

NEW MUSIC DRAWS OWN NIGHT

SunFest eyes under-30 crowd with 15 groups in forefront of pop.

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Luis Dubuc has more on his mind than performing at SunFest. Late last month, his driver crashed Dubuc's van while they were on tour. The damage was made worse by a botched repair. Now the van is in a shop in Kentucky, and he's at home in Dallas trying to straighten out the mess by phone.

"It's been crazy," the electro pop-rock artist says.

Dubuc's band, The Secret Handshake, which consists of him and a fluctuating number of players, is one of 15 groups that will perform Thursday in SunFest's New Music Night.

The evening is new twist on the festival, which opens Wednesday and runs through May 4 along Flagler Drive in downtown West Palm Beach.

Executive director Paul Jamieson conceived the event while brainstorming for ideas that would motivate people to attend the festival on a work night. The kickoff all-access party has

The bands range from headliners such as Finger Eleven, which has notched two gold albums, to Dubuc, a self-taught musician who records his songs on his home computer. Most are bands people may have heard of, but never seen perform, Jamieson said.

"There's an element of this that's cool," he said. "Who's going to be the one to pick the next hot band? It's kind of fun — scary, but fun."

Young people aren't relying on the radio to discover bands as their elders did, Jamieson said. Instead, they learn about them on Web sites like YouTube or MySpace or by file-sharing, he said.

Many pop musicians have gotten their starts on the Web. Colbie Caillat rocketed to stardom aboard her MySpace profile, which generated more than 31 million plays and whisked her into a record con-

tract.

Scary Kids Scaring Kids, another New Music Night band, emerged from obscurity when its songs were posted on MP3.com and mentioned on AbsolutePunk.net. The band is now part of RCA Records' stable.

"The Internet has become such a strong tool for getting people exposed to your music," said DJ Wilson, Scary Kids' bass player. "There are so many ways, from MySpace to mailing lists and everything in between. I think that this is the best way by far to reach your audience . . ."

The Web has changed how presenters pick acts as well. "In the past, we would get 300 to 400 tapes," said Chris Jonethis, chairwoman of SunFest's entertainment committee and a volunteer for 16 years. "It was a tedious task." Now the committee checks out bands online and sees them perform whenever possible.

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been scrapped in favor of more targeted lineups on the first two days.

New Music Night is intended to appeal to the under-30 crowd and anyone else interested in where pop music is headed.

The festival invited the public to suggest bands and vote for them on the Internet. Acts also came to organizers' attention by more traditional channels, such as promoters and industry contacts.

With support from Commerce Bank, SunFest is offering \$15 advance tickets to New Music Night on its Web site until 5 p.m. Thursday.