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Sole Practitioners

By Claude Solnik

Did you hear the one about the trombonist who worked on a sliding scale? How about the attorney that spent his nights drumming up business?

Many area attorneys moonlight as musicians, recording in studios, singing in a capella groups and performing at parties and concert halls.

Some attorneys like Richard C. Goldberg - counsel to Mineola-based Forchelli, Curto, Schwartz, Mineo, Carlino & Cohn - play piano at home for pure pleasure. But some with sonic second selves make sweet music together.

Four attorneys at Uniondale-based Rivkin Radler formed the rock cover band Without Prejudice to play at the firm's holiday party. Gary Centola, a partner in Rivkin Radler's insurance coverage group, plays bass and provides background vocals. Eric Strober, a partner in medical malpractice, toxic tort and general liability defense, plays guitar and also does backup vocals. Glenn Egor, an associate in the litigation group, plays drums. Tara Visconti, an associate in the real estate, land use and zoning department as of Jan. 14, is the lead singer.

Tuning in, turning on

Their reasons for doing so run the gamut from the pleasure gained from playing privately to the rush received from a rousing round of applause. And some even claim that playing music helps them perform better on the job. David Curry, an associate at Farrell Fritz, performs in an a capella group known as The Ex Boyfriends - check out the Web site www.the-exboyfriends.com - with gigs at Kenny's Castaways, Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center and the Mercury Lounge.

"It's the passion for performance, something other than our careers," Curry said. "The performance outlet is a way to focus and release energy that's otherwise not able to happen sitting at a desk."

Curry said since rehearsals and gigs are at night, being in a band doesn't interfere with his work. "It's helpful, because it allows me to do my job better," he said, adding the musical

outlet helps him achieve "peace of mind and balance."

"A lot of the same skills and talents that go into being an attorney go into being in a band," Visconti said. "Teamwork. Creativity. It's nice for people to be able to see that your skills as an attorney dealing with day-to-day issues can also come out in a more fun light."

Centola enjoys playing music at home in front of relatives as well as in front of audiences. "It's a stress reliever," he said. "I pull out my guitar or bass and play along. I'm oblivious to everything after that."

Brandi Klineberg, an associate at Garden City-based Moritt Hock, has played French horn in orchestras where teamwork and timing are key.

Musical roots

Lawyers in bands typically performed before becoming attorneys. Centola played bass in bands in high school, college and law school, but stopped performing until getting together with fellow attorney-musicians.

Strober, who plays guitar professionally in the house band at Olive's in West Nyack, said he and fellow attorney-bandmates were mum at first.

"We kept it on the quiet side in the firm," Strober said. "We didn't want to say anything until we knew could really play and not embarrass ourselves."

Egor, who hadn't played drums in a group since being in a garage band called Millennium in high school, no longer owned a drum set. But the band rented rehearsal space, complete with drums, and clicked.

Halfway through Without Prejudice's first song, about 100 people started dancing; they never stopped through seven songs. "It was a good way of sharing a good time with other lawyers and the staff," Centola said. "The minute the instruments started, that anxiety melted right off my body and I started singing," Visconti said. "It was gone."

Having attorneys perform at the holiday party is good for morale. "It shows the human side not just of the partners, but the associates," Centola said. "After we were done, peo-

ple came running up to us saying how great it was. It was a real bonding [experience]."

Strober thinks it's healthy for people to enjoy artistic activities in addition to work. "If you're a musician, playing is fun," he said. "Some people like to cook, paint. We like to play music."

Professional musicians

While some attorneys stick together, others unite with doctors and other professionals. Curry's group includes a doctor, TV show director, TV show writer and other musical moonlighters. "The seven of us are very close," Curry said. "We have a ton of laughs."

Curry has flown to Florida to do gigs for Pfizer and gone into the studio to record jingles for Nickelodeon's "Rugrats" and "Hey, Arnold!"

Visconti and her group "Absolut Acoustic" made a CD titled "Acoustic Tara" and they perform at the Batata Café in Northport.

The Ex Boyfriends (the name appears chosen for sound not significance) cut two albums, "Karaoke Bar Brawl" and "A Capella's Dead," for sale at a capella Web sites.

The band, which formed from a core in the SUNY Binghamton group called the Binghamton Crosbys, replicate rock music arrangements vocally, reproducing guitar riffs with voice.

Some attorneys bring their competitive side to the table. The Ex Boyfriends won the mid-Atlantic round of an a capella competition, making it to the finals, where they were an audience favorite. Judges chose another band as the winner.

Although some bands last many years, musical marriages tend to break up. The Ex Boyfriends are likely to dissolve soon after 14 years of gigging together, but Curry doesn't plan to stop performing. "I'm starting a new music project - a classic rock band," he said.