

to do 12 • 2012

# THIS ONE'S FOR *The Girls*

BY COURTNEY RAE KASPER | PHOTO BY BUBBA CRUMRINE

Area female musicians will take to the stage next month and battle it out for the ultimate prize

The curious absence of female musicians fronting the male-dominated music scene has long been a debate among music enthusiasts and one that has yet to lend itself to finding a solution. However, nestled at the south end of Cayuga Lake, one community of local music supporters have put a grassroots effort into action to encourage area girl groups to be heard loud and clear.

After a viral conversation sparked when independent concert promoter Ithaca Underground released a documentary last spring that mentioned the lack of equality within the local music scene, Darcey Laine, a former opera songstress, and her husband, Eric, owner of McNeil Music, were spurred to get involved.

“We really love the music scene here so we’re always looking for how we can support it and participate in it. My husband was the one that started the conversation. He’s been a feminist since back when we were courting, which is part of what I loved about him,” said Laine with a laugh. “He sees all these women come in and teach music, take music lessons, and buy bass strings and other gear, but we both noticed that in Ithaca you see a dispro-



Artwork by Mel Casano

portionate amount of male musicians. He asked me, ‘what could we do to change this?’” The answer: create a local girl bands “Battle of the Bands.”

On Jan. 19 (also the birthday of respected rock goddess Janis Joplin) girl groups — at least one more female than male band member — from across Central New York and the Finger Lakes will battle it out on stage at The Haunt. Each group has 15 minutes in the spotlight to wow the panel of judges — boasting notable female musicians like Judy Hyman, Elisa Sciscioli and Maddy Walsh — and the audience with their song-writing knack, musicianship, originality and enthusiasm. The winning act gets a budding band’s dream opportunity: an all-day recording session at Pyramid Studios in Ithaca and 300 copies of a seven-inch vinyl record on the Angry Mom Records’ label.

“The idea is to encourage female musicians and their creativity and to make them feel more welcome, especially the younger ones who aren’t sure how to break into the business,” said Mel Casano, an I.U. music booster and the first lady

Laine tapped to join the mostly female steering committee. “I remember a time when there was a lot more sistership between the cities, so we wanted to include cities that were close enough so that we could get a network working and make sure that bands would be close enough to come back to record at our local studio and record store. We’re hoping to find a diverse group of bands and see as much creativity as possible; we want to see what the people in this town can really do.” ■



Mel Casano

## SAVE THE DATE

**WHEN:** 6 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 19

**WHAT:** Finger Lakes Girl Band  
“Battle of the Bands”

**WHERE:** The Haunt, 702 Willow Ave., Ithaca

**HOW:** The event, whether entrant or viewer, is free and open to all ages and music genres. Register by Dec. 1 at [www.fingerlakesgirlbands.org](http://www.fingerlakesgirlbands.org), or email [fingerlakesgirlbands@gmail.com](mailto:fingerlakesgirlbands@gmail.com).