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Making Beautiful Music Together

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A chance meeting at a gig that wasn't supposed to happen resulted in an enduring partnership for James "Fuzz" SanGiovanni and Carrie Ernst, one that's musical and romantic.

Big Fuzz, SanGiovanni's band at the time, was in Burlington, Vt., playing a show in 2004 that the band had meant to cancel. During a set break, Fuzz smiled at Ernst, who was in the audience with friends. The two struck up a conversation, were engaged a few months later and got married in 2005.

"We just started talking, and from that moment on, it was like this instant connection," Carrie SanGiovanni says by phone from their home in Bridgeport.

The pair found they had a musical connection, too. Fuzz, 36, was a stage veteran, having sung and played guitar for years with Bridgeport funk favorites Deep Banana Blackout and then leading the post-Blackout band Big Fuzz. Carrie, 26, was working on her own music, which she describes as "a solo singer-songwriter thing." As their romantic relationship blossomed, they'd sit around with acoustic guitars and swap songs, sometimes originals, sometimes covers.

Soon enough, Fuzz landed a solo gig opening for Dickey Betts & Great Southern. He brought Carrie along with him, and they've been performing together as Rolla ever since.

"At that time, Carrie and I were messing around more and more with the guitars, and I said, 'Why don't you join me on this?'" Fuzz says. "And it went over really well, so we did it again."

They added a rhythm section on a full-length album, 2005's "La La Land," and an EP, last year's "Fits & Starts," and Rolla is spending an increasing amount of time on the road, including gigs at the University of Connecticut Saturday, the Webster Underground April 19 and Sully's Pub in Hartford May 12.

Rolla's tightly arranged alt-pop sound and close vocal harmonies are a change for Fuzz, whose previous experience largely came in bands with a jammier vibe.

"I was just feeling like I didn't want to be stuck in a jam all night, and also the music I had been liking and listening to recently wasn't about all that," he says. "It was about tighter arrangements, or at least more about the song and the melody."

Rolla plans to start work on its next record this spring, and both musicians say the next record won't necessarily sound like the previous two.

"We want to make this one be the one that really defines us," Carrie says.

Rolla performs a free show Saturday, April 14 at 9 p.m. at Fairfield Way on the University of Connecticut in Storrs as part of a human rights awareness festival. The band also performs April 29 at the Webster Underground, 31 Webster St., Hartford, supporting the Radiators. Tickets are \$18, doors open at 6 p.m. Information: 860-525-5553.

What's new

The Boston alt-metal band Godsmack performs May 25 at Chevrolet Theatre in Wallingford; tickets go on sale Saturday at 10 a.m. for \$35.

Tickets go on sale Friday at 10 a.m. for a June 24 performance by Wilco at the Pines Theatre in Northampton, Mass.; Low opens. Tickets are \$36.50.

It's a free show, but Internet access is essential for scoring tickets to this year's Ozzfest, happening Aug. 18 in Hartford. Check ozzfest.com for details on how to obtain the special code allowing fans to download a pair of tickets.

Latin fusion band Incendio performs June 12 at East Hartford Community Cultural Center; tickets are \$24 in advance.

The Derek Trucks Band stops May 17 at the Warner Theatre in Torrington; tickets are \$45, \$35 and \$25.

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