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Nassau LONG ISLAND

Teacher-student rock band jolts Calhoun homecoming

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Orchestra teacher Eric Vivelo and senior Teressa Sambolin, two members of the Sanford H. Calhoun High School's rock band, perform at the homecoming football game on Oct. 14, 2016. Photo Credit: Ian J. Stark



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Touchdowns and tackles were punctuated by guitar riffs and drumbeats Friday night for Sanford H. Calhoun High School's homecoming football game courtesy of the school's rock band — a group made up of both students and teachers.

The band sits next to the larger, more traditional pep band, with whom they do play along. But they also have the ability to break out for real rock moments, rarely played live at other Long Island sporting events.

"We're kind of like the underground sound of Calhoun," says 16-year-old drummer Kara Vecchione, who plays alongside guitar player and fellow junior Phoebe Goldberg.

"Our job is get attention," Phoebe says, "so we crank it up when we play, turn it all the way up."

Calhoun math teacher Bryan Beach is in his second year with the district and never thought he'd been moonlighting as a guitarist.



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"I heard during the school announcements one morning there was a school rock band, and they needed players, said Beach, 28. "So I went down and asked if they needed someone to maybe sit in, and ... here I am!"

When asked if playing with students was akin to a "School of Rock" experience, Beach admitted with a chuckle, "Yeah, maybe just a little bit."

Beach was sitting in the home bleachers Friday night, ready to play his guitar as part of an ensemble that includes about 10 musicians, such as Teresa Sambolin, a senior who was already working on her own alt-rock band outside the school when members of the music department asked her to join.

"I love it, but it's really hard sometimes," she says. "We don't have a setlist, the music director just calls out a song. He'll be like, 'OK, we're doing [Ozzy Osbourne's] 'Crazy Train,' and we have to do it immediately."

The band works from a group of songs they rehearse during

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the week, but it's not played in order, as songs are called out to match game action -- Alien Ant Farm's version of Michael Jackson's "Smooth Criminal" for a field goal, or "My Own Worst Enemy" by Lit for an opposing touchdown.



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But the overall sound is always heavy, with energetic guitar and bass, powerful drums and a funky keyboard on some songs.

"We try hard to turn people's heads," injects 17-year-old keyboardist Amber Lievre. "We're all about energy, and we never quit."

"It's still just four strings, and it's always awesome," adds 29-year-old Eric Vivel, a Calhoun orchestra teacher, describing his time playing with students.

As it turns out, it was during an interview with a reporter that he revealed his first name to his bandmates — the same kids he teaches.

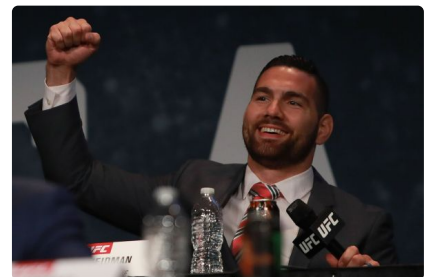
But despite the wild nature of rock, he adds, "I'm afraid they're going to still have to call me 'Mr. V.'"

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