



## Post-Maxwell's Hoboken teems with new venues, new talent

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Jersey City's Sailor Boyfriend will be one of several young area bands performing at a showcase at Hoboken's Little City Books on Friday, June 8. (Photo by Eli Trakhtenberg/@thesmallsoviet)

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By [Jim Testa | For The Jersey Journal](#)

For anyone who worried that Hoboken sans [Maxwell's](#) would turn into a musical wasteland, fear not. The city is teeming with creativity and new venues.

Former Maxwell's booker Dave Entwistle has revived the popular People's Open Mic at a new location, Northern Soul on Hoboken's west side. A few blocks away, Danny Shot presents weekly live music at the intimate but fascinating Issyra Gallery, nestled into one of Hoboken's large industrial buildings on Observer Highway, across the street from Bar/None Records' new offices. Finnegan's on Willow Avenue, meanwhile, has its own open mic and a steady diet of singer/songwriters and small combos.

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And Geri Fallo, Hoboken's indefatigable and ageless administrator of Cultural Affairs, is taking the music outdoors for the summer.

She's just announced three stages for live music throughout the summer: Sinatra Park, Church Square Park, and the city's new Southwest Park. (Schedules are available from the city's [Department of Cultural Affairs](#)).

On Saturday, June 9, the Elks lodge, 1005 Washington St., gets into the act with a Who's Who of veteran Hoboken rockers staging "Ristra-Fest," a celebration of the long-gone Rodeo-Ristra Bar on Washington Street, which gave many of these

players their starts.

Ristra-Fest will host 13 acts on two stages, many of them familiar names to anyone familiar with Hoboken music: High Speed Chase, Crewman #6, Lloyd United, Las Vandelay's, Rob Nicholas, and a reunion set by the members of Eugene (later known as The Fave), among others. That show is free (although donations are requested for the Elks) and kicks off at 5:30 pm.

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And then there's Little City Books, 100 Bloomfield St., owned by singer/songwriter Kate Jacobs.

The bookstore has hosted not only authors' readings but also music performances and has really stepped up its game since Maxwell's closed in February.

On Friday, June 8, the store will present "The Kids Are All Right: A Big Rock 'n' Roll Show," a showcase for some of the area's most promising young talent. Bands include the jazzy Elevator Pitch, which features Kate's son Edward Horan, and several of his high-school aged friends; Tula Vera, a garage-rock quartet out of Montclair which, coincidentally, took its name from Kate Jacobs' first band; college student/folksinger Eli Trakhtenberg, who recently played Frank N Furter in an independent production of "The Rocky Horror Show"; Tim Erbach, a twentysomething musician from Hoboken who will perform with his post-rock group Din; and, finally, Sailor Boyfriend, a synth-pop duo whose singer/keyboardist Andy Waldron actually works at Little City Books. (Eli Trakhtenberg also excels at photography; she took the photo of Sailor Boyfriend we're using with this story.)

The evening will very much be a family affair by young, aspiring musicians who have literally grown up together. Andy Waldron graduated last year from Hoboken's Stevens Institute of Technology, where he helped stage the campus' OnPoint Festival, which featured many of these bands. He started working at Little City Books last summer.

"Alex and I started booking time at WCPR, the Stevens radio station, in 2016, and began working on the songs that would become Sailor Boyfriend," Waldron said. "I was still a student at that point and Alex was a NYU, and it was one of those things where we were seeing each other often at different events and we'd just keep saying to each other, 'When are we going to start a band?'"

Waldron and Mercuri found they shared a mutual love of David Bowie, Peter Gabriel, and other pop culture reference points.

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"Our new EP, 'Exposure!,' is very Pet Shop Boys influenced, especially the song 'The Is the Dream of Alan and Mike,' where I wanted to play around with dance music tropes," Waldron said. "I was only exposed to Pet Shop Boys because Bowie did a collaboration with them back in 1996 or so, and growing up and loving Bowie, that happened a lot. You'd find other things through Bowie.

"We're a very young band and it might be presumptuous to say we have a 'sound' yet, but the decisions that Alex and I both make in terms of sound are very conscious of that.

"That particular song came together quickly. I had the lyrics on my phone, because at the time I was listening a lot to Perfume Genius and that is the 'Mike' in the song, and 'Alan' is his partner. I was reading about their relationship and how they had gone through addiction problems, and then being gay added another whole set of discrimination they faced, and so I wrote a story about how it would feel to come through all of that. The title is the riff of another song, 'This Is the Dream of Evan and Chan,' which was why a producer named Dntel, who would later team up with Ben Gibbard and become the Postal Service. So that song is a lot of record store talk, but we're still very happy with the way it came together. It's got that Robert Fripp guitar sound that Alex loves so much and the heart on the sleeve lyrics from me."

Waldron noted that Sailor Boyfriend hews to a philosophy espoused by the artist St. Vincent.

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"She once said that her songs and arrangements are complex and convoluted, but were sincere attempts at communication," he said. "We don't want the listener to feel dumb. If you listen and love it, that's what we want. But because we're both music nerds, there's a lot of wordplay and countless rewrites and references that we throw in there. It's 'keep it simple, stupid' on the one hand, but we also have a lot of ruminative tendencies."

While Waldron and Mercuri are only 23, they'll be the old guys on a bill with the high schoolers in Elevator Pitch and Stevens Tech student Eli Trakhtenberg.

"Alex says he's like a vampire, he's either 23 years old or 3,000 years old, you can't really tell and I don't think you're supposed to," Waldron said.

A donation of \$10 is requested. For guaranteed admission, advance tickets are available at [littlecitybooks.com](http://littlecitybooks.com).

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