

Just two settings: Off or full blast

St. Dallas and the Sinners' live stage set in Springfield holds nothing back

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St. Dallas and the Sinners, from left: Ryon Groff, Dallas Self, Manila. (Drummer Taylor Steele is not pictured.) / Submitted photo

Written by
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For the News-Leader

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Last Friday, the Outland Ballroom became an interactive museum exhibit showing kids what it's like to be inside a rocket engine as it blasts through 45 minutes of fuel into the vast beyond.

Those who missed the exhibit will have another chance tonight to experience St. Dallas and the Sinners — again at the Outland Ballroom.

“We come out of the gate running and just sprint the whole time,” lead singer Dallas Self said in an interview last week with all band members.

The group is inspired in part by Self's grandfather, Ronnie Self, a Springfield-based rockabilly artist known for his 1957 tune, “Bop-A-Lena.” The Sinners embrace rockabilly and add thick layers of punk, metal and personal

St. Dallas and the Sinners

Also: Koffin Kats; Brutally Frank
Playing tonight, Outland Ballroom, 326
South Ave.
417-869-7625

Online: Hear two versions of
"Bop-A-Lena"
• Ronnie Self: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Q7jPi0gZEU>
• St. Dallas and the Sinners (not the
current Sinners):
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ScAYQBnazJ8>

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force.

Self is the only member who has a strong
rockabilly background.

On Friday night, Self set the tone with his
raw, back-of-the-throat vocals and imposing
presence.

Manila, the guitarist, glared grimly as he
lurched and flailed through speedy riffs and
deafening chords.

Upright bassist Ryon Groff, wearing
trendy/nerdy black-rimmed glasses and a
gleefully maniacal grin, slapped and
straddled his bass, climbed on it and hoisted
it above his head. He said he learned upright
by playing jazz and caught rockabilly fever
later on.

In contrast, drummer Taylor Steele
maintained a businesslike gaze as he
delivered heavy, loud beats. He grew up

playing country, not rockabilly or punk, which prompted Manila to
point out that Steele's background helps differentiate the band from
others like it.

Manila said he helps generate new material for the band, though
finished songs often sound much different from his original ideas.

"If I find a cool riff I want to turn into a song, I format it in my head to
how I think it would go," Manila said. "Then I bring it into practice,
and these guys take it and mangle it up" — which sparked laughs
from his bandmates.

Last Friday, the group celebrated the release of its CD, "Hail Mary,"
which draws heavily from rockabilly, though often powered with a
bouncing, bludgeoning punk pulse.

The album, on Zero Youth Records, delivers a full, dense sound at
high volume, just like the band plays live. Additionally, the disc
offers touches you might miss live, such as Self's voice trailing off
at the end of "Rockabilly Demon."

To hear where the band comes from and where it's headed,
compare "Rockabilly Demon" or "Shake Rumble and Quake" from
the album with Ronnie Self's version of "Bop-A-Lena" on YouTube.
Better yet, show up tonight at the Outland Ballroom and hear St.
Dallas and the Sinners play their further-out version of "Bop-A-
Lena."

"Ronnie, back then, was pushing stuff," Self said. "They called him
Mr. Frantic. ... So we want to bring that same kind of attitude. They
had the punk attitude back then, even though they weren't playing
what people call punk-rock music."