



PHOTO: PETER BISSELL

Our area is overflowing with a dizzying array of **musical talent**. From rock to folk and everything in between, music fans can find a way to please their musical palate without having to drive south. We met up with three talented bands to talk about their music, their influences, and what's next on their playlist. BY EDDIE ADELMAN

the metro



The Mallett Brothers Band.

*M*aine has a long and celebrated history of musical excellence. Starting in the 1950s, there was country icon Dick Curless. In the 1970s and '80s, rockers such as the Blend, Bill Chinnock,

Aztec Two Step, and Bebe Buell had record contracts with major labels.

Of course, folk music has always had a strong hold on Maine, with artists like David Mallett, Gordon Bok, Devonsquare, Ellis Paul, Patty Griffin, and Schooner Fare. Also, let's not forget the national artists

who adopted Maine as their new home, like Don McLean, Noel Paul Stookey (of Peter, Paul, and Mary), Jonathan Edwards, and Dan Fogelberg.

Today, that Maine tradition of stellar music is alive and well. And no more so than right here in the Bangor metro area.

One person who's had the privilege of hearing this outstanding local music firsthand is Denis Howard, the music director at WERU, the eclectic community radio station in Blue Hill.

"We're truly blessed to have so much extraordinary music being recorded and performed live in this part of the state," Howard says. "Whether it's country, folk, reggae, jazz, blues, or rock, the bar is set really high around here. Local musicians from Presque Isle to Brunswick receive airplay on WERU, and our listeners can't get enough of them."

There's clearly an abundance of outstanding musical groups in this part of the state. For this article, we've chosen to focus on three of them.

■ THE MALLETT BROTHERS BAND

We met up with the Mallett brothers at the Tim Horton's in Newport on their way to a show at the sold-out Sangerville Grange Hall. Looking across the table at Luke Mallett, 27, and Will Mallett, 26, it was almost eerie to see the stunning physical resemblance to their father, Maine folk and country legend David Mallett. They both have distinctive red hair and broad, engaging smiles. Like father, like sons.

But the resemblance doesn't end there. The sons obviously inherited their father's musical gene, as well. They've put that gene to great use on their alternative

country and rock debut album, consisting of original songs, simply titled *The Mallett Brothers Band*.

"There was always music in our house when I was growing up, both in Nashville and Maine," Luke Mallett says. "And there were instruments everywhere. It seems like I tried everything. When I was about 5, I picked up a bass guitar, just to try it out. I even played the drums for a while."

But being in a household of musicians (his mother plays the French horn and his sister plays the fiddle), Luke needed to somehow find his own niche. And that came in the form of writing songs.

"When I was 12, I began writing lyrics to the music I was playing," Luke recalled. "It felt really comfortable. I carried a notebook around with me wherever I went. I even wrote on the walls of my bedroom. Of course, singing was a natural extension of this. Early on, I was all over the map, musically—heavy metal, blues, even a hard-core band. But eventually, I started concentrating more on acoustic guitar and country music."

Brother Will had a similar experience of starting to play music at a young age. "Somewhere around the age of 10, I started playing electric guitar," Will says. "But when I got to high school, I switched over

to the acoustic guitar. It was just easier to lug around, and you can play it anywhere. I didn't really begin to write songs until I was out of college."

"I carried a notebook around with me wherever I went. I even wrote on the walls of my bedroom." —Luke Mallett

Two years ago in their hometown of Dover-Foxcroft, Luke and Will finally began to collaborate, energized in no small part by their mutual love of country music. Luke was attracted to the sounds of "outlaw" country artists like Waylon Jennings and Kris Kristofferson, while Will was more enamored with the uncluttered sound of early country icons like Hank Williams, Merle Haggard, and Buck Owens.

About 18 months ago, the two brothers took the next step. They formed a six-piece band, called The Mallett Brothers Band, which concentrates on an alternative country, rock sound.

Will plays acoustic and electric guitar, banjo, and vocals. Luke also performs vocals and plays acoustic guitar. Nick Leen plays the bass guitar; Brian Higgins plays the drums. Nate Soule plays acoustic and electric guitars, organ, mandolin, and performs vocals. Wally Wenzel not only plays the dobro and electric guitar, but also



From left: Will Mallett, Nick Leen, Nate Soule, Luke Mallett, Wally Wenzel, and Brian Higgins.

PHOTO: PETER BISSELL

produced their album. The group is managed by Lara Sullivan.

Both Mallett brothers admit that the name recognition of their father has helped their careers, at least here in Maine.

"So many people in Maine are familiar with our father's music," Will says. "And it certainly helps that our own music seems to appeal to much of the same crowd. Our band opened up for our dad at the Chocolate Church in Bath last year. We also played together with him onstage. What a great night." That show was rebroadcast on Maine Public Television.

Listening to the band's debut album feels, at times, like stepping on the gas pedal of a fast car, and at other times, like sitting in a rocking chair on the front porch.

There's the toe-tapping "Walking down the River," the country western "Last Man Standing," the sweet acoustic rhythm guitars on "Black Moon," and the hard-driving "Wrong Kind of Woman." There's also the lyrically and musically exquisite "Watch You Walk Away," which would be right at home on Neil Young's classic album *Comes a Time*.

The Mallett Brothers Band has played every type of venue from rock clubs to grange halls to outdoor festivals. But when asked which venue they'd most love to play in the future, both brothers answered in unison, "The Grand Ole Opry." Like father, like sons.

■ SAM AND YURI

Sam Chase and Yuri Trusty have a bond that transcends their music. That bond is a close friendship that goes back to when they first met as freshmen at Bangor High School.

It didn't take long for them to realize that they had something very special in common. It was a passion for music, both creating and performing it. With Chase focused on guitar, and Trusty on the keyboards, the symmetry was undeniable.

That was seven years ago. Their comradeship and musical collaboration have matured with time. Now in their early 20s, they're poised to take their musical chemistry and talent to the next level.

Even though their name sounds like a duo, they're actually part of a five-piece



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band. The other members include Chase and Trusty's former Bangor High classmates Cody Allard on drums and guitar, Mike Wellington on electric guitar and viola, and Jared Botting on bass.

Both Chase and Trusty are self-taught musicians. "When I was 14, my older brother had an electric guitar down in the basement," Chase says. "One day I just went down there and started to play around with it. From that moment on, I knew that music would be a big part of my life. Eventually, I moved on to the acoustic guitar, because it was easier to play and

compose songs on."

With Trusty, it was the family piano. "There was a real comfort level with the piano," Trusty says. "I tried guitar for a while, but ultimately it was the piano that really spoke to me. That's where I was most at ease writing songs and expressing myself musically."

Chase and Trusty describe their music as acoustic, folk-rock fusion. They're strongly influenced by some of their favorite classic performers, like the Beatles, Simon and Garfunkel, Queen, and the Everly Brothers. More contemporary influences



From left: Jared Botting, Cody Allard, Yuri Trusty, Mike Wellington, and Sam Chase.

include Coldplay, Radiohead, Wu-Tang Clan, REM, and Death Cab for Cutie.

An especially notable aspect of the Sam and Yuri sound is their impeccable harmonizing.

"Yuri and I started harmonizing early on," Chase says. "We would draw on a lot of different sounds, put the ingredients together, and just let it boil. We both have individual voices, but together we create something bigger, something greater than the sum of its parts. We learned a lot listening to Simon and Garfunkel."

Cindy Michaels, anchor and news director at WVII ABC 7 News, is the band's

"I tried guitar for a while, but ultimately it was the piano that really spoke to me." –Yuri Trusty

manager. "The first time I heard Sam and Yuri at the Sea Dog in Bangor, I fell in love with their sound," Michaels says. "Their versatility blew me away. Each song is so unique. I see the future in Sam and Yuri.

The edges of this diamond in the rough are starting to sparkle."

Even at this early stage in their career, Chase and Trusty have already logged a lot of musical miles, performing as a duo in Key West in 2008, and with the entire band in Austin, Texas, in 2009. Both of these trips were highlighted by a signifi-

cant number of local bookings, which tightened up the band musically.

"We've always been close friends, but there's nothing like going out on the road and playing," Trusty says. "On that trip to Austin, we really grew as a band. The musical communication was taken to a whole new level."



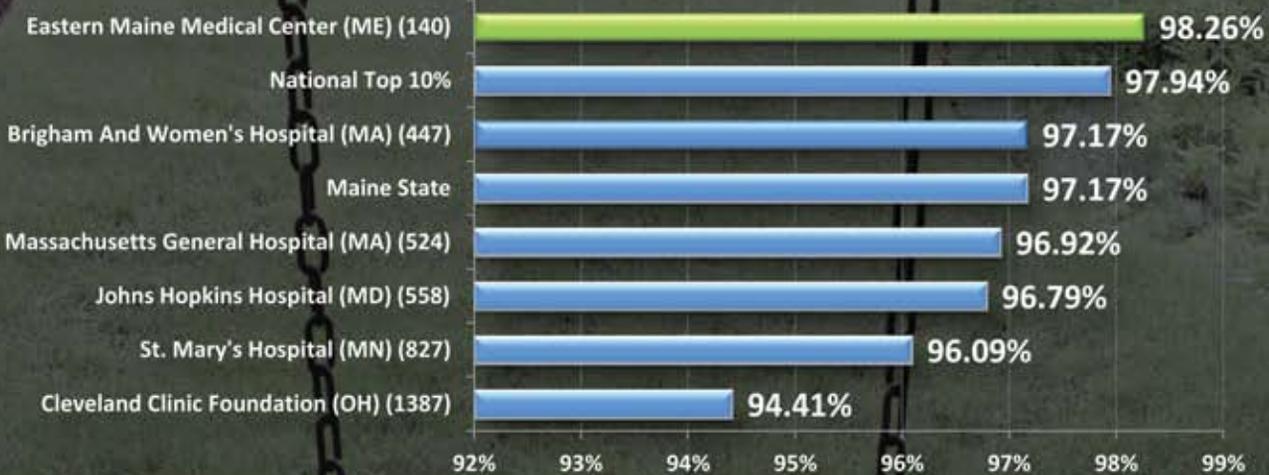
Yuri Trusty during a performance.

Raising the Bar in Your Own Backyard

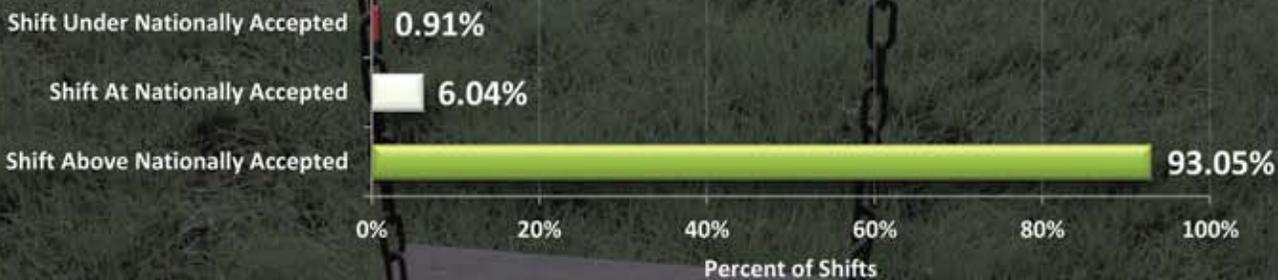


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■ ODLAW

OdLaW...Kind of an odd name, with an odd spelling. But look a little closer and you'll notice that if you reverse the letters, it spells Waldo. As in Waldo County—which is where this band calls home.

“We honestly don’t know how to categorize our music,” says Jerry Weaver, the band’s bass player. “Others have called it things like progressive country rock, alternative blues, eclectic rock ‘n’ soul, even new old wave. We just like to call it good

music. One of the joys of playing in this band is that we don’t place any constraints on ourselves. It’s kind of like going back to the ‘60s. Everything is on the table.”

OdLaW is a trio of musicians that formed in the fall of 2008. Each of the members brings a unique background and sound into the mix.

Sam Ladd is the band’s lead guitarist and also handles the vocals. He’s a local boy, who was born and raised in Belfast. He’s been playing guitar since he was 10

years old.

“My sister’s boyfriend had a Harmony Archtop electric guitar,” Ladd says. “It had a crack in it, so he sold it to me for \$5. From that day on, I was hooked. It was the best five bucks I ever spent.”

At 15, Ladd began writing his own songs and bought an acoustic guitar, since it was an easier instrument to compose with. Ladd would later become attracted to spiritual music, but he never lost his passion for blues, rock, and soul. As Ladd



From left: Sam Ladd, Gary Grant, and Jerry Weaver.

would say, "It's all music."

Gary Grant is the band's drummer. His steady beat provides the foundation for the band's tight sound. "I've been playing

"Others have called it things like progressive country rock, alternative blues, eclectic rock 'n' soul, even new old wave.

We just like to call it good music." –Jerry Weaver

drums ever since I can remember," Grant says. "It was something that I picked up really easily, and people kept encouraging me to keep playing. As it turns out, I never stopped."

Grant is a veteran of many local bands, and is also the recipient of an award for drumming from the American Country Music Association.

Jerry Weaver, the band's bass player, also sings. He's a transplant from the West Coast, who made Maine his home in 1998. Weaver is also married to the band's energetic manager, liaison, and cheerleader, Melinda Weaver.

Jerry Weaver's diverse musical odyssey includes appearances at prominent Los Angeles venues, such as the Roxy and the

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Whiskey A Go Go (made famous by the Doors). Weaver's original songs also received radio airplay in the Los Angeles and Orange County markets.

You might say that Weaver is the straw that stirs the drink in this band. Drawing on his varied musical background, he's constantly invigorating the band's sound.

"I love introducing new ideas to the

band," Weaver says. "And Gary and Sam have been really receptive. But I also continue to learn from them. It's a great collaboration."

And that collaboration has produced a CD with music as diverse as the musicians themselves called *OdLaW 1*. It harkens back to a much more impulsive, free-spirited time in music. From muscular, pulsating rock songs like "Wilted Flowers" and the Hendrix-tinged "Thinking 'bout Me," to country/folk "Learn to Love," the music pulls you right along.

Clearly, this album defies easy description or typecasting. And that's just fine with the band. As Ladd concurred, "We just write songs."

Clearly, there's a wealth of outstanding music being created in northern, midcoast, and Downeast Maine. It's also being performed live every week at venues all across this area.

No one understands this better than Denis Howard of WERU. "No need to go to Boston, New York, or even Portland to hear great music," Howard says. "It's all right here under our noses. Folks just need to get out and see how incredible this music really is. It'll knock their socks off." □



OdLaW during one of their performances.