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Bands play tribute to The Replacements

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Several bands paid tribute to the influential band The Replacements at Woodruff's bar in Ypsilanti's Depot Town on Saturday.

The event, 'Mats Fest, featured Replacements songs covered by several local bands and a few non-local bands (one group, Stupid Beautiful Heaven, traveled all the way from Cleveland). The artists who performed were Scott Martin, The Real Americans, Your Gracious Host, Stupid Beautiful Heaven, 40 Stitches Later, The Plurals, Hoveround Pile Up and Thunderbuck Ram.

All the groups that performed have one thing in common: A love of The Replacements. Anybody who has seen "Color Me Obsessed," the recent Replacements documentary, knows that the people who loved The Replacements loved them to an insane degree. If somebody saw the band live, they had to see them again and again and again. Stupid Beautiful Heaven guitarist Eric Collander said he saw them six times back in the day.

When you listen to the kind of impact The Replacements had on their fans, you can see why so many people went out of their way to see the band multiple times. Ted Hoogland, the guitarist and lead singer of Hoveround Pile Up, spoke of hearing the band's 1984 classic "Let It Be" for the first time.

"It changed me," Hoogland said. "I stopped listening to Bruce Springsteen. I was listening to The Replacements from there on."

During the show, bands ranging from the completely acoustic set of Martin to the completely punk-rock set of The Plurals performed covers of classic Replacements songs. Martin opened with "Hold My Life," the opening track from the band's 1985 album "Tim," while Stupid Beautiful Heaven performed "I Will Dare" and "Here Comes a Regular," two essential songs in the Replacements' discography.

It didn't just stop with the essentials, though. 40 Stitches Later, along with performing "Alex Chilton" and "Left of the Dial" (two of the most anthemic songs ever), also found time in their set for "Little Mascara" (one of my personal favorites) and "The Ledge." The Plurals, along with doing "Bastards of Young" and "Answering Machine," also did versions of "I.O.U." and "Seen Your Video."

With The Replacements' recent "Songs for Slim" EP, it is a perfect time to be celebrating the band's work. But, Ypsilanti is also a great place to be celebrating it. Why Ypsilanti? Hoveround Pile Up drummer Steve Bowers explained it.

"This is the perfect spot for a festival like this, because these areas were a mecca for college radio rock in the '80s," Bowers said. "This is [the] perfect place for 'Mats Fest.'"

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