

COMMUNITY

# Rhythm Section hitting its stride

BY NICOLE MONTREUIL  
NIAGARA ADVANCE

Most performers awarded at the first Niagara Music Awards ceremony took the stage

and thanked their parents for letting them practice in the basement.

The musicians of Niagara Rhythm Section, with 30 to 35 years of playing behind them, could well have been the

parents being thanked, according to bassist Steve Goldberger, who also said his group was awarded for a performance style that relies on not rehearsing.

"It was kind of cute at the awards," he said of the contrast. "It brought back a lot of memories."

Assembled as a house band for the Anchorage, NRS has taken on a life of its own, attracting guest musicians of increasing calibre and allowing members Herb Nelson, Dave Norris, Penner MacKay, Steve Grisbrook, and Goldberger to stretch their repertoire.

They accompany guest performers by reinterpreting the appropriate music, and they do it on the fly—Goldberger says there's a 10-to-15 second window for band members to get accustomed to

songs as they arise.

The performers of NRS, he says, find a way to get the job done, often by offering inspiring new variations on music their guests may well consider old-hand.

That's part of the band's appeal, he says, and one of the reasons he seeks out the highest-calibre guests possible, looking for performers all over the musical map who will offer the band a chance to stretch their musical muscles.

Upcoming shows range from world-class harmonica player Espanola Slim to bluegrass group Whiskey Jack, from the pop-rock of Scott and Simon to the R&B of John Mays.

"I like to keep the variety and calibre of our guests up," he said.

"I'm looking for people who are really going to challenge us every week."

So who's his idea of a dream guest? He says he doesn't have one in specific, though he says Mark Lalama has been a great addition in the past.

The band still plays every Saturday night at the Anchorage.

It's something of a dream opportunity, Goldberger said, in that it offers a steady Saturday night gig, a chance to stretch personal musical boundaries on a regular basis, and a friendly atmosphere for performances.

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