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# In With the New

## New faces and hometown pride dominate the 19th-annual Cincinnati Entertainment Awards

BY MIKE BREEN · FEBRUARY 3RD, 2016 · CEAS



Tim Willig of The Slippery Lips rocks out at the 2016 Cincinnati Entertainment Awards. - Photo: Craig Weiglein

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Tags: Cincinnati Music, CEAs, Madison Theater, Jess Lamb

A common grievance heard after every Cincinnati Entertainment Awards show is that the same musicians seem to win every year. Internally at *CityBeat* (which organizes and runs the CEA program) over the years, we've discussed retiring certain nominees from categories after they'd dominate them for several years in a row, maybe even naming the award after the disqualified nominee.

But for the 2016 CEAs, which were given during a performance-filled Sunday night (Jan. 31) at Covington's Madison Theater, while there were certainly some repeat winners, several first-timers took home awards. Congratulations to Cincinnati Contemporary Jazz Orchestra, Kate Wakefield, Taylor Shannon, Us, Today, Buffalo Wabs & The Price Hill Hustle, Casino Warrior, Krystal Peterson & the Queen City Band, Dawg Yawp and Jess Lamb, who each took home their first CEA plaques Sunday night. In fact, Krystal Peterson and the members of Casino Warrior both made comments about how few shows they'd actually played in the Cincinnati area, which says a lot about their fan support, who saw fit to vote in droves regardless.

There was already a full house when Jess Lamb kicked off her three-song set dressed like a gothic Stevie Nicks and sending chills through the audience with her amazing voice. Backed by keyboardist/electronicist Warren Harrison and guitarist Kasey Williams (also featured on her latest release, *Free*), Lamb dazzled, bringing fellow nominee Wonky Tonk — dressed in her finest *Aladdin Sane* gear — onto the stage to help sing a snippet of "Space Oddity" in tribute to the late David Bowie.

The rest of the performances were equally compelling. Punk/Best Live Act nominees The Slippery Lips (featuring *CityBeat's* photographer extraordinaire Jesse Fox on vocals) broke through the ethereal haze of Lamb's performance with a raucous, colorful performance, flooding the stage with unbridled energy and, for the finale, a horde of dancer friends. Joined by his airtight band, Noah Wotherspoon showed off his astounding Blues guitar chops, making it seem almost effortless and pouring palpable emotion into every note played (it should come to the surprise of no one that Wotherspoon took home "best guitarist" honors at last year's International Blues Challenge).



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### EVENT

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Perennial Bluegrass CEA winners (yes, they won again this year) Rumpke Mountain Boys were a special treat; the group spends so much time touring and playing gigs, they often don't even make it the ceremony, let alone perform. The band's blend of old-time Bluegrass with Blues and jammy Rock was magnetic. Art Rap/Hip Hop nominee Abiyah hit the stage with some powerhouse-bass-booming backing tracks and vocal assistance from veteran local musician Dana Hamblen, providing a lively and dynamic mini-set.

When The Whiskey Shambles (who'd earlier won the Blues CEA) were performing their diverse spin on Blues/Rock, a guy next me said, "They're good, but they're not Blues." While it's true if perhaps based on an inflexible dictionary definition, the Shambles are impressive because they don't adhere strictly to the antique Blues blueprint, which is just the kind of act the CEAs loves to honor and celebrate.

One of the best performances of the night was the last one, by Folk/Americana CEA winners Buffalo Wabs & The Price Hill Hustle. The all-acoustic foursome exploded with as much energy as any of the electric bands, and that energy was infectious. If you're tiring of the influx of Americana bands over the past couple of years, go see Buffalo Wabs and Co. and have your faith in the music revival restored.

While most of the CEA show is about Cincinnati's contemporary music scene, the Cincinnati USA Music Heritage Foundation annually presents a segment during the show about its efforts to help protect and promote the Queen City's musical past. This year, the organization helped save the building that housed the facilities of landmark local record label King Records from potential demolition. King alumni Otis Williams and Philip Paul were on hand for the presentation. Williams said King "was like the beginning of all the stuff you're hearing today — King Records was first, right here in your own hometown." The CUMHF segment also acknowledged the 2015 erection of a permanent memorial at the site of one of the worst concert tragedies in music history, to honor those who lost their lives trying to get into Riverfront Coliseum (now U.S. Bank Arena) in 1979 to watch a concert by The Who.

Some dismissively say that the CEAs is just a vapid opportunity for local musicians to pat themselves on the back. Uh, yeah. They deserve it and, as they showed throughout the night, almost all of the musicians who won awards (and most of the presenters) were quick to praise not themselves or individual musicians, but the Cincinnati music community as a whole, from the players to the non-musical entities that go out of their way to support them.

Jess Lamb graciously accepted her "Artist of the Year" award with a heartfelt speech about her hometown, certainly reflecting the feelings of many others at the local-music love-fest.

"I love this city; I love being from this city," Lamb said. "There's so much amazing talent in this city, it inspires me so hard. I'm so happy to be from Cincinnati."

**2016 Cincinnati Entertainment Awards Winners:**

**World Music/Reggae:** The Cliftones

**Jazz:** Cincinnati Contemporary Jazz Orchestra

**Singer/Songwriter:** Kate Wakefield

**Country:** Taylor Shannon

**Punk/Post Punk:** Tweens

**Indie/Alternative:** Us, Today

**Rock:** Wussy

**Electronic:** Black Signal

**Blues:** The Whiskey Shambles

**Bluegrass:** Rumpke Mountain Boys

**Folk/Americana:** Buffalo Wabs & The Price Hill Hustle

**Hard Rock/Metal:** Casino Warrior

**R&B/Funk/Soul:** Krystal Peterson & the Queen City Band

**Hip Hop:** Buggs Tha Rocka

**Best Music Video:** Molly Sullivan – "Before"

**New Artist of the Year:** Dawg Yawp

**Best Live Act:** The Cliftones

**Album of the Year:** Honeyspiders – Honeyspiders

**Artist of the Year:** Jess Lamb

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