

# ELECTIC CITY/DIAMOND CITY

## Best Of 2012: Arts & Entertainment posted by [Alicia Grega](#)

Zombies are still hot; dancing D-listers not so much in 2012, according to your votes in this year's Readers' Poll. Television programming, films, video games, and recording artists with national reach receive the bulk of our entertainment attention (and dollars), but you haven't given up on the potential of NEPA to amuse and inspire you.

Among the most notable arts and entertainment developments this past year was the opening of the second floor at **The AfA Gallery** in Scranton. In addition to providing additional space for events like the weekly Drawing Socials series and annual Holiday Art Auction, the augmentation allows for twice the exhibition opportunity for our region's artists. All win and no lose.

See, things do happen in The 570. Even as it feels some things will never change — **Idle Hour** was our preferred place to play pool in the '80s — new things do come along now and then to ripple the pond.

Your votes for Best New Event in 2012 went to **Scranton StorySlam**. We saw three installments of [The Moth-inspired](#) true short story telling competition in 2012 when the first program, a senior project of Abington Heights High School student Madeline Zoe McNichols, was received with enthusiasm beyond expectations in March. While each program was unique in terms of theme (Warning Signs, Dirty Laundry, Game Changers), venue (The Vintage Theater, the former Banshee Pub, and the Radisson's Platform Lounge), roster of storytellers, and panel of judges, the same careful attention to audience experience was paid. It's not at all surprising to see the program's emcee Conor McGuigan receive our Best Actor award again this year.

Scranton StorySlam's looking for additional venue options for 2013 but it will continue "come hell or high water," Pamela Hill McNichols confirmed upon news of StorySlam's award. The energy of StorySlam is best experienced live but the McNichols family has dedicated itself to recording each and every tale for posterity (and portfolio's) sake. Visit [scrantonstoryslams.com](http://scrantonstoryslams.com) for links to the video archives or go directly to [www.youtube.com/user/ScrantonStorySlam](http://www.youtube.com/user/ScrantonStorySlam).

Before we leave the topic of storytellers, we'd like to pay our respects one more time to poet, playwright, and teacher **Karen Blomain** ([www.karenblomain.com](http://www.karenblomain.com)) who we lost in August. The award for Best Local Author is well-deserved, even if awarded posthumously.

While not brand new, the **Bonfire at the Iron Furnaces** rose to new heights in its second year with its incorporation of live storytelling and a festive Day of the Dead ofrenda, crafts, and performance parade with large puppets by John Bromberg and led by experience artists from The Pop-Up Studio, in addition to snacks, hot and cold refreshments and live music by The Tom Petty Appreciation Band.

With no less than three separate retrospective exhibits dedicated to his work this year, **Bob Stark** stuck out in your mind as an artist worth honoring with our Readers Poll award. Other pretty things to look at can be found posted with fresh frequency on the blog of local boutique **FreedLove**. A link to the inspirational (and educational if you're working to keep track of the latest trends in style) digest can be found via the shop's main website at [shopfreedlove.com](http://shopfreedlove.com).

If you thought this year's special exhibits at the **Everhart Museum** were stimulating — the diversity and quality of these shows has been so gratifying since curator Nezka Pfeifer came to town, no? — next year's shows are almost guaranteed to attract unprecedented crowds of active young (and young at heart) viewers. "The Blood is the Life: Vampires in Art & Nature" opens in February after the museum's traditional January hiatus ends, and planned for

August opening is a multi-disciplinary exhibition titled “Sidewalk Surfing: The Art & Culture of Skateboarding.”

Two of our favorite categories in the Readers Poll every year are best and worst band name. And while we’re not going to pick on you for **Aim & Fire** – the band clearly enjoys the support of a vocal and active band of followers, so good for them – we have to question your choice of **Blush**.

What is exactly that you have against “Blush”? It’s a little lackluster, perhaps, but as far as band names go it’s not that bad. Do you not read our club listings? What about 2 for Flinchin’ or Never When? I’m assuming Uppercase H is a private joke ‘cause I don’t get it. And “Jay (formerly of Dashboard Mary)” needs to get a new band or a last name stat. Just sayin’.

This year’s votes for best original band and best new local CD both went to **The Great Party**. Because who doesn’t like a great party? Seriously, the band has delivered its catchy original tunes with high production values ([See video for “Teresa”](#)) and playful social media outreach. We’re looking forward to seeing what they’ll bring to the potluck in 2013.

Performing as a solo artist as well as part of belly dancing duo Lotus Fire, and the Eastern European flavored Red Shoes Dance Company, **Rachel Dare** is everywhere. And when not dancing up a storm... she teaches belly dance-inspired Sandstorm Fitness classes. Talent + work ethic = your love. Magician **Denny Corby** doesn’t perform quite so much in the area, but his charm and charisma have left an impression nonetheless. He just finished a weekend gig at the Corner Bistro Dinner Theater in Carbondale and we hope that means he’ll be making himself less scarce in 2013. Expanding our concept of Best Comedian, you nominated a whole troupe of performers this year rather than single out just one funny entertainer. If you haven’t seen **Here We Are in Spain** ([hereweareinspain.com](http://hereweareinspain.com)) at its recent performances opening for the Scranton Cultural Center’s Up and Coming Comedy series or at **The Vintage Theater**, make a note to check out one of their sets at the Federal Building on Washington Avenue during First Night Scranton ([firstnightscranton.com](http://firstnightscranton.com)) this New Year’s Eve.

Not nearly as amusing, Misericordia University’s **The Voices Project: Disability** won your approval for its profoundly important but not preachy treatment of the challenges difference present in society. Even if you missed the live presentations of this theatrical production directed by psychology professor Alicia Nordstrom, there’s a good chance you caught one of the screenings on WVIA-TV. The expansive cast boasted some of the most talented theatrical performers currently working in The 570 as well moving performances by the differently-abled.

**Best Art Venue** AFA Gallery • **Best Big Concert Venue** Toyota Pavilion at Montage Mountain • **Best All-Ages Venue** The Vintage Theater • **Best Casino** Mohegan Sun at Pocono Downs • **Best Concert in 2012** Warped Tour • **Best Dance Company** Scranton Civic Ballet Company • **Best DJ** DJ Cadillac • **Best Independent Movie Theater** Dietrich Theater • **Best Local Actor** Conor McGuigan • **Best Local Actress** Agnes Cummings • **Best Local Author** Karen Blomain • **Best Local Band Name** Aim & Fire • **Best Local Blogger** FreedLove • **Best Local Comedian/Comedy Group** Here We Are in Spain • **Best Local Dancer** Rachel Dare • **Best Local Festival** Bonfire at the Iron Furnaces • **Best Local Filmmaker** Joe Van Wie • **Best Local Visual Artist** Bob Stark • **Best Magician** Denny Corby • **Best Mainstream Movie Theater** IMAX Great Escape Theater, Dickson City • **Best Movie in 2012** Dark Knight Rises • **Best Museum** Everhart Museum • **Best New Event** Scranton StorySlam • **Best New Local CD** The Great Party • **Best New Video Game of 2012** Madden NFL 13 • **Best Ongoing Cultural Event** First Friday Scranton • **Best Open Mic** The Irish Wolf Pub • **Best Original Band** Great Party • **Best Party/Cover Band** M80 • **Best Place to Shoot Pool** Idle Hour Lanes • **Best Solo Musician** Ken McGraw • **Best Theater Production** Misericordia University’s *The Voices Project: Disability* • **Best TV Show in 2012** The Walking Dead • **Worst Concert in 2012** Up roar Festival 2012 • **Worst Local Band Name** Blush • **Worst Movie in 2012** Paranormal Activity 4 • **Worst TV Show in 2012** Dancing With the Stars