

# School of Rock

## Syracuse University students prove that music is only child's play.

By Matt Alderton

When students at Syracuse University in Syracuse, N.Y., wanted to distance themselves from their school's musical traditions, they did what industry trailblazers such as Ani DiFranco and Aimee Mann had done before—they created their own record label.

Named for a lively street near campus, Marshall Street Records is an entirely student-run subsidiary of Syracuse University Recordings (SUR),

"Our previous SUR albums have been classical music and jazz," says Sara Villagio, a 21-year-old senior and a music industry major at Syracuse. "On Marshall Street, we wanted to be able to separate ourselves from that a little bit so we could release more popular music."

And that's exactly what they did. Villagio and nearly 20 of her peers trademarked Marshall Street Records last year and released their first CD in April, titled "Children @ Play." The 12-track album features original songs by four campus acts—Party In Your Pants, Roast, solo artist Jon Moses and sandBox—which range from pop rock to folk to funk. More than 50 bands competed for a spot on the CD, Villagio says, via live audition and demos. The final four were chosen by group vote.

"All kinds of people auditioned, everything from cover bands, singer-songwriters, people who had never written music, musical theater majors, music majors and frat boys," Villagio says. "We pretty much saw every type of person possible, so it made it difficult for us to decide what we wanted on the disc."

The CD was a group effort, Villagio says, as students engaged themselves in all aspects of the production process. Some students managed recording, production and finance while others handled packaging design, licensing and even artist relations. Villagio worked primarily in promotions and distribution.

"I think people may not recognize all the opportunities they have in music," she says, stressing that there is far more to it than song and dance. "There are so many reasons [to get involved in music], not only as a passion, but as a way of learning. It teaches you to have discipline."

Due to several marketing challenges, "Children @ Play" has sold only 100 copies, according to Melantha Hodge, a senior management student who headed up marketing efforts for the disc. But the students aren't discouraged. Marshall Street has begun soliciting talent for its next project this fall—talent it hopes to translate into success.

"One thing we at Marshall Street Records need to improve on [is] building awareness of not only the acts that we have on our releases, but gaining recognition as being one of the only student-run record labels in the country," Hodge says.

"Children @ Play" is available at the Syracuse University bookstore, as well as online at the label's Web site, [vpa.syr.edu/sur/msr](http://vpa.syr.edu/sur/msr). \*



which was established by the university in 1997 to provide students with hands-on experience in the recording industry. Since then, the label has released 11 records. Not all of them, however, have necessarily served the student population well.

## PLAY MUSIC

Have ideas for future issues? Send us story suggestions at [www.playmusic.biz](http://www.playmusic.biz)!