

Rane defies musical characterization

By Joe Ax

MANCHESTER — The members of South Windsor-based rane insist their band is not, as many are wont to term it, a “jam band.” The lengthy, sophisticated, and entirely enjoyable jam sessions that characterize their concerts, however, might cause one to respectfully disagree, as was the case Dec. 28 at Manchester’s Cheney Hall.

Perhaps the band’s five members refuse to label themselves because, as even a cursory listen to their eclectic mix of world music, funk, and classic rock reveals, their unique brand of music defies categorization. Rane proved it is far more than “just” a jam band during a two-part set that lasted more than two hours and included an acoustic portion complete with a high school string quartet and an electric portion that sizzled with energy.

Most of the songs rane chooses to play in concert cannot be found on its two studio albums, leaving audiences feeling as though they were invited to a private rehearsal. Rane is that rare band whose live performances far outstrip its studio work, which is outstanding in and of itself.

The four Manchester High School members of the accompanying quartet — violinists Ciara Picard and Danielle Joseph, violist Amanda LeRoux, and cellist Laura Maas — received an enthusiastic response from an audience that was nearly 400 strong.

The young musicians provided solid backup, though their playing was uneven at times. Their best moment came during a long, languid instrumental during the wistful “Gemini,” the final song of the acoustic set.

“Gemini” proved to be the acoustic set’s highlight, though the opening “At War With the Moon” included a lively extended jam with the quartet that presaged the more vigorous jamming that was to come.

The electric set, which came after a short break, included stand-out work by guitarist Ryan Bowman, especially during a long piece in which the band teased “Sounds of Sleep” and “Long Road” in the middle of “Center.”

The band showed off its versatility during “New England Song,” which eventually turned into



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From left, Dan Prindle, Alan Veniscofsky, and Ryan Bowman of rane jam during an acoustic set that included a string quartet. Peeking through in the back is Manchester High student Laura Maas, who played cello during the set.

“Goomba.” Kurt Rinaldi, whose repertoire includes the drums and the xylophone-like marimba, did excellent work on the congos during the song, which feels like an African dance.

Perhaps the only knock on rane is its lack of a superior vocalist. While frontman Alan Veniscofsky’s voice is capable of carrying a song, as it did during an inspired rendition of “For Them,” the band prefers to use harmony between Veniscofsky and bassist Dan Prindle, who also does not possess killer vocals.

But it is the harmony between rane’s instruments that makes the band so popular among local loyalists — its second album, “Camelopardalis,” reached the Connecticut Billboard’s Top 50 when it was released in 2000.

The band, which has been together for six years ever since Bowman, Veniscofsky, and percus-

sionist Travis LaMothe were students at South Windsor High School, plays as if it has been together for 10. Their long tenure allows members to experiment with different sounds — Prindle played a long cello solo during “Mirage” — and they excel at playing together during frequent jamming.

Frequently compared to the Allman Brothers, Phish, and Peter Dinklage, rane played a cover of the latter’s “Digging in the Dirt” during the encore.

Pennsylvania native Stephen Kellogg opened with an acoustic solo set that showcased his impressive vocals, which were reminiscent of Train’s Pat Monahan. His folk songs, at times accompanied by drummer Brian Factor, included a kazoo and some stellar guitar work.

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