



Bronx Boy Justin Biaggi Gets Hopelessly Romantic! Jazz Drummer to Doo-wop Rock ... and Chivalry Is Anything But Dead

It was back last year at Kenny's Castaways that I first got to see Justin Biaggi and his band, The Hopeless Romantics. The booker there had told me about them, and what a great live act they were. And he was right.

Since then, T.J., Justin's manager, has been in touch, inviting me to gigs and keeping me in the loop with all the news. The other week, I got to see Justin again - this time at The Baggot Inn - and loved them again, only more so. Got to get them in Indie Sounds, I decided, so here they are ...

Indie Sounds: You are New York born and bred ... how did you get your start in music?

Justin Biaggi: I was born and raised in the Bronx, as were my parents and grandparents. To this day, I never take for granted having grown up in the most musically exciting city in the world.

I actually got my start in music as a drummer. I was an extraordinarily restless kid, and I often found myself tapping out patterns on almost any available surface. As a result, when I was about seven, I built a drum set out of my mom's Tupperware! The whole contraption was held together with duct tape and plywood, and I played it with chopsticks! After that, I managed to get some real equipment and started taking lessons and playing with various bands.

IS: And which bands were those?

Justin: The first group I joined was a metal band in high school, after which I played in more than half a dozen bands, ranging from rock bands to pit orchestras to jazz trios. In

fact, my first experience as a professional musician was as jazz pianist Peter Cincotti's drummer when he was just getting his start in the New York club scene.

IS: Along the way, you acquired a B.A. in music. How has that helped you?

IS: So, what happened next?

Justin: The more I learned about music and how emotion might be captured in musical form, the more I realized that there were ideas inside of me that I wanted to express musically. I felt that there were lots of ideas



Photo by Kevin Goggin

Justin: Studying music in college helped me transition from being a drummer to a more broadly capable musician and songwriter.

I acquired my B.A. in music from Fordham University in the Bronx. The classes I took - music theory, history and ear training, ranging from Baroque opera to the Beatles - gave me a great education in the overall history of song form.

brewing and I just needed the motivation to break the ice and tap into them.

At the time, I had just been through a painful breakup with someone that I loved very much. Needless to say, that was the spark that blew up the powder keg. I found myself in a situation where I couldn't write fast enough. I believed in what I felt, and the shape those ideas were taking, and I just



wanted to get out and perform them. So I started a band that was made up of some of my close childhood friends.

IS: So who plays in your band?

Justin: My band is made up of a great bunch of guys, who are also extremely talented musicians. We all pretty much met while working at a music store in Westchester, NY, except for Brad, who is on keys - we grew up together. They are all well-experienced and diverse musicians, which always makes it easy to introduce new ideas and new styles. I write the tunes, play rhythm guitar and sing (and sometimes play piano); Joe Piteo plays drums, Derek Delisle is on lead guitar, Keith Keresey plays bass and Brad Napriax is on keyboards.

IS: How did the band get its name?

Justin: I have always loved the music of the Doo-wop and early rock and roll era. I became familiar with these genres because my family would always play lots of records from the 40s and 50s. Doo-wop music and early rock and roll was an important part of their youth growing up in the Bronx. There was always a formal quality to those names that I thought was real cool (e.g. Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons, Dion and the Belmonts, Bill Haley and the Comets).

This tendency towards more traditional early 50s pop, combined with the fact that I draw

most of my inspiration from either the presence or absence of love led me to choose the name Justin Biaggi and the Hopeless Romantics. I consider myself to be a hopeless romantic so it just seemed like a natural choice.

IS: How would you describe your music?

Justin: Simply put, I write rock and roll music. It combines the traditional sounds of early rock and roll with more contemporary garage-rock. I am a big believer in simplicity - solid melodies and good section changes. Many people have likened my sound to early Elvis Costello, when he was playing with the Attractions. Truth be told, I really didn't listen to that much Costello before I had written most of my songs. Having said that, because people continuously made this comparison, it became an influence that I explored. Soon after that, I realized what a tremendous compliment that is.

IS: Tell us about the album you made.

Justin: I called the album *Chivalry is Dead* because all of the songs reflect on my own personal struggle with love and how much I had been hurt. Chivalry not only can take on many forms, but I believe it to be applicable to both parties in a relationship. Chivalry, to me, is much more than holding the door for someone or paying for dinner. It has to do with honesty and compassion towards another person.

Last year, me and the guys went up to Somers, NY to record twelve songs for the album. We have since gone back to record two new singles for the purpose of putting together an EP. We have not yet officially released an album, but are actively looking to do so. In the meantime, we sell our CD at shows and try to spread it around the New York scene but we eventually want to sign with a label so we can record it and distribute it on a much bigger scale.

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Indie Sounds NY serves the New York independent music scene. Each month, Indie Sounds seeks out the singer/songwriters, the bands, the places and the people who make up a unique and vibrant artistic community.

Indie Sounds NY is brought to you by Harris Radio, an internet radio station broadcasting 24/7 on www.harrisradio.com, playing great music from unsigned artists and independent labels. And Canadians. Harris Radio also operates www.gigapple.com.

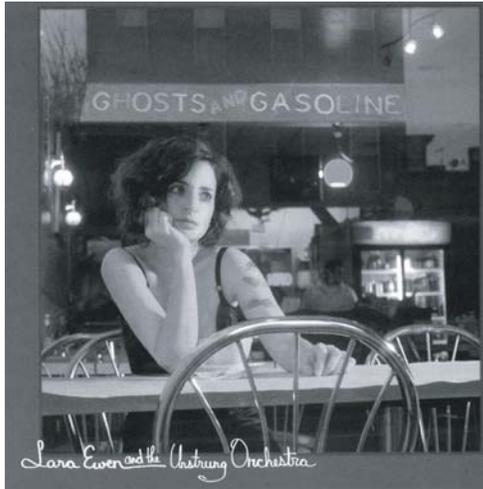
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New Release Rap

Lara Ewen
Ghosts and GasolineIndie Sounds: Why *Ghosts and Gasoline*?

Lara Ewen: If I had to tell some sort of over-arching story about this album, I'd say it's about what you see in the rearview mirror as you move ahead. The ghosts in the album title refer to all the things that get left behind - people, places, parts of yourself.

But those things don't disappear so much as they morph into a kind of emotional fuel that propels you forward. They become a kind of metaphorical gasoline. So that's where the title comes from.

IS: Who are the Unstrung Orchestra?

Lara: For this recording, the band consists of Howard Rappaport, who plays all the slide guitar and lap steel parts, as well as almost all the electric guitar parts; Donald Facompre on bass; and Jordan Lash on drums.

IS: Who else was involved with the CD?

Lara: Allen Farmelo produced, recorded and mixed the album, with Katie Menke assisting. We recorded at Mavericks (in

Chinatown), and Allen and I did all the post-production stuff at his home studio in Fort Greene, Brooklyn.

After that, the record went to Jeff Lipton, who owns Peerless Mastering up in Boston. Jeff and I have been friends for years, and I wouldn't go anywhere else for mastering.

All the photography and design on the CD was done by Emily Rawlings, who works a lot with the indie scene here. And I can't forget to mention Oasis, because they did such a stellar job on the duplication.

IS: Compare making this CD to your 2002 solo EP *Clear*?

Lara: *Clear* was really bare bones: just my guitar and me. Steve Shirk (the producer/engineer) and I just sat down one night and recorded the whole thing in about three hours.

Everything on that EP is a first or second take, and there was no mixing at all. What came out of me that night is what went onto the EP.

So when I set out to make *Ghosts and Gasoline*, it was almost as though I'd never made a record before. The difference was really that dramatic.

First of all, there's the fact that I had a band. That's huge. And working with a new producer was also a big change.

Allen put a lot of time and effort into helping me to sound the way I wanted to sound, from attending pre-production rehearsals to slogging through all the post-production listening sessions.

The whole process, from beginning to end, took about a year, even though we spent just two days as a band in the studio.

The amazing thing is, there are several tracks on this album that were done in one take. I love that. In the studio, some of the songs,

such as *Manhattan/Kansas*, just kind of happened. We heard it back after the first take, and just said, "Okay. We've got it."

Same with *Turning Blue*. In fact, the version that's on the record was a one-off. We'd rehearsed it a totally different way for months, and then when we got into the studio, we just started playing it slow and groovy, and when we were done, we just knew we'd gotten it.

IS: Are you playing out solo or with the band to promote it?

Lara: Both. I'll be playing some local New York shows with the band, as well as playing some solo slots here and there around the city. But as far as touring goes, all my tour dates are as a solo performer.

IS: Apart from live shows, how else are you selling and promoting it?

Lara: The CD is being sold online through CD Baby. They gave it a really great review and even featured it as an editor's pick on the front page of their site, which was awesome.

Right now, it's available as a download on DigStation.com, and in a few months, it'll be on all the standard download sites, too. I'm also looking to set something up so that people can buy the CD directly from me via my website.

IS: What's next?

Lara: Promoting, performing and lots of writing. I can't believe I'm saying this, but I've already started to think about the next album. It's like what they say about tattoos: As soon as one heals, you start thinking about the next one.

Web: www.laraewen.com

MySpace: laraewen





The L Word

With Lauren Jonik

Moldover

In the same way that there are many ways to view a painting or appreciate the architecture of a building, there are many ways to not only hear, but to listen to a song.

Sound collage artist Moldover challenges listeners to do just this. By combining often familiar tunes in varied ways, Moldover uses technology to push boundaries and enhance the experience of music itself.



Encompassing music of many styles, Moldover's work defies genre categorizations and while continually stretching the limits of his own creativity, carries the theme of making music more accessible and interactive. When asked about the instruments he uses, he explains, "I play guitars and computers." Having studied computer music and composition at Berklee, much of Moldover's work focuses on the art of live performance. After realizing that there weren't many appropriate forums for other DJs and electronic artists to share their talents in front of an audience in NYC, Moldover, along with DJ Shakey (aka Julie Covello), began holding monthly events called Warper over a year ago.

Now held at The Delancey, Moldover says that "Warper is an open forum for artists to do live electronic performance. It's inclusive which means that it builds community and it fosters creativity. There's less of a division between the performers and the audience. It attracts artists of all levels."

At Warper, Moldover has used his own talents to blend everything from Bach with The Police to Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers with The Beastie Boys, all completely cohesively. Sometimes termed live-remashing or live remixing, Moldover describes it as "chopping up and spitting out my favorite bits of music live."

On performing live, Moldover deeply values the significance of sharing one's creations with others in the moment. He says, "I had a misconception for a long time that music is only a recorded

thing. That's really just an outgrowth of the music industry and the necessity to sell a product to support the art. But, live music is the way it happens. It's a moment that's instantaneous and happens once. That's what real music is and why performance is important to me. It's a powerful thing."

Taking the philosophy that at its best, music is interactive, available and fun to a new level, Moldover has created the Octamasher, which allows eight people to simultaneously play with different sounds using controllers that are tied into one database that has hundreds of sounds and that coordinates all of the tracks to be in sync with each other. "The Octamasher is like a game. It was inspired from being at Burning Man where there's a lot of interactive art and art that brings people together and helps them to express and facilitate their own creativity." The Octamasher can be installed for private parties, special events, clubs and festivals and will appear at The Bergen County Teen Arts Festival on June 1st.

In the process of creating a solo album, Moldover has been turning his attention to drawing on the same huge palette of influences that has shaped his live sound and using it to make an original creation.

Connection, creativity and communication: these are the key elements that drive Moldover's work. "At the heart of what I want is to make music that people can understand and to make music that perpetuates music."

Web: www.moldover.com and www.warperparty.com

MySpace: [moldover](#), [warperparty](#)

Lauren Jonik is a freelance writer and photographer based in Brooklyn who enjoys blending her love of music with her passion for writing. She is the founder and editor of the website www.soundaffects.net. Contact her at lauren@soundaffects.net.





Pictures Of You



Birthday girl Erin Sax Seymour at Caffe Vivaldi in the Village.



Great entertainment: Mack Price & The Prigs rounding out a fantastic night at Rockwood Music Hall.

Next Month in Indie Sounds NY

On the Cover:

Chris Brown & Kate Fenner

Look out for the July issue at all good NYC music venues. Or download it at:

www.indiesoundsny.com



Lowry at Luna Lounge in Williamsburg.



Emilie Cardinaux and friends perform at Googie's Lounge, the 'blue room' upstairs at the Living Room.



Casey Shea looking more like the character from the GEICO adverts every day. Still, one's gotta love a positive attitude.

Check out more photos from the scene at the www.indiesoundsny.com blog.

Fast Forward



The Secret's Out: Emma Peel Rocks With Style!

Read this article, memorize, then eat it...

A new band with a name drawn from an old TV series, Emma Peel is a name that will excite an Generation X or Y, and new music is a great reason to revisit all those memories again. Indie Sounds got a do-brief from the band's front gal, Leslie Mendelson.

Leslie Mendelson: Your name is Leslie, so where does Emma Peel come from?

Emma Peel came to mind because it was a name that if you knew who she was then you got it, if not, then it still sounds a cool name. Emma Peel is a character from a 60's British cult television show *The Avengers* - a highly entertaining tongue-in-cheek spy drama. She is smart, sexy, she kicks major ass and it's always said that "if this spy world together, since I draw a lot from 60's pop music, especially the girl groups that Phil Spector produced."

ES: How did you come to form the band? What's in it?

LM: I was introduced to Mike Vinziglia (lead) almost three years ago - I had just moved to Queens from South Stuyvesant, LI and was trying to get an act together. Mike basically told me to get my act together and to call him when I did.

Two years later, a few gigs and an album (self-titled) under my belt, I called him and asked him to book up a band for my CD release party. So he did, and I met him. With the influence of Andrew Howard (Pizzarelli (guitar) and Doug Yowall (drums)), John Prazmaris (bass) and Mike (vocals), the band slowly became a funk-dance band. We had a blast. Some of my favorite gigs were in the smaller dives in the middle of nowhere.

This summer should be interesting. Mike's leaving for a little bit to attend off at a rockier country blues band.

ES: After the band dispersed, I played a lot of solo since gigs around NYC for dinner and champagne the crowd. Sometimes you can only say so to "blame me" so many times in a night. Nevertheless, I got to play. There's something right?

LM: When I was in college, I used to play in a band called Motive Freedom. We were a funky pop band with two main writers, myself and Greg Rucking (guitar). We

After the band dispersed, I played a lot of solo since gigs around NYC for dinner and champagne the crowd. Sometimes you can only say so to "blame me" so many times in a night. Nevertheless, I got to play. There's something right?

ES: As a band, you play a number of songs from your debut solo album. What's the plan?

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Some things are just not meant to be. And some things just turn out for the best. Perhaps both can be said of the act that was featured on the cover of issue 4 of Indie Sounds. A new act, I knew I was taking a bit of a chance, but then again I let my heart rule my head, silly old me.

The act in question was Emma Peel, a 4-piece pop outfit fronted by the delightful, and talented Leslie Mendelson. Somewhere along the line, however, the band went to the great studio in the sky. Lord knows why. Shit happens, as they say.

Leslie, though, continues as a solo act, often appearing live with James Maddock, one of her partners in the cover band Aki is the Glue. She's also a regular member of Emily Zuzik's live band.

On the recording front, an album beckons, apparently to be released by Ryko, part of the Warner empire. It will be amazing!

MySpace: lesliemendelson



Scene and Heard

Bye Bye Benji



If this issue comes out on time, you may well get to read it while listening to Benji Rogers - aka Marwood - playing his last New York City show - at least for a while.

After many years in the USA, the last few being something of a cornerstone of the NYC scene, Benji is returning to his native England, where he will continue to perform, write awesome music and record. Soon, the bar space at the Bedford in London will be strewn with his promo CDs, and a much better place it will be as a result.

Apart from being a great musician, with a live act that always delivers, Benji is also a delightful character - funny, generous and well-travelled. Hopefully he'll get homesick for the Big Apple and come back to play a show or two. Until then, it's shots all round!

For those that don't get out so much, Sin-e and Tonic in the LES are no longer options for live music, both having shut up shop in recent weeks.

Meanwhile, over in trendy-ville, the HighLine Ballroom has just opened on 16th Street and 9th/10th Avenues.

Sharing ownership with the Blue Note Jazz Club and the B.B. King Blues Club, early acts booked into the venue include Lou Reed, Amy Winehouse, moe and Girlyman.

Caffe Vivaldi has a new website, which is good news for those of us without a T1 connection to the internet. By all accounts, the new site is a lot cleaner and less cluttered than the original, while still providing all the info on the music and menu. The website is, of course, still at www.caffevivaldi.com.

Wicked Willies at 149 Bleecker Street now features live music. Maybe it always has, but now some acts playing there are posting them to GigApple.com. Axiom Addicts and Tamara Fishman being examples of those enlightened musicians.

Speaking of GigApple, the indie music listings website operated by Harris Radio (publisher of this organ) now has a MySpace page at www.myspace.com/gigapple. The page is being run by Danielle, who otherwise can usually be found somewhere near the bar at the Rockwood.

Listing gigs on GigApple continues to provide additional exposure to bands, through shout outs at the www.indiesoundsny.com blog, in this print edition and via increased airplay on Harris Radio. And it's free, so what are you waiting for?

Want to sell music downloads from your website or MySpace page? Check out Snocap.com - where you can sign up for free and upload songs to be sold.

Snocap has a clever little player - seen already on many bands' MySpace pages - that allows tracks to be previewed and purchased. The player can also be embedded into websites and HTML emails, making it a very useful tool for getting music out.

Bands and venues: Tell us your news ... changes in lineup, new albums, sound upgrades, new open mics, new bartenders. Email us at pete@indiesoundsny.com. If it's worthy, we'll give you a shout out in these pages or via the continuously updated blog at www.indiesoundsny.com.

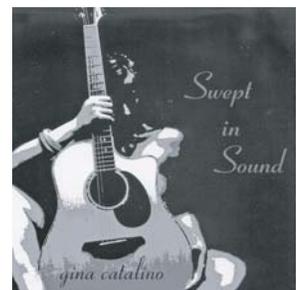
WHAT'S NEW ON CD



Various Artists
New Arrivals: Volume 2
www.newarrivalscd.com



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American Baby
www.renilaine.com



Gina Catalino
Swept in Sound
www.ginacatalino.com



Justin Biaggi ...

Continued from page 2

IS: You've had some great radio play of late? How did that happen?

Justin: When it comes to getting your music out there, it's all about casting as wide a net as possible. We have contacted many radio stations this past year and managed to get played on lots of college stations as well as some internet channels.

The most notable of these was when we got airtime on a show called *Out of the Box* with Jonathan Clarke on Q104.3. I have always listened to Q104.3 and I was familiar with the show. The platform of the show is to expose people to underground and unsigned bands, so it was a natural decision for us to send them a CD. The thing is, they get hundreds of CDs a week, so we were floored when about a month after we sent them the album, some friends of mine contacted me and told me that they heard my band on the radio! I was totally taken aback and completely honored because airtime on a station like that is truly incredible.

They played one of our new singles, called *Let it Out*, a song that we've been playing out quite a bit to a huge crowd response! You can check it out at our website and MySpace page.

IS: How did you find your manager T.J. and what does he do for you?

Justin: Well, T.J. and I used to go to high school together. We were both involved in the music scene in school. Then we hadn't seen each other for years after graduation. We randomly met up in the Bronx one day and we just caught each other up with our current endeavors. I, of course, was busy with the Hopeless Romantics, and he had started a management company. Us working together was a very natural decision. It's

been great. T.J. takes care of the more business related aspects of promoting a rock band - contacting labels, radio stations, booking shows, etc. That gives me more freedom to focus on writing and rehearsing.

IS: Where do you like to play out in NYC?

Justin: The truth is, I love performing more than anything, and there are so many great clubs to play in New York City. I really consider it an honor to be a part of the NYC music scene. People come from all over to play these clubs.

Most of the places we play are in the Village and around Bleecker Street. I love playing at the Knitting Factory, The Lion's Den, Arlene's Grocery, CBGB's (before it unfortunately closed), The Baggot Inn, and of course, Kenny's Castaways, which is always a fun place to play.

IS: What's next?

Justin: Well, writing and performing will always be the constants in my life. The eventual goal is to sign with a label where my sound can grow and be put out there on a much larger scale. I want to keep broadening my audience and hope my songs hit people in the same way they struck me when I first wrote them.

But, as anyone in the NYC music scene knows, getting out there is a lot of hard, persistent work in conjunction with experiencing and communicating the pure joy of being a musician.

Justin is under personal management with T.J. O'Sullivan, O'Sullivan Talent Management, Inc. (914) 393-5365, osullivantalent@hotmail.com.

Web: www.hopelessjustin.com

MySpace: hopelessjustin

Pete's Rant

The other night I went to Piano's to see one of my favorite bands - Bugs in the Dark. Check them out, buy their new EP. It rocks. I just love these guys.

The Bugs had sent out an email, saying they'd be performing at 11pm. I reckoned they had probably posted a slightly early time, so I went by Piano's web site to check.

Piano's had them listed as 11.30pm, and stated that "Please note that all listed set times are actual onstage start times." Nice to know that - it makes planning a bit easier.

Now, maybe someone at Piano's can actually read what their own website says!

Getting to the place - with the front bar packed full of the usual bloody awful beautiful people crowd - I noted the Bugs were now listed to go on at midnight.

Bollocks management, I thought, and suggested the same to the door person.

Of course, the music was running late. I think it was past 12.30am when the Bugs actually made it onstage. Perhaps Piano's also needs to invest in a friggin' clock?

The upside to this tail of delays, is that I actually got to see the band who played before the Bugs - and very good they were too. They seemed to forget to tell the crowd who they were ... though since the music room was full I suspect I was the only person there that didn't know.

(I think they are called the The Bold Rogues, and they seem to have some connection with a Queens band called The Upwelling.)

The moral of the story: Check set times at the venue web site, and if it's Piano's then add another half hour, or take a sleeping bag!



**Backline****Five Vital Questions For ...
James Maddock****Indie Sounds:** What turns you on?**James Maddock:** Louis Armstrong.**IS:** What turns you off?**James:** Capitalism.**IS:** What is your motto?**James:** "Better a terrible end than never ending terror" - Lenin.**IS:** George W. comes to one of your shows, you have a mic, what you gonna say?**James:** Here's my new song, called *Lets all spit on George*.**IS:** Who would you like to get stranded on a desert island with?**James:** George W. (I will need someone to punish) and Jenna Jameson.**MySpace:** jamesmaddockmusic**Questions:** Mistress Tessa Perry,
www.tessaperry.com**LIVE IN NYC**
From www.gigapple.com**Who:** The Blood Lines**Where and When:** Friday, June 1st,
8pm, at Piano's, 158 Ludlow Street.**What:** "Move over Arcade Fire and Stars and all you trendy Arts+Crafts bands. From Saskatoon in Saskatchewan come the future of alterno-pop-rock on their self-titled debut." - Harris Radio.**Web:** www.thebloodlines.com**MySpace:** thebloodlines**NOW BLOGGING @ INDIESOUNDSNY.COM**

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