

Syracuse New Times - Feb. 6-13, 2008

## Something for Everyone

The Jan. 25 **Words and Music Songwriter Showcase**, a WAER-FM 88.3-sponsored event at **Jazz Central**, 441 E. Washington St., featured

a veritable smorgasbord for all music fans, from smoky blues to light and sentimental country and upbeat folk songs.

## Idle Chatter

**Jeffrey Pepper Rodgers**, National Public Radio music reporter and writer-turned-songwriter, started the night with the title track of his new, independent CD *Humming My Way Back Home*. That tune had a soft and airy quality akin to a lullaby. Watching Rodgers' live rendition grabbed a few chuckles due to a small instrument he called a strumstick, which looks like a broom handle with strings.

Following Rodgers was **Leo Crandall** of the local group **Gonstermachers**. His bluesy, sometimes hellish "The Night That Sam Cooke Died" cleared away the dreamy atmosphere left by Rodgers and replaced it with an overcast of darkness. His haunting moans and low growls channeled Muddy Waters' deep Mississippi blues.

Loving someone so much that it hurts seemed to be the central theme of **Dusty Pas'cal**'s music. The Skaneateles-based performer's "If I Can't Find You" was sentimental, delicate and bittersweet. The slight southern accent that Pas'cal injects into his songs gives them a country edge, which makes his music straddle between country and folk.

**Timothy Daniel** featured a pop-influenced style, yet Daniel has a way of tackling complex issues through innovative lyrics. No simple love songs exist in Daniel's catalog. "Desert Island" revealed a philosophy that proclaims no one is born with the skills of



**Timothy Daniel: Singer-songwriter featured his pop-based tunes during a Jan. 25 showcase at Jazz Central along with other area musicians.**

leadership. And "Happy Now," a melancholy song about that guy friend that a girl always runs and cries to regarding her jerky boyfriend, was the type of song that spoke about ineffable, romantic matters.

Rodgers returned with his musical manifesto, "My Life Doesn't Rhyme," about how Rodgers "pays [his] dues for artistic license." That song is quite possibly the only song in the world to have the word "spe-lunking" as a part of its lyrics. Rodgers then rounded out the first set with the rhythmic "American Dream," for which he insisted on audience participation in the form of drumming on the auditorium's pull-down desks.

The second half of the showcase was devoted to **Lisa Gentile**, a local songbird and 2007 *Syracuse New Times* Syracuse Area Music Award (Sammy) winner. Gentile started off by sharing a story with the

audience about how her parents' work at Motown Records has influenced her music. After a duet with Rodgers entitled "Fly," Gentile let the audience really hear her voice soar in "Carolina Sky."

Gentile talked to the audience in a way that made you feel as if she were a friend chatting with you over coffee between songs that yielded the same type of intimacy. In "Guys Like You," Gentile sang about the pressure to sleep your way to the top of the music business with an attitude and spunk that let the audience know that she stands her ground.

In the similarly soulful "Tell Him How You Like It," Gentile told women to speak their minds to get what they want from their men. With lyrics like "Tell him when it hurts/ tell him when it works" it's no wonder why she calls this piece her "dirty song." Yet the track also has an empowering quality that would make it a perfect candidate as an anthem for independent women.

—**Nichole Nichols**