from being stuck in traffic (with "Drivin' Ivan" Solomon behind the wheel) to opening for the Cars, Cheap Trick, Eddie Money and Todd Rungren in front of 75,000 people. "It was blazing hot, and our set was roaring and the crowd loved it," Myers says.

The band dissolved in the early '80s and in 1989 played a local mini-reunion tour. McNally passed away in 1998. "We all miss Mac," Myers says. "His voice was truly one of a kind." Benrubi is now a St. Louis, Mo., morning radio personality and fronts the band Smash. Johns lives in Florida and works with children. Read continues to play music, currently with Zanna-Doo and Ribs and Bone, also writing scores for video projects. Benick played with Grand Ole Opry star Hal Ketchum.

While Benick lives in Nashville, Tenn., rumor has it he's moving back to Indiana. Myers played for John Mellencamp until 1999. He now plays with his band NoNet. At Nashville West, his studio, Myers records other bands and works on his own music.

—Nora Spitznogle

**THE STRUGGLERS**  
Genre: Blues/alt-country

The Strugglers started in a south of Broad Ripple house in 1970 and did not break up until one of the members moved out of town in 1985. The band had the same basic lineup for most of that time: Scott Ballantine (guitar), Jack Clarke (harmonica), Kevin Hughey (drums), Dave Langfitt (pedal steel), Joe Langfitt (bass) and Stanley Smith (clarinet and vocals).

Ballantine remembers, "The Strugglers played everywhere there was to play — we were on the bill with Les McCann the first weekend the Vogue was open. We played the Patio, Crazy Al's [and] Caesars' Pub [later the Stone Mug]," he says. "All said we were really a creature of the Hummingbird and played there a lot — [having] warmed up for Mose Allison, Newgrass Revival, the Dillardards, Taj Mahal, Doc Watson, Townes Van Zandt and many more sort of famous people. We once played a stint at the Patio for a year straight [six nights a week] when Gordon Atchinson owned it. Dave Letterman was a big fan and came in late every night after doing the weather on Channel 13."

Smith's favorite memories are of the Crazy Al's gigs. "Sometimes we would play the whole week," Ballantine says. "Each night would get a little crazier than the last. I have tapes of some of those nights when I'm brave enough to listen. We were a crazy

band for those times. We mixed Chicago blues, Western swing, old rare country tunes and some jazz."

The band members insist they invented newgrass (progressive bluegrass) in 1972 at Union Grove in North Carolina. "Sam Bush won't admit it, I'm sure, but he stole the whole idea from the lowly brain-addled Strugglers," Ballantine says.

Ballantine plays several times a week as a solo guitarist with his jazz trio and with several bands (including The ReachArounds and the Amy Lashley Band). He also owns Funhouse Guitars and Records. Clarke works for the Marion County Board of Heath and breaks out the harmonica. Hughey has a picture framing business and still drums. Langfitt also owned Hit City Recording. He sold that to Tim Brickley, and now plays music with Randy King. Langfitt works at the Monroe County Library.

Smith moved to Austin, Texas, and played many years with the Asylum Street Spankers. He is the leader of the Jazz Pharaohs. He has played in all but three states, toured Europe five times, released his first solo album in 2003 and toured Japan. He's playing a full schedule in Austin.

The band recently reunited for Clarke's birthday. The show was full of old fans singing along and dancing so hard the floor was moving. The Strugglers still sound fantastic — even 37 years later.

—Nora Spitznogle



**TOXIC REASONS**  
Genre: Punk/hard rock  
[www.myspace.com/toxicreasons02](http://www.myspace.com/toxicreasons02)

Toxic Reasons stands tall and proud alongside the Zero Boys as one of the biggest, baddest and loudest hardcore bands from Indianapolis. From its beginnings as a Dayton, Ohio, transplant playing straight-up, old-school punk to its prime-time peak in the late '80s as a hardcore metal sensation, Toxic Reasons' Bruce Stuckey has stuck it out.

"All I had was this band," he says. "If anybody quit or left, I had to replace them. I had to keep Toxic Reasons going."

Spend any time at all with Stuckey and you will hear the most incredible stories — like the time the band was stuck in Vancouver, Canada, living in Joey Shithead's pad, and the only thing they had to eat was a 100-pound bag of potatoes. Or you'll hear about the time they opened a rabid Dead Kennedy's gig in San Francisco, Calif., and nearly stole the show. The stories go on and on.

Nowadays, even though Stuckey has found a calling as a chef in one of the top

restaurants in town, and after battling the arthritis in his hands for years, he still can't let go of Toxic Reasons. "This group of guys is probably the best group I had in a long, long time," he says of his new bandmates, guitarist Kurt Harley, bassist Jason Pizzleman and the group's original drummer, J.J. Pearson. "We get in a room together and it's like, almost effortless."

Toxic Reasons is planning to reissue the classic *Kill By Remote Control* album for the first time on CD as the group heads to Europe for four show dates early this spring, and new songs are continuously posted on the Web. Plans also include making most of the band's music available for download.

"With J.J. back in the band drumming and singing a lot more, we are doing more of the old-school stuff," Harley says. "Now, when you come to a Toxic Reasons show, you get to experience everything the band means and has meant ... We're still doing this because nobody's killed us yet!"

—Jeff Napier



**THE WHY STORE**  
Genre: Pop

The Why Store was started in the late 1980s at Ball State University in Muncie, Ind., by students Chris Shaffer and Michael David Smith. With local drummer Greg Gardner, they played a few gigs as Emerald City. Adding Charlie Bushor on drums, Gardner moved

to bass, and the band changed its name to the Why Store. In recording *Welcome to the Why Store* in 1993, it officially added keyboard player Jeff Pedersen to complete the lineup.

The groove-pop sound was a big hit with fans. The "Whomheads," the 8,000-member fan club, followed the band from gig to gig. The band signed to Way Cool Music/MCA in 1995 and released *The Why Store*. The single "Lack of Water" landed the band on radio and the *Conan O'Brien* TV show. Shaffer's favorite Why Store show took place at Red Rocks with Ben

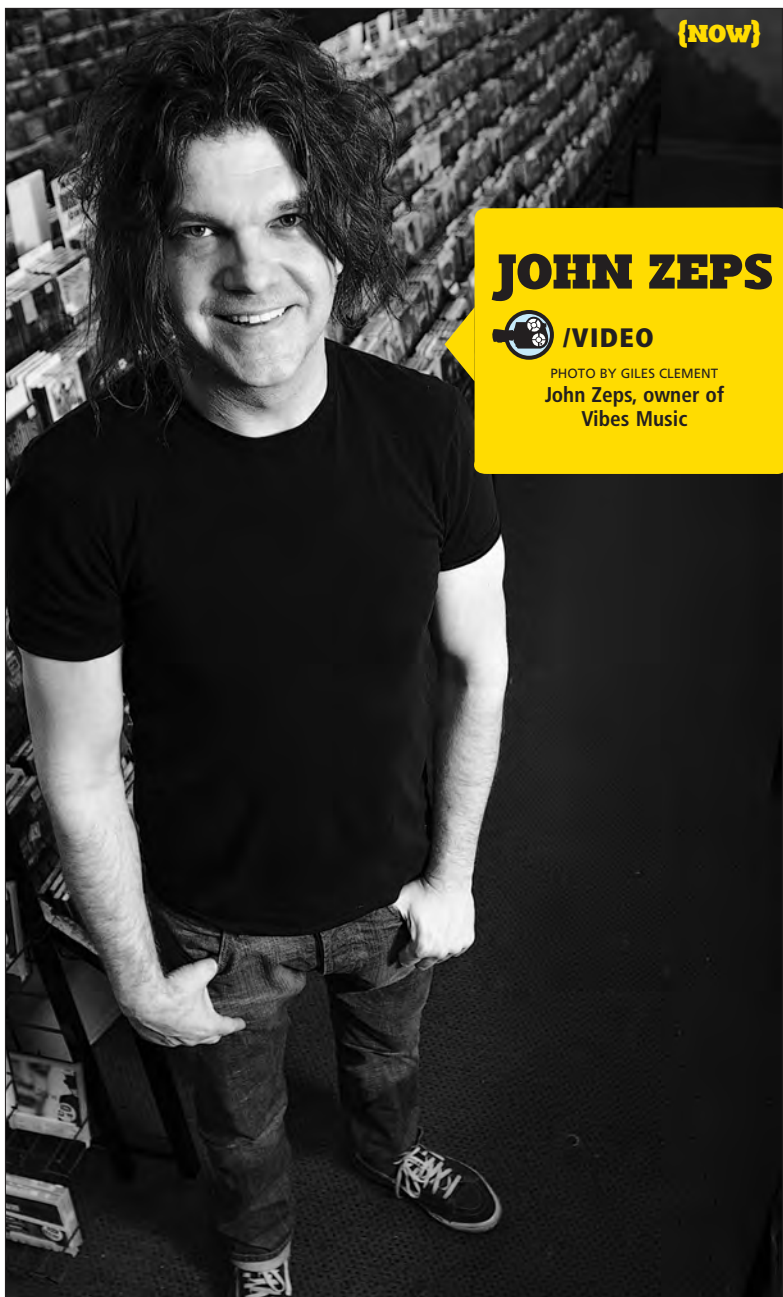
Harper, the Samples and Medeski, Martin and Wood. "There was a full moon that night and all of the hippies in Colorado were there to celebrate," he says. "It was magic."

The band broke up in 2000 and has played a few reunion shows since then. All have gone on to other musical projects. Shaffer's first post-Why Store project, *Shaffer Street*, ended in 2004, and he launched a solo career. Shaffer's latest CD, *Vim*, was released this January. He continues to write and "play for his supper." Smith is a Peavey guitar rep who plays with Rich Hardesty. Gardner plays with

Zanna-Doo. Pederson lives in Louisville, Ky., and specializes in children's education. Bushor produces jingles with his father, Skeet Bushor at Skeet's Music, and plays with Carl Storie.

The Why Store's music continues to be heard on radio stations worldwide. Shaffer recently received an e-mail from a programmer in France requesting a copy of *Vim* to play with the rest of the Why Store catalogue.

—Nora Spitznogle



(NOW)

## JOHN ZEPS

/VIDEO

PHOTO BY GILES CLEMENT  
John Zeps, owner of  
Vibes Music

**JOHN ZEPS**  
Genre: Hard rock/metal

If there were one guitarist to define rock music in Indianapolis, it would have to be John Zeps. The man can shred. His unmistakable sound varies from fast, squealing solos to odd-time signature crunches. He may be best known for his work with Burn It Down, a political hardcore band that could raise a crowd up like few this town has seen. After releasing 2000's *Let the Dead Bury the Dead*, an album that transcended two-minute thrashers and gave way to epic metal anthems, the band hung it up — save for a reunion show in 2005.

What few may know is just how many bands this guy has been in, most of which had a deep impact and have helped to influence the hard rock sound coming out of Indy.

Zeps took up guitar at age 12, and without ever having formal training, was soon tearing up basements and pissing off parents who wished they never bought their kids instruments. "I cut my teeth on hard rock and metal from the '70s," he says. "A few early influences were Randy Rhoads,

Yngwie Malmsteen and [Sonic Youth's] Thurston Moore."

After graduating from Ben Davis High School came a career move that would allow Zeps to practice at night and play gigs on the weekend: Tracks Records. However, he may have felt a little burnt out after a decade of running the counter and playing in several bands. "I almost moved to San Francisco with friends but stayed to own a record store," he says of buying the store in 2000 and changing the name to Vibes Music, located across from the Castleton Square Mall.

Zeps' latest band, Action Strasse, is a little more laid-back than previous outings. "It's definitely got more of an indie rock feel to it," he says. You can also catch him playing out with Lukewarm Bodies (At Best) and Amongst the Swarm.

After years of playing, touring, recording and then of course the day job, do you think Zeps is satisfied? "Never," he says. "I always try to reinvent myself and keep everyone guessing what I'll do next."

—Mel Duncan



(THEN)

## THE ZERO BOYS

SUBMITTED PHOTO

David "Tufty" Clough,  
Terry Howe, Paul Mahern  
and Mark Cutsinger

### THE ZERO BOYS

Genre: Punk/hard rock  
www.zeroboys.net

*Vicious Circle* may just prove to be the most influential album ever to come out of Indiana. More than 25 years after Indianapolis hardcore punkers the Zero Boys released this landmark album of Midwestern punk fury, the album still sells copies and is nearly universally revered due to its innovative (at the time) mix of Johnny Thunder's swagger with the more militant West Coast sound.

With an appearance in the recent American hardcore documentary and with all the band members involved in pretty much every corner of the local music scene, the Zero Boys is about as active today as it ever was, albeit in different, varied ways. Although original guitarist Terry Hollywood died a few years ago, the mach II version of the band with Vess Ruhtenberg in Hollywood's slot has been well-received, selling out one-off gigs across the country.

Bassist David "Tufty" Clough is co-owner of Future Shock and also owns Radio Radio. Drummer Mark Cutsinger plays in at least three bands at any one time. Ruhtenberg is touring behind Evan Dando in the Lemonheads and has joined up with former Majhas alumni in the killer local group Action Strasse. Lead vocalist Paul Mahern has worked in the studio with everybody from the Why Store to Iggy Pop and currently operates the White Ark, where he's working with Red Light Driver, Kaiser Cartel and Sloppy Seconds. He also practices and teaches Kundalini yoga.

Mahern sees little difference between yoga practice and punk rock. "When Iggy sings, 'Raw power got a healin' hand, raw power can destroy a man, raw power is more than soul,' he is talking about that same life force that is Kundalini," he says.

Ruhtenberg was almost giddy with the excitement of a couple recent gigs: one with the Lemonheads at the Vogue in February and a January gig at Spin with Action Strasse. Of Action Strasse, he declares, "The Strasse! Das ist mein Lieblings-gruppe!" which, roughly translated, means, "The Strasse! That is my favorite band!"

Look for a Zero Boys show or two this year.

—Jeff Napier

# A new Spin on a legendary bar

## Inspiring Broad Ripple

BY JEFF NAPIER • MUSIC@NUVO.NET



(NOW)

PHOTO BY MELONSHE  
Gideon Navarro general  
manager of Spin  
Nightclub

Live music is back at the venue formally known as the Patio. For whatever reason, there's still a little bit of resistance to the concept of Indy's new Spin Nightclub ([www.myspace.com/spinindy](http://www.myspace.com/spinindy)) from local scenesters. It's almost as if your significant other left, only to come back expecting all to be as it was before. I know. I felt it too before I stepped back into the venue formally known as the Patio.

But once inside, it was like going back to my boyhood bedroom. All the psychic energy was still there, and soon, if general manager Gideon Navarro has his way, we will forgive and forget all about this rock and roll queen's stint with cigar-smoking conservatives who wanted to hear bad Billy Joel songs.

Through the years, the Patio was a steadfast pillar within the Indianapolis rock community. Bands like Nirvana, Tad and Smashing Pumpkins played there before anyone knew who they were. Local bands like the Rastabilly Rebels, Toxic Reasons and Birdmen of Alcatraz built up the biggest part of their respective legends through barnstorming performances at the club. For the better part of two decades, anybody who wanted to be anybody in rock music in this town had to play the Patio. Then, at the end of 2005, it was suddenly announced that the Patio was closing to be turned into a piano bar known as Rouge.

It was a seismic shock on a scale with the closing of CBGB in New York. Hundreds, if not thousands, of local music fans came out to pay their respects during the last few shows, and with a final performance by Otis Gibbs, the club was no more. Enter Navarro, who worked at the Patio from 1992-'95 as a doorman and waiter before moving over to the Vogue. In March of last year, he became general manager at Rouge. "That was a little painful," he says. However, within a matter of months, the

piano bar fizzled out, and Navarro immediately tried to get live rock back into the room. A few ups and downs followed as he was fired, the bar was sold and the new owner, Todd Johnson, rehired Navarro as the general manager of the newly rechristened Spin Nightclub.

I spoke to Navarro when I recently visited the club. It was my first time back since the Patio's closing. A positive, upbeat guy who genuinely loves music, Navarro showed me how he had put the old graffiti-covered walls back up in the band room (man, the stories that little room could tell!) and told me of plans to paint the place back to black — a more rock 'n' roll color. But mainly, he was excited to bring live rock music back to Broad Ripple on a regular basis with the leadership of Johnson.

"Indy needs a boost to its music scene," Navarro says. "There are dance places all over. I am hoping to help in creating resurgence in the live music scene in Indy."

Even though he says he wants to bring back that old Patio "feel" to the bar, he wants to do something with a different "Spin." His modus operandi seems to follow what made the room so successful in the past: inviting hip, breaking national touring bands, cultivating the crop of local original bands and giving them a chance to build an audience.

Right now, Navarro's biggest hurdle is getting the message out to those heart-broken souls who feel betrayed by the Patio's short-lived dalliance with commercialism. "This is a great rock and roll room," Navarro says. "It's still the same as it ever was; it just has a new name. I thank everyone that has given Spin Nightclub a chance. But if you still can't get yourself to come into the 'old Patio,' at least get off your butt and support the bands trying to keep live music going in Indy!" ■