

Odd Man Out**Buffalo singer-songwriter searches for folk-rock niche.****By Cris Glaser**

Buffalo audiences compare native singer-songwriter **Tom Stahl** to both Billy Joel and Bob Dylan, but the former truck driver defies classification. "I just fall through the cracks," he laughs. "I don't fit in *anywhere*. Folkies don't want me, and I don't rock enough for the rockers."

Tonight, Stahl strums his acoustic guitar at a solo show at the Barking Spider, before he heads home to open for Eric Burdon & the Animals next week with his band the Dangerfields.

Tonight's concert also spotlights unplugged versions of songs from next month's *King of the World*, the group's eighth CD. Over the past 12 years, the quintet has become a folk-festival fixture throughout western New York, where it has warmed up audiences for '60s and '70s nostalgia acts like America, Don McLean, and Paul Revere & the Raiders.

Stahl isn't quite as familiar with artists that broke after 1990, however. Ten years ago, his band opened for Joan Osborne, just as her hit single "One of Us" was soaring up the Top 40 charts. "I didn't stick around to listen to her, because I'm a father and had to go home," he says. "A few days later, I was watching MTV and said, Hey! I just opened for her."

Stahl was even more stunned this past April, when he was named best entertainer in a readers' poll published by a local magazine. "I have a pretty nice following," he says. "But it's weird, because I'm not the best self-promoter. The people in Buffalo apparently love me, but I don't get that much press. I think I'm more surprised at the award than anybody."

Date/Time: Sun., Aug. 20, 9 p.m.