

BSP manager Trevor Dunworth peeks through the front window of this Kingston venue, which has become one of the most progressive arts and entertainment complexes in the region.

**Backstage Studio Productions** is an optical illusion. With its unassuming glass storefront, tinted so you have to press your head to the window to look inside, one might never guess what lies

**THROUGH  
THOSE  
DOORS** >



## >BSP comes front and center

By Lindsay Lennon  
Photos by Michael Bloom

What's inside Backstage Production's storefront is one of the most progressive arts and entertainment complexes in the region, a key player in the ongoing revitalization of Uptown Kingston.

Countless shindigs have been thrown in BSP's back room, a 21,000-square-foot playground that doubles as a soundstage. A mammoth backstage can host a band rehearsal or party. An upstairs dance studio hosts regular classes. And the front houses

the BSP Lounge, a paradise for young music lovers.

The building originally was built as a 2,500-seat vaudeville theater in the late 1800s and has also served as a movie theater. Teri Rossin purchased the building

in 2000, when, she said, the Stockade District was "a very different neighborhood." Rossin says the neighborhood turned into a ghost town after 5 p.m. But nowadays there's not a parking spot in the district day or night.

"More young people started to move in, and artists and musicians. When that happens, it kind of revitalizes the neighborhood," says Rossin. "I feel like Uptown has more vitality now than all

Members of the band Wild Carnation set up for a recent "It Came From New Jersey Show."



the times I've been there in the last 14 years."

#### Diversity of shows

The contrast between the Uptown Kingston of yesterday and today – with an influx of young art- and music-minded residents – is evident in the types of events showcased at Backstage and the numbers they bring. Backstage served as a participating venue for the O+ Festival, the weekend-

long fusion of free health care and independent music throughout the Stockade. There are the screenings of "Rocky Horror Picture Show" attracting upward of 1,000 attendees; the annual award ceremony of the Woodstock Film Festival, bringing such images as Vincent D'Onofrio smoking a cigarette sitting in a chair outside Backstage; V-Day Kingston; Hudson Valley BRAWL; and the filming of Blondie's music video for the song "Mother."

"It's really one of the few places in the Hudson Valley that has this big empty room that can be turned into anything," says Rossin.

Indeed, it has. Countless scenes have played out in this space, which echoes the feel of a general-admission concert hall: rowdy fans hollering at costume-clad female arm wrestlers; filmmakers and actors making acceptance speeches; and flashing

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## COMING UP

Owner Teri Rossin says while BSP has always functioned as an event and education space, the recruitment of liveLIVE! Productions to run BSP Lounge has made live, original music the venue's most popular feature in the last few years. For a full listing of events, visit [bsplounge.com](http://bsplounge.com) or find it on Facebook at [facebook.com/bsplounge](http://facebook.com/bsplounge).

**9 p.m. March 2:** Geezer, Daddy Long Legs, the Dead Exs. \$5.

**9 p.m. March 30:** Marco Benevento. \$10 advance, \$15 door.

**9 p.m. April 13:** Richard Buckner, William Tyler, Small Houses. \$9 advance, \$12 door.

**9 p.m. April 27:** Queerstock! – Dance party sponsored by Hudson Valley LGBTQ Center. Price TBD.

**April-August:** Battle of the Bands. \$5 Wednesday mini-battles, \$5 Aug. 16 main event. \$10 advance ticket for all shows.

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lights, disco balls and vampires in drag at a "True Blood" Halloween party thrown by the Hudson Valley LGBTQ Center.

Most recently, Backstage played a part in the mind-blowing New Year's Eve celebration that Uptown dubbed "1913," when 1,000 celebrants dressed in period garb, drank era cocktails and jammed to music from the ballroom era.

### 'Huge tremors'

"New Year's was one of these huge tremors where you could really feel what's going on in Uptown," says Daniel Sternstein, marketing director of liveLIVE! Productions, the team that began booking the BSP Lounge in 2011.

liveLIVE! – Sternstein, production director Dan Votke and bar manager Trevor Dunworth – came from Oneonta, experienced in working music festivals.



East of Venus performs at the BSP Lounge's "It Came From New Jersey Show."

"Every year, with the weather, something would happen," says Dunworth. "When we had the opportunity to come here and manage this and produce events here at BSP, I think the thing that excited us the most was we'd have a roof over our heads."

So the music hasn't stopped. The BSP Lounge plays host to a constant stream of local, regional and touring musicians, with talent consistently featured several nights a week. Talent buyer and promotions director Michael Amari takes a grassroots approach by cultivating relationships with bands and booking agents while coupling top-notch touring acts with complementing local musicians.

This means a band that may never have played outside the Valley may find itself opening for a touring musician en route to South by Southwest in Austin, Texas. These "scene-building shows" not only en-

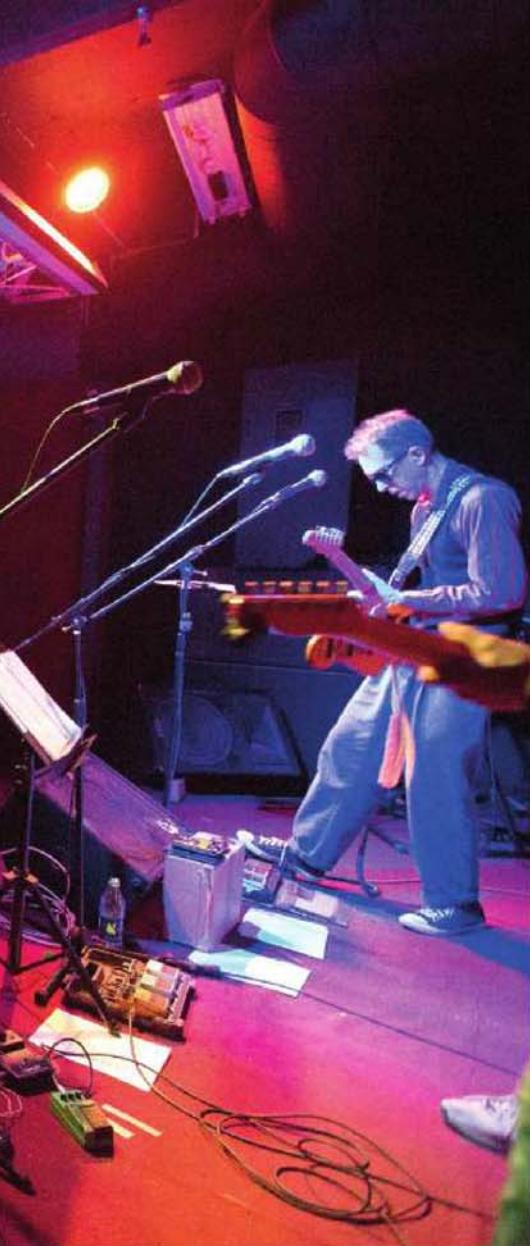
hance BSP's connections to artists but also the artists' relationships with one another, turning BSP into what Sternstein calls "a community center for musicians."

### Making it work

Matthew Cullen, a recording engineer, musician and producer who has worked with artists from My Morning Jacket to Mandy Moore, has performed at BSP in various musical incarnations including in the Duke McVinnie Band.

"For the first time, it's actually got an identity," says Cullen of the BSP building. "They've started to get a reputation that even if you didn't know who was playing, it would be good, because they only book good things there ... Kingston needs a place like that, and I'm glad to see them making it work."

Sometimes, it's all about timing: When Texan rockers Hacienda, whose last two



## The many facets of BSP

**BACKSTAGE STUDIO PRODUCTIONS (BSP)** at 323 Wall St., Kingston, is far more than just an event space. The six different components that exist within its walls – from a professional soundstage to an increasingly popular music venue to some of the Hudson Valley's most respected theater and dance programs – make this building a powerhouse of art and culture.

**BSP Lounge:** A music venue and event space featuring live entertainment several nights per week. Since August 2011, the BSP Lounge has been booked and managed by Oneonta imports liveLIVE! Productions, and has since become one of the Hudson Valley's premier music venues. "We've gotten the reputation ... of being the place to showcase a band," says marketing director Daniel Sternstein.

**STAGES:** A 17,000-square-foot black box theater space that serves as home of the annual Woodstock Film Festival award ceremonies and countless other events, as well as a teaching and performance theater for BSP's educational programming. "I wanted BSP to serve the community, to be a place where, if they had an event, that would be the place where those events happen," says owner Teri Rossin.

**Soundstage:** A professional-grade stage officially certified by New York state as a qualified soundstage, offering filmmakers substantial tax breaks on their projects. Film projects such as "Peace, Love and Misunderstanding" with Jane Fonda, "The Sisterhood of Night" starring Kal Penn, and the Blondie music video "Mother," which featured many local residents

albums were produced by the Black Keys' Dan Auerbach, were in New York to play "Late Show With David Letterman" on a Thursday, BSP snagged the group for Sunday.

"We bring in acts that people wouldn't expect to see in Kingston, or in the Hudson Valley at all," says Amari – such as local bassist Tony Levin, best known for his work with Peter Gabriel, and drummer Zack Alford, who's played with David Bowie and Billy Joel. "That's kind of what we work on day and night, and to also set the trends a little bit. If we bring someone in, the next time they come through the area, they might not play here – they might play somewhere else. But now they know about this area. They know how amazing the Hudson Valley is."

Adds Cullen: "If they continue to bring national touring acts through Kingston ... it

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as extras, were shot here.

**WallSpace:** The front room has also been used as a gallery space. The full bar and comfortable seating make it an attractive option for an art exhibition.

**Dance Collective:** BSP's professional dance program, housed in a 2,000-square-foot studio with full mirrors and professional-grade floors, is on the building's second floor, above the lounge. Both youth and adult classes are available in every type of dance, from hip-hop to ballet to jazz.

**Stages in the Arts:** Founded in 1987 by Beth Lipton, the Stages in the Arts program was formerly known as Woodstock Youth Theater. When the group was looking for a new home in 2001, Rossin officially took them under the BSP umbrella, giving them a permanent home at STAGES. The program was renamed and expanded to serve ages 6 to 24, offering a number of youth and adult theater and dance programs, summer camps and workshops. Stages in the Arts culminates in several full-scale productions every year, and many scholarships are offered annually.



**BSP, owned by Teri Rossin, pictured here, was used as a set for the 2010 movie "Rocksteady."** File photo by Jeff Goulding

# Where to find a copy of Ulster Magazine

<b>Accord</b>	Grand Street Medical Ctr.	White Wolf Restaurant	Wood'n Wheel Family Fun Center	<b>Tillson</b>
Saunderskill Farms	Hampton Inn	Heritage Area information booth	Postage Inn	Postage Inn
A & M Hardware	Heritage Area information booth	Convenient Deli	Toad Holly Pub	Toad Holly Pub
<b>Bearsville</b>	Holiday Inn Kingston	Derrick's Pharmacy	<b>Ulster Park</b>	Headless Horseman
Bear Cafe	Hudson Valley Coffee	Earthgoods	Market Market Café	Hayrides
Bearsville Theater/Restaurant Complex	Traders	Elting Memorial Library	Peppino's	Klyne Esopus Museum
<b>Eddyville</b>	Joey D's Bagel & Deli	Fox & Hounds Liquors	Red Brick Tavern	La Mirage Catering
Anchorage Restaurant	Kings Mall	Handmade & More	Rosendale Café	La Roma Restaurant
<b>Ellenville</b>	King's Valley Diner	In Good Taste	Rosendale Library	
Aroma Thyme Bistro	Kingston Heritage Area	Inner Wall	Rosendale Recreation Center	
Family of Ellenville	Visitors Center	Jack's Meats & Deli	Rosendale Theatre	
Barthel's Farm	Kingston Hospital	Main St. Bistro	The Big Cheese	
Cohen's Bakery	Medical Arts Pavilion	Manny's Art Supplies	<b>Saugerties</b>	
Craft Chiropractic	MAC Fitness centers	My Market	Diamond Mills	
Ellenville Hospital	Madden's Fine Wines	New Paltz Agway	Dutch Ale House Inc.	
Ellenville Public Library and Museum	Mariner's Harbor	New Paltz Chamber of Commerce Visitors Ctr.	From Europe to You	
Ellenville-Wawarsing Chamber of Commerce	Michael's Diner and Restaurant	P&G's	Hudson Valley Dessert Company	
Family Practice	Sensational Creations	Woodland Pond	Inquiring Minds	
Gaby's Café	Mid-Town Medical Arts Center	Plaza Diner	Bookstore	
Il Paradiso	Monkey Joe Coffee	Starbucks	Krause's Chocolates	
Hollywood Cuts Hair Studio	Roasting	Village Tea Room Restaurant & Bake Shop	Lucky Chocolates	
<b>Highland</b>	Mother Earth's Storehouse	The Bakery	Pig Bar & Grill	
Gateway Diner	SUNY Ulster's Business Center	The Sanctuary	Miss Lucy's Kitchen	
Mariner's on the Hudson	OK Mini Market	Minnewaska Lodge	Mother Earth's Storehouse	
Mid-Hudson Professional Offices	Fox Radio 98.9	Mohonk Mountain House	Saugerties Antique Center	
<b>Highmount</b>	Gabriel's Café	<b>Olivebridge</b>	Win Morrison Realty	
Belleayre Conservatory	Rachel's Deli	Krumville Country Inn	Starway Café	
<b>Hunter</b>	Rosita's Restaurant	Tetta's Tire Shop and Convenience Store	Tango Café	
Hunter Mountain Resort	Stone Soup Food Co.	Ashokan Center	<b>Shokan</b>	
Catskill Mountain Bookstore	Sunrise Bagels and Deli	Windham Resort	Good Stuff Café and Inn	
<b>Kerhonkson</b>	Super 8	<b>Phoenicia</b>	Fruition Chocolate	
Barringer's Diner	Town of Ulster Public Library	Sweet Sue's	Ragtime Antiques	
Key Bank	UPAC	Ricciardella's Restaurant	Hickory Hill Antiques	
Provident Bank	Half Moon Books	Phoenicia Supermarket	<b>Stone Ridge</b>	
Redding Dental Offices	Ulster County Chamber of Commerce	Arts Upstairs Gallery	Egg's Nest	
<b>Kingston</b>	E & S Discount Beer	<b>Pine Bush</b>	High Falls Café	
Adams Fairacre Farms	Wiltwyck Golf Club	Pine Bush Area Public Library Annex	Last Bite Café	
Avante	Times Herald-Record bureau	Hearts and Flowers	Jack & Luna's	
Barcone's Music Center	Edelweiss Soap Company	STS Tires	Stone Ridge Wine & Spirits	
Barnes and Noble	Sissy's Café	<b>Port Ewen</b>	Emmanuel's Marketplace	
Benedictine Hospital	Ulster Tourism	April & Co.	Stone Ridge Lodge	
Health Alliance	<b>Marlboro</b>	Frozen Rainbow	Stone Ridge Library	
Broadway Lights Diner	The Falcon	Port Ewen Animal Hospital	Marbletown Town Hall	
Courtyard by Marriott	<b>Napanoch</b>	Port Ewen Diner	Bodacious Bagels and David's Famous Falafel	
Desing's Bakeries	Peter's Market	Port Ewen Liquor Store	Davenport Farm Stand	
Florentina's Restaurant		Port Ewen Pharmacy	SUNY Ulster	
		Ulster BOCES Port Ewen	<b>Tannersville</b>	
			Green Mountain View Inn	



**From the street, BSP looks deceptively small; the entertainment complex actually contains 21,000 square feet.**

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would be quite interesting to see who they could bring to fill the back."

## Dance camps and workshops

Hiring Dunworth, Amari and company to book bands has allowed Rossin to focus more on larger events, as well as the educational component of BSP, which is "where my passion tends to be." In addition to Dance Collective (the professional dance studio), a slew of youth and adult theater, music and dance camps and workshops are offered through the center's nonprofit youth programming arm, Stages in the Arts.

While the various sects of BSP – inhabiting that illusion of a space that stretches a whole city block – may seem like many moving parts for now, the team hopes to bring them together cohesively, much like the way BSP has helped bring Uptown together. It's already happening organically through cross pollination: For example, a group of young parents bringing their children to the Lounge for a Ratboy Jr. show are then exposed to the youth programming of Stages in the Arts, as well as a hip place for them to catch a show of their own the next time they feel like getting a sitter.

"The future is going to see this whole building working together," says Sternstein. ■

## Mohonk Preserve 50th Anniversary Celebrations

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For a full schedule of 50th Anniversary events visit  
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photo by John Mizei

