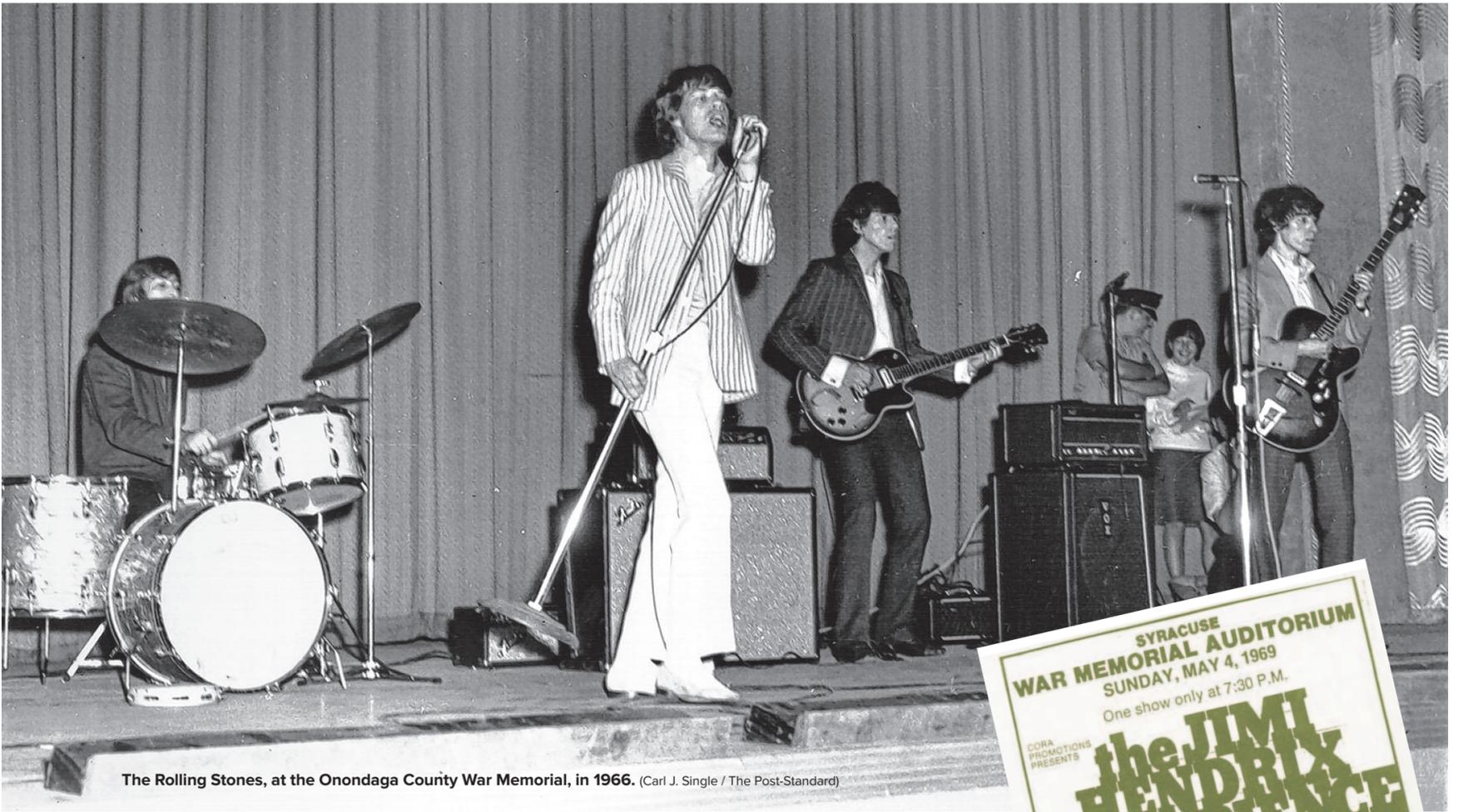




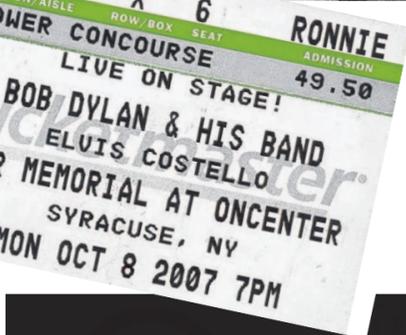
**Inside:** Landmark goes for the dogs. I-3

# CNY

## MILESTONES



The Rolling Stones, at the Onondaga County War Memorial, in 1966. (Carl J. Single / The Post-Standard)



# BEYOND THE JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE

FROM LOU REED TO POLAR BEAR CLUB: OHA MUSEUM LOOKS BACK AT THE HISTORY OF ROCK 'N' ROLL IN SYRACUSE

By Chris Baker  
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In 1957, Buddy Holly performed at the Onondaga County War Memorial in Syracuse. Two years later, the legendary rock 'n' roller would be dead — an accident famously chronicled by Don McLean. Chuck Berry played there, too. So did

Elvis, Led Zeppelin, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, The Who, Johnny Cash and countless others. And that's just one venue. U2 played on Erie Boulevard. John Lennon and Yoko Ono performed at the Everson Museum. Lou Reed played all around SU. "Syracuse was an important enough stop in rock 'n' roll that most of the big names played here at one point or another," says Ron Wray, a music historian and author of the "History of Syracuse Music" website. "The Stones, Bruce Springsteen, even Shania Twain, if you're going to that era. They all came to Syracuse."

Yes, Syracuse has earned its small spot in the annals of rock history. The Onondaga Historical Association is paying tribute to that history with its latest exhibit: The History of Rock 'n' Roll in Syracuse. The exhibit runs for the next six months and admission to the museum, as always, is free.

**'THIS ISN'T THE CIVIL WAR'**

During the adolescent age of rock 'n' roll, Syracuse emerged as a prime market for the nation's biggest acts. As the genre came of age, the city featured prominently, due, in large part, to the War Memorial. And while rock legends were blasting away at the Syracuse arena, local rockers were plugging away at scores of clubs and bars, developing a thriving scene.

The exhibit begins with the 1950s and creeps up to modern rock 'n' roll. Its emphasis is on Syracuse, but it serves as a window into the cultural revolution that swept the nation in the '50s, '60s and '70s. "The music scene really reflected how kids were growing up," says Jon Zella, who curated the exhibit. "These are cultural signifiers. We're not teaching rock

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Bruce "The Boss" Springsteen, right, and saxophonist Clarence Clemons jam a tune in concert at the Onondaga County War Memorial on Sept. 12, 1978. (Clem Murray / The Post-Standard)  
Above, Elvis Presley, at the War Memorial, in 1976. (Carl J. Single / The Post-Standard)

**"The music scene really reflected how kids were growing up. These are cultural signifiers. We're not teaching rock history. People were there."**

— JON ZELLA, EXHIBIT CURATOR

**WHAT'S IN A NAME?**

## Vendetti's Soft Rock emerges after decades of 'goodtimes' in CNY

By Katrina Tulloch  
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We've been thinking about Central New York restaurants and bars with well-known namesakes. We're exploring stories of the people behind the places in a series of features called *What's in a Name?* Today, we continue with Vendetti's Soft Rock at 2026 Teall Ave.

Mickey Vendetti, 72, originally named his new bar The Soft Rock Cafe, until he was served with papers from the Hard Rock Cafe, threatening legal action if he didn't change the name.

Vendetti had two options: drop the "Rock" or the "Cafe." "So we're 'The Soft Cafe?'" said Mickey's son, Josh Vendetti, 27. "That was the most ridiculous thing I'd ever heard."

Vendetti's Soft Rock opened May 6, 2014. Formerly a chain location for The Poor House East, the old joint sported a bar area with darts and TVs, while the dining room featured a stage and tables.

Framed posters now line the walls, featuring everyone from the Beatles to the Bee Gees. Elvis, Janis, Jerry Garcia and

Bob Marley surround anyone performing onstage.

It would be the 12th venue on Vendetti's long list of owned or managed establishments. He started as a chef at Hillside Steak and Ale House in 1970 and never looked back.

Since 1977, he's owned or managed staff at Hillside, Roundhouse Restaurant, Mother's Cupboard diner, Mickey's Goodtime Saloon and New York State Fair food stand, Moby Dick Deli, Harbor Lodge Restaurant, Vendetti's Lakeview Restaurant, Barney Google's



Mickey, Chris and Josh Vendetti stand in front of their business logo. Vendetti's Soft Rock opened May 6, 2014.

Goodtime Bar, Gilligan's "Goodtime" Pub and Goodtime Banquet Hall and catering services.

Most of his bars and venues had the "goodtime" name attached (one word) to let customers know what to expect. Vendetti's Goodtime Band has played hundreds of weddings, anniversaries and birthday parties around Central New York.

**GROWING UP**

Even after 45 years, Vendetti never wanted to move his businesses out of Central

VENDETTI'S, PAGE I-6

## Rock history in Syracuse reflects 'how kids were growing up'

### ROCK, FROM PAGE I-1

history. People were there. They lived it. This isn't like the Civil War."

Zella collected old 8-tracks and 45s, a double-neck guitar from the 1960s, drum heads, concert posters, ticket stubs, newspaper clippings and even some old car radios. The exhibit combines memorabilia from local acts like the Flashcubes to big names that stopped here, like the Rolling Stones.

### ROCK, THEN AND NOW

While cobbling together relics of rock history, Zella tapped Wray as well as some notable musicians, including Gary Frenay, who played with the Flashcubes and Screen Test in the 1970s and 80s.

He also found traces of how and why rock culture in Syracuse (and nationwide) has changed.

"The '60s was an amazing time around here," Frenay says. "Five or six nights a week the clubs were packed. It was such a scene.")

It's true, clubs and music halls were plentiful in Syracuse during the hey-

day of rock 'n' roll. Today, you're hard-pressed to find packed rock halls every night of the week. So what happened?

On Dec. 1, 1985, New York State raised the legal drinking age from 19 to 21, in order to comply with the National Minimum Drinking Age Act. The change put a stranglehold on a movement promulgated by youthful culture.

"We would play college events that we'd played the year before and there were maybe 30 people when there'd been 200 the previous year," Frenay said. "Everybody was going to keggers instead. It took the heart out of the scene."

But rock endured — though it would (arguably) never rival the scene developed in the '70s. Bands like Polar Bear Club, Earth Crisis or Perfect Pussy have superseded the city limits to earn acclaim on a national stage. Local rock still perseveres in the bars, clubs and hidden-away halls of Central New York.

And the OHA exhibit covers it all — the good, the bad and the rocking history of Syracuse music.