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# Arts & Entertainment



MUSICFEST...Collective Soul, left, will headline at the Union County MusicFest on Friday, September 16, at Oak Ridge Park in Clark. The Smithereens, right, will perform at the Union County MusicFest for New Jersey Family Day presented by Kean University, on Sunday, September 18, at Oak Ridge Park in Clark.

## MusicFest Adds Collective Soul, 'Southside Johnny' and The Smithereens to Line-Up

*Blondie to perform at MusicFest September 17*

UNION COUNTY – Triple-platinum recording artists Collective Soul will headline at Union County MusicFest 2011 on Friday, September 16, joining five days of free music on multiple stages at the Union County Fair in Oak Ridge Park in Clark from Wednesday September 14 to Sunday September 18.

Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes, one of the top acts to come out of the Jersey Shore music scene, will also join MusicFest to headline "New Jersey Family Day" at the Union County Fair, presented by Kean University on Sunday, September 18.

Longtime indie favorites The Smithereens, fronted by Union County native Pat DiNizio, are also slated to perform on New Jersey Family Day.

For Family Day, MusicFest will be given over to top New Jersey performing artists, from national touring acts to hometown favorites.

As previously announced, international recording stars Blondie will take the stage at MusicFest on Saturday, September 17.

MusicFest is the highlight of Union County's free seasonal outdoor music series, which lasts all summer long.

As part of the five-day Union

County Fair, MusicFest starts on Wednesday, September 14, at Oak Ridge Park in Clark. Free MusicFest concerts are featured throughout the fair, with New Jersey Day wrapping up the festivities on Sunday, September 18.

The Union County Fair also features a full-scale carnival, children's activities, and many other attractions including the Rock on! Walkathon and 5K Rock 'n' Run fundraisers to fight cancer in partnership with the Love, Hope, Strength Foundation and The Valerie Fund, which is based in Union County.

The Union County Fair featuring MusicFest is sponsored by the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders and numerous partners in the business and non-profit sectors including Overlook Medical Center, which returns as presenting sponsor of MusicFest for the fourth year.

Band announcements will be ongoing. For continuous updates visit [theucfair.org](http://theucfair.org), [ucmusicfest.org](http://ucmusicfest.org), and [facebook.com/musicfest](http://facebook.com/musicfest), or follow the County Fair and MusicFest on Twitter, [ucnjmusicfest](http://ucnjmusicfest).

For information on the Love Hope Strength 5-K Rock 'n' Run, Rock On! Marathon, and bone marrow registry, visit the Union County Love

Hope Strength Association, [uclovehopestrength.com](http://uclovehopestrength.com).

Prospective sponsors can contact Cherron Rountree, Director, Union County Division of Intergovernmental Policy and Planning, (908) 527-4200 or [crountree@ucnj.org](mailto:crountree@ucnj.org).

## Westfield's Transit Radio Makes History at Starland Ballroom Earning Spot in Finals

By ERIC NIERSTEDT  
*Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times*

SAYREVILLE—In eighth grade, most kids have enough on their plate without making history. But Transit Radio, made up of four eighth-graders from Westfield, managed to find time this weekend to win a space in the finals of Jersey Shows' "Battle of the Bands," becoming the youngest band to ever do so.

Jersey Shows is an independent promotion company that works to give New Jersey bands a chance to showcase their music. Their "Battle of the Bands," which scours the entire state for talent, was whittled down to the final bands at Sayreville's Starland Ballroom this past weekend. The eclectic lineup featured groups such as the pop-punk Fuzzies and InSkagntio, who blended ska, folk, and covers together.

Transit Radio, who won a spot

earlier this year, took the stage between these two groups, and they were ready to go from the start. They launched into their first song, "Don't Let Go," a fast-and-hard rock song pushed forward by Mike Maguire's furious drumming and Connor Wynne's solid bass work. Guitarist Julian Mone, dressed for the occasion in a red suit and top hat, shone as he played a pentatonic lick reminiscent of AC/DC's classic fist-pumper, "Thunderstruck."

Rhythm guitarist Colin Barry established himself right after the song ended, pumping the crowd with banter as he introduced the band and asked how many audience members were from Westfield. He then joked that he was "sorry for you." Barry also mentioned that he was suffering from a sore throat, but knew he had a job to do that night. With that, Transit launched into "Summer Nights," a more melodic tune that, nevertheless, saw the band bouncing all around the stage (which they continued throughout their set).

Mone then took center stage, playing his own song, "Revelation of the Mind," which partly echoed Blink 182's, "Anthem Part II." Before playing, Mone and Barry jokingly engaged in a long intro about the song, before Barry urged Mone to start singing. The two would also share harmony on the song's powerful chorus.

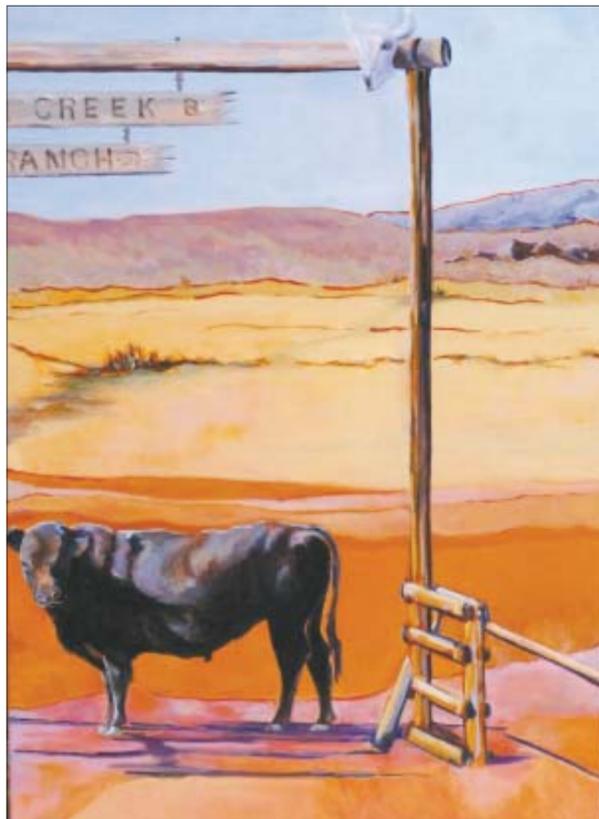
Barry would return to the mic for

the next song, the New Found Glory-esque "Sarah," where he showed the band's excellent showmanship. While pumping up the crowd, Barry took a wrong step backwards and fell. But he simply sat back up, smiled, and continued to clap as the band played on around him, with Wynne taking a slap-and-pop-heavy bass solo.

The group then did a small shift, as they introduced their next song, "I Can Feel It Coming," their only love song. While slightly mellower, the song was firmly entrenched in power-pop, with its heavy-but-poppy chord progressions and bursts of guitar picking.

The time then came for the band's final number (just as Barry announced his throat was feeling sore). Transit thanked Jersey Shows for allowing them the chance to play, the crowd for coming out, and Mone added a special shout-out to his father, wishing him happy birthday. The band then asked the crowd for help, as they began "The Day After That," with Mone making gestures for the crowd to chant along at various points.

The band wouldn't find out the results of the Battle until later that night, but their set gave them a history-making return to Starland on Saturday, August 27, where they will perform in the finals. Anyone who loves music should get a ticket as soon as possible.



HOME ON THE RANGE...Honey Corbin's paintings "Cattle Guard," above, was juried into a national show in Louisville, Colo. The oil painting is based on a photograph taken while the artist was in Wyoming last fall. Honey is the sister of *The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* Publisher Horace Corbin and Assistant Publisher and Sports Editor Dave Corbin.



SMOOTH OPERATORS...At the July 14 Village Green Summer Concert Series presented by the Scotch Plains Cultural Arts Committee, Funktion 11, above, rocked the crowd with their smooth, mo-town sound. Below, a performer-in-the-making sings along with Eva the Diva, the event's opening act. The next concert is slated for tonight and will feature Amazing Dave, a children's act, and Jazz Lobsters, as the main event.



HISTORY MAKING...Transit Radio, comprised of a group of Westfield students, became the youngest band to earn a spot in Jersey Shows' "Battle of the Bands" at Sayreville's Starland Ballroom this past weekend. Their performance made the grade and they will perform in the finals on Saturday, August 27.

## Provocative Play Invites All To Follow Me to Nellie's

By SUSAN MYRILL DOUGHERTY  
*Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times*

UNION — Of the more than 300 submissions to the 2011 Premiere Stages Play Festival at Kean University, *Follow Me to Nellie's*, by Dominique Morisseau was selected as this year's winner. Last weekend, packed houses at the intimate, comfortable Zella Fry Theatre glimpsed the "gold" that judges saw in naming *Nellie's* number one.

*Follow Me to Nellie's* is a thoughtful show about dreams; a freedom fighter's hope for a better future, a young black girl's fantasy to become "Ravishing Rose," a blues singer, and a houseful of women who long for a way out of their life in a brothel.

Set in Natchez, Mississippi in 1955, the two-act play by Ms. Morisseau transports the audience to a bleak time in history for African Americans. This is just before Rosa Parks' famous stance and well before true integration of southern schools. Ossie Brown (the dynamic Warner Miller), a student from Howard University, travels to Mississippi to "educate" fellow blacks on how to pass Jim Crow voting registration.

The nearly impossible test, administered by whites, was fraught with hoops through which prospective black voters jumped to get a registration card. When Brown secures secret accommodations in a backhouse building of the infamous brothel of Miss Nellie Jackson (Lynda Gravatt), he finds more than just lodging.

Miss Nellie, portrayed by the amazing actress Lynda Gravatt, is somewhat of an anomaly in her community. A larger-than-life figure and similar in ways to Rhett Butler's red-headed paramour Belle in *Gone with the Wind*, Nellie operates her whorehouse of black women with the precision of a military general. But she's

known throughout the area and respected by blacks and whites alike for her charitable donations to Natchez.

Each of the women who lives in her house has multi-layered stories and rich characterization. Nyahale Allie's portrayal of Marla, a hard-bitten vixen, shows what some women of color had to do to survive in the 1950s. Her fellow prostitutes — the seasoned, rational Ree Ann, played convincingly by Michelle Wilson and a younger, effervescent Sandy, played perfectly by Ley Smith — give a view of what mind games the women under went to survive. In a credible, revealing moment, Sandy counsels Marla that men might try to steal every bit of her, but she's able to overcome any situation by going to a place in her soul that no one can touch.

One of the key residents of Nellie's house is a beautiful young, fresh-faced girl named NaRose (Kelly McCreary) who dreams of becoming a blues singer some day. An orphan,

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Photo courtesy of Roy Groething  
LADY IN WAITING...Lynda Gravatt in the Premiere Stages at Kean University's production of *Follow Me to Nellie's* by Dominique Morisseau, directed by John Wooten.

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All Seats \$7.00

**Seussical Jr.**  
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1 PM & 8 PM Thursday, July 28  
Adults \$10.00 Students \$7.00

**Crazy for You**  
2 PM & 8 PM Saturday July 30  
2 PM & 8 PM Sunday, July 31  
\$11.00 Adults Students \$8.00

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