

*Billboard*

T H E S O U N D O F T H E C I T I E S

# BOSTON

## RETURN OF THE A&R BUNCH

Lately, the labels have returned to scope out the city's new wave of pop bands. New signings include the Pushstars (to Capitol), Jack Drag (to A&M), Red Telephone (to Warner Bros.) and college favorites Guster, the acoustic rockers having signed a reported million-dollar deal with Sire. In fact, there's every reason to believe that Guster will be the next big act out of Boston. Focus on the pop side of the Dave Matthews Band and you'll be close to Guster: not a bad place to be.

Generating the largest groundswell of interest is Rubyhorse, a transplanted Irish pop-rock band just signed to a management deal by Tim Collins. It's Collins' first such deal since parting ways with former client Aerosmith, whose career he helmed for 12 years, leading the band back from addiction to sobriety and multi-platinum status.

Collins sees a close-knit community of rock bands in Boston, with Rubyhorse fitting in nicely. "Rubyhorse moved from Ireland to Boston, rather than to New York or Los Angeles, because there was more of a community here," says Collins, who never heard the band until it arrived stateside. "They thought Boston would be a good place to be nurtured and they were right."

Rubyhorse recently played a showcase at Boston's Paradise rock club, attended by A&R reps from nearly every major label, including John Kalodner of Sony, who is also Aerosmith's A&R representative. "It's a feeding frenzy," Collins says of the

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## A CITY THAT ROCKS

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industry's pursuit. He and the band haven't decided which label to go with, but none is trying harder than Sony; label boss Don Ienner came up later to catch Rubyhorse at a tiny Somerville, Mass., club called the Burren. Ienner then stayed at Collins' home until 6 a.m., trying to close the deal.

The labels would do well also to track other acts of merit, notably the cerebral but funky Gravel Pit, the hard-rocking Mind Flow, the anthemic St. Vitus Dance and the psychedelized Violet Tide (formerly Hybrid Minds), whose singer Megan Berry has a hypnotic voice.

Boston hasn't had a lot of break-out acts this past year, except for the Bosstones ("The Impression I Get" scored big at album-rock radio), Cole (a Berklee College Of Music-trained singer whose "Where Have All The Cowboys Gone" was a top 10 hit) and Orbit, which became a college favorite and was on a number of Lollapalooza dates last summer.