

CONCERTS

**George Clinton, local bands team for Project iAm concert**

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For local band Arctic Clam and its lead singer, Nicole Khoury, there is nothing like the feeling of performing in front of a large, energetic crowd — especially when they're there for more than just great music.

"We've had a lot of people tell us we definitely rise to the occasion and we're definitely at our best when we're on that big stage and when we're playing in front of the big crowds," Khoury said in an interview with Toledo Free Press Star. "Something about the energy of the fans — and I know it sounds silly to say that, we're just a cover band in Toledo, but there's something about the energy you get and the response you get from people."

For Khoury, though, some of the most powerful emotions can come from the cause at the root of the band's most visible gigs. For the past six years, Khoury has been the brains behind Project iAm and Acoustics for Autism, a concert series designed to raise money and awareness about the condition.

"Not just for autism, but for families affected by autism, which is something that isn't being done anywhere," Khoury said.

Each February, Acoustics for Autism brings together a slew of local bands to raise money, hold a raffle and rock out for the cause. In contrast, the fall event has a different focus, though the goal of bringing funds and awareness to the issue remains.

Nicole Khoury

"The Plugged In show, which is the September show, is supposed to have a bit of a different feel. It's more of a give-back, thank you to the community, and we're going to bring this really awesome national act to town and charge you a ridiculously low ticket price for it, because we want you all to come out," Khoury said.

"We want everyone to feel welcome. People who can't pay \$35-\$40 to go see bands that are playing at the zoo, or at the Centennial Terrace or at the Huntington Center — we want to charge you a really, really cheap ticket price and get everybody involved yet again, and have you come out and have a good time."

This year's Plugged In event will take place at 5:30 p.m. Sept. 13 at the Shops at Fallen Timbers in Maumee. Admission will be just \$10. The headliner? The godfather of funk himself, George Clinton and Parliament Funkadelic.

"This was a really hard concert to do," Khoury admitted. "I have been stressing out for about the last four months about it, because usually I have got my band in place, ready to go, and selling tickets in May. In May, I reached out to so many different booking agents, and I kept trying to reach out about what the message of Project iAm was across to these booking agents, and nobody was getting it."

She had all but run through her usual options when someone suggested Clinton.

"We reached out to them, and then after a lot of negotiating, were able to get them to fit in our price range. And I thought, this is going to be a really good fit, you know? Even if you don't know George Clinton, you know George Clinton."

Beyond the good feeling that raising money for Project iAm brings to Khoury and the members of Arctic Clam, there is also the side benefit of simply getting to perform on a bill that contains a genuine musical legend like Clinton.

"It's really cool," Khoury said. "In my personal opinion, we look at it a couple different ways. First of all, obviously, I think we're a good band, and people think we're a good band. And when you open in these big shows, you really open yourself up to an audience who, they may have heard your name around town, but they otherwise wouldn't know who you are.

"The other thing is, you're getting ready to play in front of a national act, you're always ready to put your best game on. You're always hoping you can impress them."

But no matter what, Khoury is sure that fans who come out to Fallen Timbers on Sept. 13 are guaranteed a great time — come rain or shine.

"Last year, for Rusted Root, we were opening, and it was pouring down rain. To get up onstage and look out and see 1,500 people staring back at you, laughing, jumping, having a great time, nobody complaining about it. Because everybody's there for the right reason, you know? You can't really top the feeling that you get when you get up there."

Tickets can be purchased at The Village Idiot, Doc Watson's, Ye Olde Cock N' Bull, Ye Olde Durty Burd and all Head Shed locations.