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Features

Open Mic Night lacks etiquette

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Where do you end up after walking through the back of Nugent, down the sketchy stairwell into a dimly lit basement hallway at around 8 pm on certain Friday nights? Well, you're at Ground Zero's open mic night, where a great idea meets some of the worst, and a few of the best, musical talents RPI has to offer.

Last Friday was Ground Zero's second open mic night of the year, and a large crowd of performers and audience alike, came out for the 8 to 10 pm showcase. In the whole two hours, only eight performances went, out of the 15 that signed up. It's pretty bad when half of the people who came to the open mic don't even get to participate, because you know half of the crowd is leaving bummed; and what makes it even worse is when the majority of those that did participate were extremely painful to listen to.

Now, I know you may be saying, "Don't tread on something new and original just because it doesn't meet what you consider good. Art is art, the meaning is deep, and you're not supposed to know what's going on." This is true, but my criteria for the foundation of musical art is a basic knowledge and talent of the musical tools, demonstrated through a musical product pleasing to the senses. Basically, I know music and I know pretty well—when it's real talent and when it's not—and most performers last Friday did not have any.

Now, about the actual show, most of the performers were incoming freshman with little open mic experience, so it's excusable until they figure out what they're doing wrong. Also, most of the performances were on the fly, no real practice or preparation, and definitely not the best way to earn respect or recognition among fellow RPI artists. Don't go

up there with a drummer you met five minutes ago. Of course he'll say he's good, but have you ever met a drummer that says otherwise?

Also, don't go up once for 15 minutes and then come back up with your friend for another 15 minutes, especially when all he does is read out of an Ayn Rand book while you jump around beating on your poor Fender like a flaming idiot. Trust me, seeing The Zane the first time was bad enough. The second time, I wanted to cry. The worst thing you can do at an open mic is be a stage hog.

The only really good performance all night was the last one, featuring a duo of two guitar players who were very talented and had structure—although weak at times—to their two songs.

Overall, Ground Zero open mic night is a great opportunity, with some great staff, good equipment, and the right idea. However, the nights need some organization so that everyone can have fun, and show their creativity in a reasonable period of time. This way, if a performer is bad, no one needs to worry, you only have five more minutes of him. And when you get to go, it makes everything better. So hopefully as the year goes on, the open mic in the bottom of Nugent will mature to what it has been in years past, a more enjoyable experience for all and a successful creative outlet for RPI artists.

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