

Opposites and tracks

CADENCE KING IS A STUDY IN CONTRAST AND CONNECTION

BY MATT KEEFER

Alex Lanio finishes off a bacon and egg sandwich for his 11 o'clock breakfast; across from him, Ian Cooper is still nibbling away at his chicken salad sandwich with lettuce. Cooper looks laid back in a fuzzed gray striped sweatshirt with his blondish hair and affable smile. Lanio, whose dark hair accents the dark rim of his glasses, is wearing an American Eagle button-down shirt and adjusts his watch when I ask a question.

What do these two guys have in common?

Very little seemingly. And that's a good thing.

Singer/guitarist Cooper, 20, and drummer Lanio, 21, form Newport's Cadence King, winner of the 2009 Molly Finn Battle of the Bands last July at Newport's Ballard Park. The victory earned them a day of recording time at Steve Rizzo's Portsmouth Stable Sound Studio for their first record together. Listening to a demo CD with a few early tracks, it's easy to recall how they took first place: Lanio's attention to detail with on-the-spot drumming and the extra synth is the yin to the yang of Cooper's energetic voice and guitar.

Cooper, who teaches business, the technical aspects of being a musician and martial arts at the Met School in Newport, and Lanio, who works at his family's Goodies by the Sea candy shop in Newport, diverge in most areas, with different palates, different temperaments and even varying



Dynamic duo. Ian Cooper, left, and Alex Lanio, right, merged their distinct talents and artistic approaches to form a musical partnership that won last summer's Molly Finn Battle of the Bands. PHOTO BY DAVE HANSEN

tastes in music — Lanio prefers the more indie sound of Modest Mouse to Cooper's John Mayer. The few self-recorded tracks they offer are well-planned, incredibly cohesive and damn well groovy. Their Battle of the Bands win rewarded several years of hard work: "We've been playing music probably since we were 15," said Lanio. "This (current band), we're hitting about a year."

They met at Thompson Middle School, which, at the time was under construction. When given the assignment of forming a fake band, Cooper recalls,

"I had no idea how to play an instrument." But eventually Lanio helped him write an early song about a monkey on fire. He offers no official comment on how the assignment was graded, but does recall passing the course. Naturally.

Alternating between a pop sensibility akin to Mayer, and harder guitar and drums in the vein of Jimi Hendrix, the pair boast a creative upwelling together. Lanio describes the depth of their musical output, "You'll go to one show and hear a bunch of songs, and then the next show, you won't hear any of those songs." Cooper

explains, "We have a lot of material; it's just a matter of what we've outgrown. Because we outgrow our music really fast."

So far, the worst luck they've had is in the department of nomenclature. "We hit Placebo Effect for a while when we were younger," said Cooper, "and we were like, 'Oh, there's already a band called Placebo (Effect).' That didn't work out."

The two eventually decided upon the alliterative Cadence King, and it seems to work well for now. "We've had someone e-mail us telling us that her name was Cadence King. She's

from California, and one day she just e-mailed us was like 'Hey, you guys stole my name,'" Lanio said.

"Our goal is to be really bad now because we have her name and we want to ruin her life," Cooper deadpans with a solemn look. "That's why we got into music."

But even that doesn't seem to get in the way of good music. A dedicated crowd at the Battle of the Bands enjoyed them. Though Cooper divulges the secret, "We paid them. We were like 'Here's two dollars. Just two minutes of your time: just move, cheer, pretend like you know the song.'"

Cooper describes the chameleon-like quality of their musical taste. "I guess I could bring in Bruce Lee, 'The style of no style.'"

Lanio admits to being tutored in this regard. "All I really know is some basic self-defense. If someone were to attack me, I wouldn't know what to watch out for."

"If you see a knife, run away," Cooper said.

Hopefully fans won't be unruly when their album comes out soon. The only part they seem squeamish about is the ever-elusive title: When asked about it, Lanio said, "Oh God, I don't even want to think of it. The band name was the worst part."

"I'm proud that we've just got a band name," Cooper said.

Matt Keefer knows basic self-defense; steal his sandwich and he'll poke you in the eye.