

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, Artists for Art may not have been the first gallery to push the visual envelope in the Electric City, but it's the one that survived to anchor the **First Friday Scranton** phenomenon. The collective is home away from home to the region's most accomplished and admired artists while opening its arms to the most talented artists emerging from the 570's abundance of ridiculously good university art departments.

Afa is your choice yet again for best Art Gallery and also picked up the Best Place to Look at Art title from the now defunct Test Pattern (see Biggest Loss of 2008). The ever-classy **Everhart Museum** showcases not only visual arts, but also artifacts of natural history like those spotlighted by this year's exciting **Flock and Feathers** show and the new and improved **Rocks and Minerals Gallery** on the first floor. We love our quirky **Houdini Museum** and the wealth of historical collections in the area but there's just no competing with this **Nay Aug Park** trophy when it comes to Best Museum.

Since **Cinemark** was built on **Montage Mountain** as a sort of temple to the cinema gods, the too cool for school kids won't even be seen at one of the region's less posh palaces. We love its big screens and airplane seats, the café, the arcade and the **Metropolitan Opera Live in HighDef**, but our devotion may have backfired considering the recent loss of **Endless Mountains Theatre**. We've got our eye on young **Conor O'Brien's** brainchild, **The Vintage Theatre**, set to debut next month with an indie rock show, but it's all too soon to know what sort of cinematic contributions to expect. When all else fails, we'll always have the **Dietrich Theatre's** dedication to foreign, art and independent films — at least during its invigorating annual **Spring and Fall Film** festivals.

Bigger isn't always better, but summer isn't the same without at least one ride up **Montage Mountain** to the amphitheatre we're currently calling the **Toyota Pavilion**. You love the outdoor vibe, but will gladly head inside the **Wa-**

chovia Arena when an act like **AC/DC** comes to town. You gave the classic rockers kudos for 2008's **Best Big-Name Rock Show**.

Sometimes it's intimacy we crave most of all — the right space has been known to make or break the efficacy of a theatrical production. Offering an increasingly packed schedule of a diverse variety of programs, **Scranton's Electric Theatre Company** secured its hold on the title of **Best Theater Company** in 2008. You also acknowledged ETC ensemble member **Conor McGuigan** for his always-appealing stage achievements as the region's **Best Local Actor**. Working on several area stages, **Agnes Cummings** retrieved her award for **Best Local Actress** in 2008.

McGuigan also proved his popularity at the turntables in the poll this year. He and partner in creativity **Brian Langan** were voted **Best DJs** for the musical magic of their **Panked!** dance parties held the last Thursday of every month at **The Bog** in Scranton.

Poet and Anthology Books proprietor **Andrea Talarico** didn't miss a step moving **Test Pattern's** popular monthly poetry readings to her funky second-story home for both new and used volumes. You quite rightly can't imagine the literary scene without her and gave her your votes for **Best Local Author**. Saving us with his vibrantly telling illustrations when words fail, the ubiquitous **Ted Michalowski** is 2008's **Best Local Visual Artist**.

Surely racking up a few points for stamina, **Bliss** was founded in the mid-'90s and, with the exception of a few years off early in the aughts, has been playing steadily since. Down to a more manageable couple of gigs a month from the demanding schedule of its youth, the more-mature **Bliss** appears to be as popular as ever. Featuring vocalist **Joey Stevens** and **Jamie Chorba** on guitar, backed by **Brad Polidori** on bass and **Jim Graham** on drums, the foursome prefers to play the modern rock hits of **Pearl Jam**, **Fuel**, **Rusted Root**, **Red Hot Chili Peppers** and the like. See 2008's **Best Party/Cover band** **Saturday** at **Molly Brannigan's** and Dec. 27 at **Tonic**.



LUCK OF THE IRISH
If you ask nicely, Tom Graham will play guitar and drink a beer at the bar, but don't ask him to sing, too.

We didn't actually count, but it's probably safe to say singer/songwriter **Tom Graham** has won the **Best Solo Musician** title more than any other troubadour in the 570. Performing almost as often in **Stroudsburg** as **Scranton**, his fourth album, **Set Legs**, still sounds as sweet as when it was released, summer 2007. You can see him **Saturday** at **Jilly's** or next week at the new **Balina Pub** in **Mirnooka**.

Surely, this year's winner for **Best Original Band** comes as no surprise. Contemporary blues rock trio **Dealer in Wares** is so freaking likeable you'll be compelled to hang around after shows volunteering yourself as a roadie. The Olyphant act is plenty talented but its enthusiasm and genuine down-to-earth determination have given it an edge. **Dealer** netted awards for its original songs and the acclaim of the local media (ahem) back in 2007 before winning **Keystone College's** **Battle of the Bands** in April 2008. The band then campaigned its way to represent the 570 at this year's **Dewey Beach Music Conference** courtesy of *ec/de's* "Get Your Vote On" contest. Vocalist and harp player **Sarah Ykanin** is only

18, but she's been singing since she was 10. She co-manages the band. **Drum** ahead of his time at the most recent addition is the band's old man — an old-school poet — your vote for **Best Band** could give **The** of tips. Not to be confused with the Psychobilly band **The Clowns**, **Scranton's** **Reacharounds** is so... couldn't find a pulse (*reacharounds*!), but it's teasing for the worst.

Prairie Queen **Re** **The Moneynotes** m for your readers poll to remind you how a release came. **New C** musical fun so exhibi up addicted after onl

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Best Art Gallery Afa | **Best Big Concert Venue** Toyota Pavilion at Montage Mountain | **Best Big-Name Rock Show** AC/DC | **Best DJs** Conor McGuigan and Brian Langan — Panked! | **Best Independent Movie Theater** Dietrich | **Best Local Actor** Conor McGuigan | **Best Local Actress** Agnes Cummings | **Best Local Author** Andrea Talarico | **Best Local Band Name** Dealer in Wares | **Best Local CD** *New Cornucopia* — And The Moneynotes | **Best Local Festival** La Festa Italiana | **Best Local Visual Artist** Ted Michalowski | **Best Magician** Damian | **Best Mainstream Movie Theater** Cinemark | **Best Museum** Everhart | **Best Ongoing Arts Event** First Friday | **Best Original Band** Dealer in Wares | **Best Party/Cover Band** Bliss | **Best Place to Look at Art** Afa | **Best Solo Musician** Tom Graham | **Best Theater Company** Electric Theatre Company | **Worst Local Band Name** The Reacharounds