

# Music is everything at small Livonia venue

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FREE PRESS SPECIAL WRITER

**The Lowdown:** According to the operators of this modest-sized west suburban venue, Trinity House Theatre aims to provide a setting that caters to those music fans who choose to actively, attentively listen. And in this sense, they have succeeded marvelously.

This understated, off-the-beaten-path showcase is one of the most delightful settings for live music in metro Detroit, serving as a welcome alternative to the usual bar-centric performance space. A genuine theater, complete with the remnants of stage set pieces from past productions, theater-style seating and blocked-out windows, Trinity House offers good sound, good sight lines and a genuinely intimate level of interaction between audiences and performers -- a rarity in a music market more familiar with stadiums, old movie palaces and cavernous clubs.



NICK SHORT/Special to the Free Press

John McCoy of Dearborn Heights plays with frequent guest band Dell and the Roughcuts at the Trinity House Theatre in Livonia. The club has theater seating and a strong focus on music.

**Atmosphere:** Dignified and reserved -- perhaps uncomfortably so for those more accustomed to taking in their music in a club setting -- but genuinely comfortable and friendly nonetheless. It's an alcohol- and smoke-free establishment, so the usual club rules definitely do not apply, perhaps appropriate for a building once used as a church. Whereas most venues in town seem to treat their musical offerings as mere background for drinking and socializing, Trinity's patrons treat performers with attentive reverence, speaking little and moving less during performances.

**Crowd:** Social butterflies and scene mavens beware: This probably isn't the place for you. This isn't a mix-and-mingle sort of joint; the twenty- to fifty-somethings who fill Trinity's seats on performance nights are here to listen to and watch the performers, rather than each other. Just who shows up likely varies according to the artists onstage, but on a recent visit a cross-section of ages were represented, including at least one very polite 8-year-old.

**Decor:** Established as a community-style theater, the Trinity House space is architecturally and decoratively oriented towards stage-centrism. Decor, other than what's within the proscenium arch, is an afterthought, pleasant although meant to be barely noticed.

A broad stage is faced by roughly eight possible rows of seats (small round tables take up some of the space), holding 85 patrons. No matter where you sit, the performers are only mere feet away. Neutral-toned walls refract the dim glow of white Christmas bulbs in the seating area, while the stage itself has theater-style lighting, artfully tailored to flatteringly frame the musicians.

**Entertainment:** Trinity House Theatre still puts on plays at the rate of roughly two per year (Roger Reuff's "Hospitality Suite" opens on Oct. 24), but for the past four years the venue's mainstay has been local and regional folk and acoustic acts, buttressed by a smattering of jazz and rock ensembles. The choice of artists denotes a distinct artistic sensibility on the part of Trinity's management; one gets the sense that this is a venue operated by genuine music fans, people who book acts that they themselves want to see rather than simply opting for those who might sell the most tickets. Upcoming acts include singer-songwriter John Austin tonight and traditional folkster Alastair Moock, with the Children's Hour, on Oct. 11. English folk revivalist Clive Gregson, originally scheduled for Saturday, has canceled due to illness. Opener Ralston Bowles will still perform.

**Food:** None, unless you count things wrapped in cellophane -- chips, pretzels, Nutter Butter cookies and the like.

**Drink:** The only buzz on offer here is courtesy of sugar or caffeine: Coffee, pop and bottled water are just about it.

**Pickup potential:** Although that it's likely that at some point some couple has bonded by virtue of a lobby discussion about John Hiatt's early work or something like that, it's reasonable guess that pickups happen here with about the same frequency as lunar eclipses.

**Hours:** The majority of Trinity events take place on Fridays or Saturdays -- but by no means all Fridays or Saturdays. And there's the occasional weekday gig, too, if the opportunity and artist warrant the effort. Your best bet is to check the Web site or give a call before coming by. On performance nights, door times are uniformly set at 7:30 p.m., with performances beginning at 8 p.m.

**Cover:** Ticket prices typically run at \$10 for the general public and \$7 for Trinity House members, although this can vary somewhat depending upon the performer in question.

**Parking:** Limited. Quite. And this situation isn't helped by the presence of the popular Buca di Beppo restaurant next door, resulting in bi-directional spillover between patrons of the respective establishments. Plan on arriving a bit early to get a good spot.

## Trinity House Theatre

38840 W. Six Mile Road, Livonia

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[www.trinityhouse.org](http://www.trinityhouse.org)