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Against All Oddballs

■ Plus Bitch at Cafe Nine, Hanson at Toad's and the Space's Battle of the Bands.

March 1, 2007

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Against Me!

With Riverboat Gamblers and Fake Problems. March 1, 8 p.m. at Toad's Place, 300 York St., New Haven. \$15. (203) 624-TOAD, toadsplace.com.

Since their first tentative spits into the whole realm of punk rock, Against Me! have received a goodly amount of attention. First, it was them getting the recognition from the fans as being a damned fine punk band with a rebel-rousing, modern-era Clash or Billy Bragg vibe to their curb-spawned musical aggression. After getting enough crowds sweaty and more fists raised in the air, they got the attention of the glossy mags who hyped them to hell as some new punk rock translations of Springsteen or Dylan or something. That led to major label attention and promises of big money contracts. Then they got the branded "sell-outs," like all punk bands do when their audience grows or when they do something different.

But the words that remained steadfast, whether the band played for 12 people or 1,200, got ink in a zine or some slicked-up magazine, was, "You should check these fuckers out live." Maybe with that in mind, Against Me! released *Americans Abroad!!! Against Me!!! Live In London!!!* last year; a street slap of a live record, time encapsulating one of their sing-a-long spectaculars of old tunes, newer ones, plus one never-before-released one.

—Craig Gilbert

Hanson

March 2, 9:15 p.m. at Toad's Place, 300 York St., New Haven. \$25. (203) 624-TOAD, toadsplace.com.

Hanson? Like Hanson Hanson?!? Geez! What the hell happened to those kids? Aren't they all, like, junkies or something?

Well, those kids grew up since the late '90s. They're married and have kids of their own now. And Hanson is on tour.

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A comeback?

No comeback. They never left, actually. The brothers have been playing and recording since they broke out all over the place in 1997 and now are touring for the upcoming May release of their new album, *The Walk* .

But they're so not cool!

Well, they got signed when they were kids on the basis of their insanely infectious pop hit "Mmm Bop," which got airplay everywhere. After their second album, their big-time record producers didn't hear the next "money-maker" out of nearly 80 songs the band wrote for them. So the three brothers quit their major label deal and they've been putting out records on their own indie label, 3CG Records, ever since.

Well, I dunno, I guess that's kind of cool. But seriously now, who the hell likes them?

I don't know anyone personally. But for their March 2 Toad's show, there were 650 tickets sold the first day they went on sale. How many tickets did *your* band sell?

—Craig Gilbert

Bitch & the Exciting Conclusion

With The Karner Blues. March 3 at Cafe Nine, 250 State St., New Haven. \$10. (203) 789-8281, cafenine.com.

Back in the '80s, in the heady days of the women's music movement, dykes had an all-encompassing scene of performers, culture and music they could experience on a personal and political level. Sure, there are still plenty of lesbians making music today, but are any of them as interesting and inspiring as Bitch? Are any of them as likely to rant about our president as she is to coo sweet songs for a tranny-leaning lover? Or likely to be as influential as Bitch is in the long run, with her strong commitment to women's culture and unique ability to write awesome songs about strap-on cocks? Ex of duo Bitch and Animal (one of the best dyke bands ever), and now leading Bitch & the Exciting Conclusion, the performer/performance artist/big personality and her band play our town this week. Here to celebrate the recent release *Make This Break This* , with its whimsical, sexy and politically scathing tunes, Bitch always inspires with her punk-femme, red-and-green dreadlocked, violin-wielding, unapologetically lefty alterna-self. And as if she didn't have enough star-power already, Bitch is featured in the film *Shortbus* , and is currently dating *The L Word* 's Daniela Sea, making them one of today's hottest dyke power couples. Not inspired yet? Then check out her

MySpace page to see the adoration that only a true leader can muster. As one fan writes, "Bitch is love."

—Rachel Pepper

Battle of the Bands

*March 7 at The Space, 295 Treadwall St., Hamden. \$10.
(203) 288-6440, thespace.tk.*

We like bands. We love violence. The rare combination of the two turns us into keyed-up, foot-stomping 8-year-olds, after which point we're impossible to reign in until we've completely exhausted ourselves. The Space is well aware of this, and yet lucky for you, they still stage their highly competitive, already well established Battle of the Bands.

This is The Space's fourth battle in under two years. If you think that sounds ambitious, just look at the process: The application phase ended last week, and Thursday, March 7 marks the first of the nine qualifying rounds at the base of a Byzantine pyramid of rock combat. The event seems to grow every time it's put on, and the Spacemen are expecting up to 48 bands at the outset this time. That will be pared down to 16 after a month of qualifying rounds. Three semifinal bouts in April will bring the number of bands down to eight that—strength and stamina permitting—will duke it out in a distant final round on May 18. In the end, two bands will share the championship title. Many of the critics' choices so far have been upbeat pop bands, including The Cavemen Go, Queen Killing Kings and Album.

Combatants will be evaluated by a panel of 10 to 15 local music-types: radio DJs, musicians, promoters and music writers, including the *New Haven Advocate*'s own Music Notes columnist, the sage and authoritative Brian LaRue. Armed with their hyper-critical tastes, judges will select the best performers based on stage presence, originality, power and (presumably) fighting skills. One band will make it to the final round simply by drawing the largest crowd. Cover songs garner immediate disqualification, and drugs and booze must be left at the door—no bullshit, all business.

The victors will be utterly and eternally glorified. They'll also score a thousand bucks worth of rock-related desirables including studio time, a pro photo shoot, a wad of cash, and lots of performance opportunities at the Space.

—Hugh Elton

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