

# Competing local music festivals face off

With rivaling music festivals vying for downtown Detroit to the streets of Hamtramck, a battle is about to begin.

The long-established Hamtramck Blowout, a fundraiser for the Detroit Music Awards, vies against the second-coming of Mid By Midwest, a philanthropic-based fest in the heart of Rock City.

Organizers for both events ultimately seek the same end — some well-deserved attention for metro-area musicians. Both events are scheduled for next weekend.

## Blowout

"Hamtramck Blowout is now the largest, most diverse showcase of local musicians ever assembled for one event," said Anthony Morrow, producer, in an e-mail interview. "We added 70 more artists and 4 more venues. We turned the pre-party from an intimate gathering of musicians and media into a concert extravaganza complete with rock bands, DJs and a special circus performance featuring fire breathing, glass walking and much more."

Though more than 70 percent of this year's performers are new to Blowout, Morrow sounds most proud of the pre-party line up. "We wanted to put together a show that was a microcosm of the Detroit scene, a showcase that is very representative of the diversity of the Blowout itself."

"Speedball was one of the very first Detroit bands I was exposed to in that type of environment. What can I say that hasn't been said

## Mid By Midwest

**What:** A two-day romp around Detroit  
**When:** 8 p.m. to 2 a.m. Friday-Saturday, March 8-9  
**Where:** The Magic Stick, The Lager House, Old Miami, Motor City Brewing Works  
**Who:** Bands who deserve the hype, like The Deadstring Brothers, The Witches, They Come In Threes and The Come Ons  
**How much:** Wristbands are \$10 and single show cover is \$5, with proceeds donated to Food Bank of Oakland County and Gleaners Community Food Bank.  
**Details:** <http://mxbmw.com>

## Hamtramck Blowout

**What:** A four-day extravaganza featuring 12 venues and 168 diverse performers.  
**When:** Motor hosts a pre-party Wednesday, March 6; the festival runs Thursday-Saturday, March 7-9.  
**Where:** Attic Bar, Carbon Loungs, Club Coyotes, Holbrook Café, Lil's 21, Motor, New Dodge, Outer Limits, Psyche's Lounge, Shanani-gan's, and Tight Fittin' Jeans. A free shuttle is available.  
**Who:** From DJ Godfather to the soundscapes of Halon, The Sights to The Von Bondies to Paradime's rhymes, you'll find what you're looking for.  
**How much:** The pre-party is free to performers, \$5 to the public. Wristbands cost \$15, with proceeds going to purchase instruments and musical supplies for Detroit schools and a donation to WDET.  
**Details:** <http://blowout.metrotimes.com>

about the Von Bondies? Incredible songwriting, amazing live set, just great people to be around. I think that The Sights are arguably Detroit's most underrated band. DJ Godfather is a phenomenon that I can't wait to unleash on people. Booty music at its best."

## MXMW

At just two days, the mini-festival can't offer a wide array of local acts, but it does include some of the best. According to Joe Frezza, one of the festival's originators, out-of-town acts are new this year, including Chicago's The Dishes, and Pittsburgh's Mody Lemon.

As for those closer to home, Mid By Midwest features newcomers like EsQuiro and The Deadstring Brothers. Catch something shiny new by artists you haven't heard from in a while. Detroit's pop genius Bren-

dan Benson released *LAPALCA* this week, his first record in five years, and is about to head on tour with garage rock darlings The White Stripes.

The festival serves as a week-end preview for many local performers, like Outrageous Cherry and The Witches, who are about

to head to Austin, Texas for the South By Southwest music showcase. "This town is going through its most vital musical period in the last 30 years," Frezza said. "No question."

## Times two

For artists like Kevin Herron, known as EsQuiro, both festivals boil down to one thing — exposure. "I think this kind of music festival has the potential to expose people, who may not regularly go to shows, to new music," said the Huntington Woods resident. "It is easy to hop around from one venue to another and check out whoever interests you. And it brings a lot of media attention to a lot of acts as well, at least locally. We're not on the same level as CMJ or South By Southwest with fans, media and labels coming in from all over the universe but who knows? Detroit is the swinging music big right now, so maybe it will blow up soon."

EsQuiro will perform in Detroit and Hamtramck on March 9.

"We are adding a couple of new songs into our set and switching things up a bit," he said. "Some new costumes for the go-go girls, new dances, a remix version here, a lil' old

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**Kick off: The Von Bondies** — fronted by Jason Stallsteimer — are one of a host of featured performers Wednesday, March 6 at Motor for the Hamtramck Blowout's pre-party. Both the Blowout and Mid By Midwest music festivals begin next weekend.

Please see FACE OFF, B3

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