Crrls to the Front
Seraphine Collective

By Patience Young

The Seraphine Collective mills about east-side venue Tires. The crowd is comprised of everyone from the founding members to first time attendees. This meeting is focused on setting a date for the third annual BFF Fest music festival and preparing for the spring mixtape and zine. Despite the cold, dark evening, the room is bursting with warmth and passion. In two short years this ever expanding collective of feminists has grown from a group aiming to community to a burgeoning collective of musicians, artists, and organizers and allies.

Lauren Rossi was 30 years old when she first picked up the bass. "Growing up, all of my friends were guys who played music. I didn't know any female musicians, and so it didn't seem like something that was accessible to me." As I grew older and my social scene evolved, I started meeting and learning about more and more female musicians all the time, and finally got to the point where I realized that it was something I could do too.

She soon joined Erin Norris, and later Dina Banko, in Casual Sweetheart.

Lauren started the Seraphine blog, profiling and interviewing female identified musicians in Detroit, in hopes of highlighting and inspiring local established and aspiring musicians. Through these conversations and the community that was emerging, she saw a need to start organizing together. Many of the women who attended the first meeting had never met, but together they identified within the Detroit music scene a need for spaces that empowered women. From the beginning the Seraphine Collective felt Detroit needed a female owned and operated venue, record label, and recording studio, a plan that they are persistently working towards. But in those early meetings in the spring of 2014 the first step was clear, and the plans for BFF Fest were underway.

As the collective began examining the music scene around them, they noticed that local festivals were largely male dominated. Of the many musicians who comprised the 2014 Metro Times Blowout, only 13% were female. The women of Seraphine saw that it was up to them to create space in which Detroit's diverse community of women artists could be represented. The first BFF Fest took place at Trinosophes on a sunny July day with a clear goal: "by prioritizing the participation of women, people of color and LGBTQIA performers, BFF Fest strives to be progressive, modern, and thoughtful in the curation of its lineup and hopes to foster consciousness towards building a stronger, supportive, and most importantly, a more diverse and balanced scene in Detroit and the Midwest region." SeraZine #1 and BFF #1 mixtape highlighted Detroit area feminist musicians, writers, and artists. To anyone attending it was clear that this was the beginning of a great Detroit tradition.

Today the Seraphine Collective has grown into a local power house, curating events that highlight Detroit's diverse DIY artist community. Seraphine regularly hosts shows at local spaces highlighting both local and touring acts. They have a monthly DJ night at UFO Factory and a series called Beat Match Brunch hosted at Lo & Behold is teaching women how to DJ. The class filled up so quick that the collective hopes to launch more classes like this in the future. There are quarterly events in which the community is invited to contribute to SeraZine, ranging from pizza parties and zine brunches to speakers on fertility and scary movies at a local bar. These events are a great opportunity to meet some of the amazing women involved and to get to know other artists and musicians in the Detroit community.

The upcoming Spring Fling zine and mixtape will be available at Cass Cafe and at BFF Fest #3 on July 30th.

By creating space to engage and empower female identified artists and their allies the Seraphine Collective is helping to wean and build a stronger community of Detroit musicians and to bring power to those who have been underrepresented. Rachel Thompson, resident activist, Scarlett music, and founding member of Seraphine says, "That isn't something that happens overnight. Through interviews and mixtapes, we continue to reach out to/attempts to learn from ladies who have been making music in Detroit from the get. We have a lot to learn." In Hebrew Seraphine means burning fire, and inspired images of dynamic visionaries who work to create harmony and community. In every action the collective strives to live up to that name, and to its mission statement of being an inclusive, supportive and active community of female-identified musicians and artists designed to foster creative expression and camaraderie among feminists in Detroit.

SeraphineCollective.org, in addition to its continuing tradition of interviews, is a hub of information, inspiration, and resources for local musicians and lovers of music. On their website you can also find more information about upcoming events, how to join a committee, and the Classified section designed to help musicians find each other, rehearsal space, and instrument needs.

If you have ever dreamed of joining a band or interviewing rockstars but didn't know where to start the Seraphine Collective is for you. This judgement free community will greet you warmly, helping you to actualize your dreams and together actualize the dream of a diverse and supportive music scene.

Detroit Research

Detroit Research is a new journal of Art + Criticism. A group of artists and writers from the Alexandra Street Seminars and College for Creative Studies alumni across the arts of ceramics / choreography / sculpture / post-studio art / social practice / music / performance / and critical theory felt the need for a new journal to capture the exciting historical and emerging arts scene and practices which Detroit has witnessed coming together these past ten years. We also wanted the journal to be a vehicle for artist research / critical studies. Most of all, we wanted the journal to represent the contemporary art scene of Detroit in a national and international setting and in turn to be a place where national and international issues in art + practice could be debated in a critical language. Vol. 1 (On Space) had Scott Hocking as the featured artist. Volume 2 (On Dance), due out in May, will see Marie T. Herrman as the featured artist; and volume 3 (On Sounds / Music) will see Kevin Beasley as the featured artist.

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