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## Heard on the Street

Finance types loosen up and take the stage to rock out for charity.

Lisa Ferber

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On June 11, Tony Conklin, associate director of research at Deutsche Bank, will pick up his walnut-brown Gibson SG and rock out with his band at Manhattan's Highline Ballroom.

Mr. Conklin, 45, who plays lead guitar and sings vocals for hard-rock band Riffhanger, is revving up for his third year performing at Wall Street Rocks, one of two major charity happenings geared toward helping finance folk embrace their inner Robert Plant while raising money for a worthy cause.

Wall Street Rocks is among a number of charities that have sprung up around Wall Street in the past decade, including the Extell Wall Street Boxing Charity Championship and the RBC Decathlon.

Wall Street Rocks raised \$250,000 last year, with net proceeds of approximately \$100,000 going to ReserveAid, Operation Finally Home and the Wounded Warrior Project, which support armed-service veterans and their families. (The rest went to expenses.)

"I love my country, and if I'm not going to serve literally, I might as well serve in some other way that supports the troops," said Mr. Conklin, who has had five family members in the service.

### GOOD CAUSE

**\$100K**—Amount raised for charity by 2013's Wall Street rocks

**\$300K**—Amount raised by 2013's Hedge Fund Rocktoberfest's NYC show

Seth Almansi, 44, a director at Citi Private Bank, will also take a break from the vicissitudes of the market to tend to the subtleties of chord changes at A Leg to Stand On's Hedge Fund Rocktoberfest at Capitale on Oct. 22. The show was founded by A Leg to Stand On, which provides prosthetic limbs and other corrective services to children in 10 developing countries. At 11 years old, Rocktoberfest is something of a granddaddy on the circuit. It expanded to Chicago in 2012.

"We are thinking of calling our band Par Miracle this year, which means 'by some miracle,' " said Mr. Almansi, a bass player.



*Buck Ennis*

Riffhanger rehearses for its Wall Street Rocks gig on June 11.

The blending of finance workers and rock is a natural mix, said George Chrisafis, a co-founder of Wall Street Rocks and an IT director at Credit Suisse. Though not musically inclined himself—"In school I had to take one semester of music, and they gave me the violin because nobody else wanted it; I wasn't very good"—he said others click more easily. "It's that connection between math and music."

The event's other co-founders are James Macedonio, an executive director in the technology group at Morgan Stanley; Pete Carrara, chief tech officer at Royal Bank of Canada; and Leslie Kirby, an associate partner at Citihub, a tech consultancy for financial-services firms.

## CREATIVE VIBE

### BENEFICIARIES

**WALL STREET ROCKS** donates its proceeds to the following armed-services charities, and Hedge Fund Rocktoberfest supports A Leg to Stand On.

**RESERVEAID** provides emergency grants, including rent, to military families. [www.reserveaid.org](http://www.reserveaid.org)

**OPERATION FINALLY HOME** builds mortgage-free, custom-designed homes for wounded and disabled veterans and the widows of those who have lost their lives. [www.operationfinallyhome.org](http://www.operationfinallyhome.org)

**WOUNDED WARRIOR PROJECT** provides a variety of rehabilitative and transitional programs to encourage mental and physical health, including sports, nutritional counseling, outdoor retreats, informational technology training and employment assistance. [www.woundedwarriorproject.org](http://www.woundedwarriorproject.org)

**A LEG TO STAND ON** provides free corrective surgery, prosthetic limbs, orthotic devices, club-foot corrections and other forms of rehabilitative care to children who have lost limbs or suffer from congenital limb disabilities in countries including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Colombia and Ecuador. [www.altso.org](http://www.altso.org)

"Music theory is mathematical, but playing music is not," said Mr. Conklin. "When you look at the chromatic scale and you want to understand the relationship between one note and another to create a chord, you need to know what the distance is between them. But creativity, feeling a vibe, is different."

The transition from desk to stage comes easily for Buzz Moschetti, bassist for Big Dog Party, who expects to play at both Hedge Fund Rocktoberfest and Wall Street Rocks. "During the day you are yelling into cellphones, and at night you are yelling into microphones," said Mr. Moschetti, 49, an enterprise architect for financial services at database vendor MongoDB.

Yet no matter how natural the move from one mouthpiece to another, making time for music while balancing a job and a family leaves most Wall Streeters little more than hobbyists.

"Everyone who plays in these events would love to play more," said Felix Partow, 48, a managing director at Piper Jaffray who plays guitar with Big Dog Party. But, he added, "there are bands that are very serious about it, and they have aspirations of making it big."

Mr. Conklin certainly has aspirations. His band is on track to do 10 to 12 shows this year beyond the charity circuit. Their album, Riffhanger Vol. 1, is available on iTunes, Spotify and Amazon, and the band just got picked up by Pandora.

"We are on the cusp of breaking out, and we'd like to get bigger venues as a support band for a local touring act," said Mr. Conklin.

Koma Gandy, 39, senior manager of financial services at Ernst & Young, runs Hedge Fund Rocktoberfest's acoustic room at Capitale—a smaller stage where performers can play unplugged. Ms. Gandy, a singer and guitarist, noted that she feels a personal connection to A Leg to Stand On. "My father is from Sierra Leone, where a civil war left a lot of amputees," said Ms. Gandy. "When I found out about this cause, I said, yeah, I need to participate."

New York City's Rocktoberfest raised about \$400,000 in 2013, with \$300,000 going to the nonprofit and the rest going to

expenses.

## SUPPORTIVE CLIENTS

Participants find that their clients are supportive as well. "Many of our clients know about this, and we get calls from them asking when they can go," said Greg Dabal, a managing director in prime services at Credit Suisse who runs the Hedge Fund Rocktoberfest music committee for New York and plays guitar with the Cause, a band started to help raise funds for a neighbor with cancer.

This year's Wall Street Rocks schedule celebrates the organization's new partnerships with Army Week and the United War Veterans Council. The June 11 show ties in with Army Week, which starts on June 8, and the Nov. 12 show (location to be determined) lines up with the city's Nov. 11 Veterans Day Parade.

To increase ticket sales, the organizers this year are bringing some professional musicians with local followings into the five-band lineup, including headlining funk group the Main Squeeze, who will be joined by 11-year-old guitar prodigy Brandon "Taz" Niederauer for a couple of songs. Meanwhile, Hedge Fund Rocktoberfest is still arranging its roster. Last year, it featured six bands on the main stage and eight in the acoustic room.

Most of the performers do cover songs to get the crowd rocking, including hits by Guns N' Roses, Led Zeppelin and AC/DC.

"When people go to these events, they want to hear songs they know," said Chris Heasman, a guitarist with the Subscribers and a director, portfolio manager and analyst at Lazard.

He co-founded Hedge Fund Rocktoberfest with C. Mead Welles, founder and head portfolio manager of Octagon Asset Management, after the two friends and some other musicians began jamming and realized the potential to help A Leg to Stand On.

Mr. Welles—who co-founded A Leg to Stand On with Dr. Dinesh G. Patel, chief of arthroscopic surgery at Massachusetts General Hospital and assistant clinical professor of orthopedic surgery at Harvard Medical School—said he started the charity when he saw horrors overseas as he was launching his hedge fund.

"I was doing a lot of traveling in Asia, Mexico, Brazil and Argentina," he said. "Amputation is more prevalent. A bus has too many people and it will flip over, and you have no choice but to amputate."

Previous and likely future sponsors for Wall Street Rocks include Morgan Stanley, Broadridge and Thomson Reuters, with Hedge Fund Rocktoberfest having enjoyed support from JPMorgan Chase, KPMG and Yahoo Finance, among others.

Tickets for Hedge Fund Rocktoberfest will go on sale July 1 for \$200, rising to \$275 on Aug. 2. Visit [www.altso.org/hedge-fund-rocktoberfest](http://www.altso.org/hedge-fund-rocktoberfest).

Tickets for Wall Street Rocks are \$35 for general admission, and \$125 for VIP, which includes an open bar and hors d'oeuvres. Visit [www.wallstreetrocks.org](http://www.wallstreetrocks.org).



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