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Photos by TOBY TALBOT, For The Free Press

The band The Warrens plays recently at the Vermont Visitors Center in Montpelier. The band can also be heard on a disc of Vermont musicians that will play at state visitors centers.

Rest areas pump Vt. jams

'Jukebox' project takes local musicians on road

By Brent Hallenbeck
Free Press Staff Writer

MONTPELIER — While they're poring over pamphlets promoting bed-and-breakfasts or Cabot cheese tours, tourists at the Capital Region Visitors Center and the two rest areas in Williston can now sample something else quintessentially Vermont — songs by the state's musicians.

Big Heavy World, the Burlington-based music-resource organization, unveiled its new "jukebox" project Friday at the visitors center in downtown Montpelier. The CD players that will treat visitors to tunes by Vermont musicians are running now in Montpelier, about to start in the two Williston sites along Interstate 89 and likely to spread soon to most of the state's 20 rest areas.

Twenty-six of the state's recording artists are on the disc that will be played at the visitors centers. The list includes rockers 5 Seconds Expired and Steph Pappas, jam-band Aaron Flinn's Salad Days, singer-songwriter Patrick Fitzsimmons, jazz-blues singer Sandra Wright and pop-Americana group The Warrens, who performed Friday at the opening reception for the project.

Steve Cook, who handles marketing for the Vermont Information Centers, sees the jukebox as a way to reach people looking at



Jim Lockeridge of Big Heavy World holds the disc containing Vermont performers that will be used in rest areas.

brochures about Vermont with something else unique to Vermont.

"It works while people are browsing," Cook said. "It's kind of like hitting them with two messages at the same time."

The project was the brainchild of Jim

Lockeridge, executive director of Big Heavy World. Visitors who like what they hear can ask the rest-area attendant for the name of the musician, which will appear on a screen next to the CD player. They can take down

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the information and, if they're so inclined, order a CD online through Big Heavy World's Vermont Music Library and Shop.

The jukebox project received a big boost with \$500 donated by Advance Music Center to help pay for equipment. Lockridge said he hopes to receive enough donations so that eventually the jukebox will be interactive, with a flat-screen computer visitors can use to call up songs by Vermont musicians they want to hear.

Kim Nicols of Barrington, N.H., stopped with friends Friday afternoon at the Capital Region Visitors Center on the way to a convention in

Joining the jukebox

All musicians based in Vermont who want to take part in the Big Heavy World jukebox project should contact Dave Donegan, shop manager, at musicshop@bigheavyworld.net or 865-1140.

Burlington for parents of preschoolers. She was pleased to see a live band playing and snacks and drinks on display as the reception was in full swing. She liked what she heard about the jukebox project.

"I think it's a great idea,"

Nicols said, because it's a good use of visitors' time at a rest area. "It's pleasant."

The members of The Warrens joked that they'd like to do the "you are here" tour and play all of Vermont's rest areas. In the meantime, they'll be happy to play the visitors centers in absentia through the jukebox project.

"We want to get our sound out to Vermont," said Bill Myregaard, one of the Burlington band's guitarists. "It's such a Vermont thing to do, to put all the local music in rest stops. 'Made in Vermont' is a big thing."

The Vermont musicians will be exposed to a large group of travelers. Cook said almost 4 million people

stopped at the state's visitor centers in 2004; only 30 percent of those were Vermonters.

Tourists will hear a wide range of sounds, but Cook said there are restrictions: namely, no obscenities. He said he was quoting Lockridge when he noted that each song on the jukebox "has to pass the grandmother test."

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