

Jazz trio lands top Jammie

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Grammys? What Grammys?

Who needs Mariah Carey, Diddy and U2 when you've got Organissimo, Sweet Japonic and Paucity? Who needs a tuxedo when you've got pajamas?

The Jammie Awards, WYCE-FM's (88.1) annual show honoring the best in local and national music, didn't attempt the silly pageantry of the Grammy Awards (taking place tonight, incidentally), but Tuesday night's ceremony did offer plenty of live music, some friendly competition and a whole lotta love for a whole lotta local musicians.

"This is the greatest event in western Michigan," said Ray Aleshire, vocalist for Those Delta Rhythm Kings, whose "Just the Way We Like It" took home the prize for best local blues album.

"There are scads of good music fans in Grand Rapids," Aleshire said.

More than 400 fans and WYCE listeners, many of them wearing pajamas ("jammies," get it?), attended the ceremony in The Intersection, 133 Grandville Ave. SW, Wednesday night. The show featured short performances by 14 of the nominated artists. Jazz fans were in luck, as trio Organissimo took home the night's big award -- the Jammie, honoring the previous year's best local release, as selected by WYCE's staff of volunteers -- and played an additional set to close out the night.

"You always hear the old cliché that you're never appreciated in your hometown," said Jim Alfredson, organist for Organissimo, whose "This Is the Place" also took home the award for best local jazz album. "But I think this shows we're appreciated."

The seventh-annual awards show -- honoring artists in each of the station's five formats: rock, blues, jazz, folk and world beat -- reflected the diversity of WYCE's playlist and the Grand Rapids music community, said station manager Michael Packer.

"I'm amazed at how well it came together," he said during a break in his duties of ushering musicians on and off the stage. "Out of all the nominees, I could have put any 15 together and had a great show."

Mixing genres such as jazz, rock and folk is a reflection of the station's eclecticism and a way to expand the musical palates of local listeners, Packer said.

"Basically, it's this integration of different musical forms. It's different when you hear that kind of stuff in a live environment."

The Jammies also have the potential to expand a nominee's fan base. After his band Paucity, an instrumental art-rock quintet, played a two-song set and nabbed the award for best CD by a new local artist (for "An Untitled Album"), bass player Kurtis Lytle said the group was a happy to be reaching a new audience.

"WYCE is just totally different than anything else. There are so many different worlds of music here," he said. "To come here was kind of weird. But we fit in."

Of course, not everyone can win. More than 30 local artists were up for awards, and, to borrow the popular awards-show saying, it's an honor just to be nominated.

It was for Jessie MacIntosh, a bagpipe player whose "Skean Duhb" was up for best local world-beat album. He lost to Thom Jayne but got a hearty cheer from the crowd following some impressive work on the pipes early in the evening.

"This gives us a chance to show something other than the usual," he said. "I love it. It's a wonderful opportunity."