Two music festivals, one weekend stirs controversy



You've got a decision to make. And it won't be easy.

If you want to see the best bands

see the best bands the Detroit area has to offer, you'll either be heading to Ham-tramck or down-town Detroit

town Detroit d. The more ambi-

this weekend. The more ambitious local music supporters might trek out to both cities to catch a glimpse of more than 150 bands vying for a little hometown support.

On March 8, 9 and 10, Hamtramck clubs and bars host the fourth annual Hamtramck Blowout, a local music showcase sponsored by the Metro Times, A portion of the proceeds from the Blowout benefit the Motor City Music Foundation, which produces the Detroit Music Awards. About 80 of the 99 Blowout bands are new to the list this year.

organizer Anthony Morrow acid the event stays true to its vision: "Each year attendees have the opportunity to catch acts before they get big. Acts who wouldn't normally be given much exposure are thrust into the spotlight,".

The spotlight shines also this weekend on a group of local musicians who dared to introduce a rival event, the first-ever Mid By Midwest Music Fest. The Detroit-centered benefit will raise money for HAVEN- a Pontiac-based nonprofit organization

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dedicated to eliminating domes-tic violence, child abuse and sex-ual abuse through prevention and counseling. With more than 65 performers in six downtown venues, this two-day festival has manged to get the local music community talking.

Exposed

Atomic Numbers guitarist Zach Shipps said he supports the idea behind both festivals. "Hon-

Zach Shipps said he supports the idea behind both festivals. "Honestly, anything that gets more exposure to more Detroit bands is good," said Shipps. "And there are some great bands on both schedules."

Shipps and bandmate Jeff Hupp will join the line up for The Mood Elevator to play Mid By Midwest, along with special guest Brendan Benson. TME frontman Christopher Plum sounded excited to get the band together for this special show, after going on hiatus in 2000. "Since I knew the people promoting this show, I felt very much a piece of it," said Plum.

Chris Johnston, singor of 19 Wheels, has signed on for the Blowout, but considers both festivals a sign of "rejuvenation" in the scene. "This is the 'good' kind of competition. It's not about stuffing ballots, it's about trying to get people to come to your show. It puts a tremendous amount of focus on the local scene for one solid weekend. Now we just have to maintain the feeling."

Blush's Amy Anselm isn't at all conflicted. Her band is scheduled to play both festivals. "This weekend is one that people

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shouldn't miss, even if you're not a big local munic fan," she said. In a way, Mid By Midwest is an evolution of the concept created by the Hamtramck Blowout. Its creators and participants are musicians well-rooted in the music scene. The estival celebrates their solidarity.

"Both events have their positives," and Willy Wilson, radio host at WDET. "The Blowout was started as a way to get people to come out and check out local bands in an area where could go from club to club and see bands they always wanted to see. I loved that idea.

"The thing I like about Mid By Midwest is that the money raised supports a local charity instead of an awards show, that in the past hasn't really represented what is happening on the local music scene."

DMA's

The Detroit Music Awards are meant to honor and offer expensure to local performers each year. But some musicians, like Jasper Unfriendly of the punk rock outfit The Unfriendlys, question the decision-making

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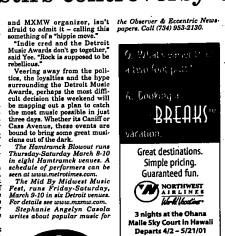
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process. Opting for Mid By Midwest because of its line up, he too feels the Awards are out of touch and tend to nominate and honor the same musicians year after year. "If an outsider was to look over the nominoes and winners of the Music Awards in the past, one would think the city has made no progress and has no new talent to offer," he said.

Radium's Tabatha Predovich, however, supports the Detroit Music Awards. Her band was nominated for an award last year. "Everyone can get together at the State Theatre and meet and hear other local musicians," she said. "Plus, there's industry people there. Anything to promote the local scene is good."

Morrow, who admits he isn't a fan of awards shows in general, had this to add: "Mid by Midwest is a direct result of a group of people feeling like they have been ignored. Is what they're doing the mest constructive way to remedy the situation? Time will tell."





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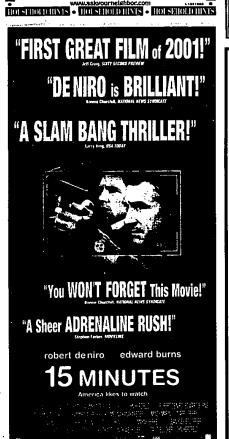
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