

**Sam Plotkin featured on award winning *Bright Night's* "Holiday Music collection"**

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# **LiveWire Awards: 2009's Best Local Discs**

By [Donnie Moorhouse](#)

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Looking back, it was quite a decade for local music. Springfield's very own **Staind** turned into one of the most popular acts in the business and the region's metal scene graduated acts like **Shadows Fall**, **Killswitch Engage**, and **All That Remains** to the national and international stage.

Northampton's supportive music community gave rise to **Ware River Club** and **Winterpills**, to name just a few, again pushing local talent to a more-worldly audience.

All of those bands showed promise early on, submitting locally-produced recordings here and to other outlets for review. **Staind's** "Tormented" (now somewhat of a collector's item) and **Shadows Fall's** "Somber Eye to the Sky" were feted in this column for being innovated, inspiring, and rising to the head of the stack of local CDs.

Looking forward, who will carry the torch for 2010 and beyond? Here is a collection of five, culled from entries in this year's LiveWire Awards, who stand a good chance to make some beautiful noise in the decade ahead.

**Jamie Kent and The Options - "The Collective"** - For a real surprise, track down the five tracks on Jamie Kent's EP "The Collective." Kent possesses a great voice and a fearlessness to be admired as he drifts through glimpses of blues, jazz, and rock notes that suggest Steely Dan influences without being derivative. This one has true promise. Check out [jamiakent.com](http://jamiakent.com)

**Bright Nights – "Holiday Music Collection"** - What's better than Bright Nights? Springfield's great Winter Wonderland could only be improved if it had its own soundtrack. So....credit the folks at Spirit of Springfield for creating the "Holiday Music Collection" as part of Bright Nights 15th Anniversary celebration. The disc features the classics sung by the area's most talented performers including Frank Manzi, Sam Plotkin, Ashley Gearing, and Eric Bascom. The CD was recorded, mastered, and mixed at Rotary Records by Warren Amerman. For more information, log on to [brightnights.org](http://brightnights.org).

**Mark Nomad – "Soul Proprietor"** - Nomad carries the torch for local blues musicians this year with "Soul Proprietor," a 10 song disc recorded live in one night during the summer. Nomad balances originals like "Don't Waste Yourself," and "Rocking Horse," with the Junior Wells penned "Snatch Back and Hold It" and James Brown's "Talking Loud and Saying Nothing." Available through [marknomad.com](http://marknomad.com)

**Eva Cappelli and The Watershops Band – “Valentine”** - Cappelli turned a few trips to open mic nights into a burgeoning career as the leader of a pretty cool band. “Valentine” is a 10-song disc about love, unrequited and otherwise, that showcases not only her writing and singing talents, but also the talents of her assembled group of musicians known as The Watershops Band. The title track is the real highlight, a stirring torch song that anchors the disc. Find them at [evacappelli.com](http://evacappelli.com)

**Merrick Section** takes its name from a West Springfield neighborhood but pulls its sound from Austin, Texas and the alt.country / Americana movement. Jim Walsh (drums, guitar, vocals), Tom Doherty (guitars, vocals), and Jeff Burch (guitars, vocals) strum and wail through some lo-fi, high lonesome gems highlighted by the opener “A Crested Wave,” and a wistful “She’s An Angel.” The band has a page at [myspace.com/merricksection](http://myspace.com/merricksection)

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