

Swinging with the Sin Sisters



Shoreline moms know how to rock

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By Lisa Reisman
Special to the Times

This Saturday night, just like every month for the past 25 years or so, three shoreline working moms will ditch their business attire for black leather, apply a bit more makeup than usual, and prepare to rock and roll.

And not just rock and roll. Janice Ingarra, Kathy Kessler, and Patti Rahl, otherwise known as the Sin Sisters, can pull off anything - from 1940s Andrews Sisters swing and boogie-woogie, to Motown to disco to classic rock to top 40 tunes, in dazzling harmonies that, on a recent Saturday night at Branford's La Luna, had their audience tapping their toes, shimmying on the dance floor, and calling out for more.

They've regularly performed with legendary Saturday Night Live Band's Beehive Queen Christine Ohlman and played at celebrated rock clubs like Toad's Place and Cafe Nine, at local festivals, on primetime television Christmas shows, and, most recently, on the Comcast Theatre main stage in Hartford with an all-star lineup headlined by gangsta rapper and cultural icon Snoop Dogg.

So why are the Sin Sisters, who will once again electrify the stage at La Luna this Saturday night, a relative unknown among residents on the shoreline?

Probably because all three are already booked with their full-time jobs, their teenage kids,

their husbands, and their extended families. Or perhaps because they don't have a manager keeping track of their schedule, reminding them of their Thursday-night rehearsals, and updating their website. Or a publicist issuing press releases. Their roadie? Patti Rahl's husband Don, who coincidentally plays a mean bass guitar and who was setting up the band's equipment three or four hours before their show at La Luna.

Call them no frills, grass-roots, homegrown: Kessler, a familiar sight behind the counter at Branford's main post office, first became acquainted with Ingarra

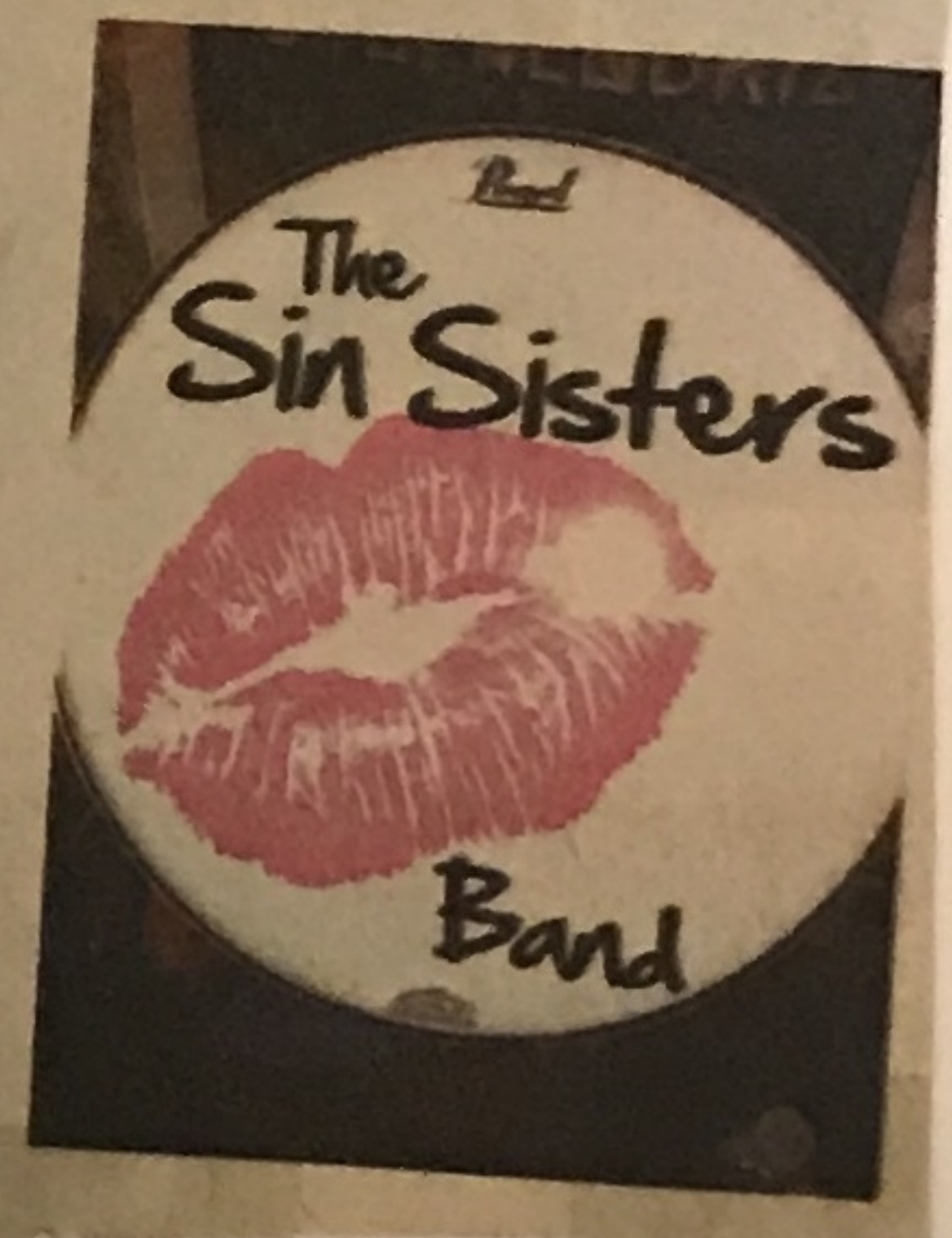
in their kindergarten playhouse and Rahl met the two as the three sin-sistered their way through Sacred Heart Academy in Hamden.

But once you hear their lightning-quick vocal syncopations in Aretha Franklin's "Rock Steady"; once you witness them belt out "Twist and Shout" with a truckload of sass and sets of killer pipes to back up their attitude; once feel your spine chill and your heart warm to Patti Rahl's searing rendition of the Patsy Cline standard "Crazy," you'll understand why the Sin Sisters have been going strong for the

See SISTERS, Page 3



The moms have been sin-sistering since their days at Sacred Heart Academy. They are from left, Janice Ingarra, Patti Rahl and Kathy Kessler.



Sisters: Band to play at La Luna this weekend

From page 1

last 25 years. Because on whatever night you catch them, on whatever stage, you'll realize that these are musicians in full command of their craft.

"Best band we have coming through here," said La Luna owner Edgar Ortiz, gesturing at drummer Mike Vandermaelen pushing the beat of Lady Gaga's pulsating "Just Dance."

Added longtime fan Ginny Ruszczyk of East Haven, smiling as Kessler and Rahl engaged in good-natured banter about their holiday shopping woes: "They've known each other forever, they've been together forever, and they just plain enjoy singing with each other. And

wherever they go, people just respond to that."

As you lose yourself in the Sin Sisters' rich purity of tone; their impeccable sense of rhythm; the fluidity with which they glide from hit to hit, it's easy to forget that they're three working moms who happen to be blessed with the talent to carry a tune far better than the rest of us and the staying power to sustain their range and versatility for so many years.

Until, in the middle of a monster riff by lead guitarist Ricky Jordan, Kessler discreetly steps away and checks her iPhone.

It was a text from her daughter, she said later. Letting her

know she was home from a date.

Check out the Sin Sisters at 9 p.m. this Saturday, Jan. 14 at La Luna Ristorante, 168 North Main Street Branford, 203-483-9995. To book the Sin Sisters for a private party, visit the band's website at <http://sinsisters.net>

The Sisters get more than a little help from their friends and bandmates. From left, completing the band are: lead guitarist Ricky Jordan, drummer Mike Vandermaelen, and bass guitarist Don Rahl of the Sin Sisters.

