

X-STRANGLERS ROBERTS ONES IT DOWN

**BRINGING ACOUSTIC SHOW
TO NEW HAVEN'S CAFE NINE**

BY SEAN SPILLANE
STAFF WRITER

Roberts is used to being the everybody's attention on the former longtime singer of an English punk band The Stranglers and with his side project,

Roberts is touring the United States as an acoustic act, accompanied by guitarist Andy Ellis.

"I'm really busy, indeed I am," he said during a recent phone interview from his home in Brighton, England. "I go out with just a guitar — because I'm inept — and I've been doing it for a couple of years now. It's a different thing, but you do get the need sometimes for a little bit of electrification."

Andy's a fantastic acoustic guitarist and people will really appreciate the work when we play [Cafe Nine New Haven Tuesday]."

Roberts is even alive to tour is a minor miracle after he was involved in a December 2005 car accident described as "spectacular, even by star standards."

"The car was stopped on a blind bend, and I was driving down, facing the wrong way at 30 mph in the morning . . . it was awful, and it took me two years to get back from that. I walked away pretty much without a scratch — I had a few bruises — but it was the damage that I'd done. My state wasn't really good after that."

Following that frightening incident, Roberts has returned his attention to Soulsec, his side project that he started in 1999, using the monikers The Faithband and The Roberts Band.

"Soulsec is the project and it's been a lot of fun," he said of putting his focus fully on Soulsec. "I'm writing as often as I needed to do [with The Stranglers] and, I think people that write in a band, I



Cafe Nine is at 250 State St., New Haven. Showtime: Tuesday night at 9. Al Pist opens. \$10. 789-8281, www.cafenine.com.

started a project on the side just to fulfill that need."

Joining Roberts in the band are Ellis, bassist Brad Waissman and keyboardist Richard Naiff, who formerly played with The Waterboys.

"It's a solid core of four players, but we've had a bit of trouble with drummers," Roberts said. "Our last drummer went off to play with The Spice Girls, so it's become kind of a Spinal Tap-like issue."

It wasn't easy for Roberts to leave The Stranglers, especially since the band was enjoying a bit of a resurgence at the time of his departure. There was no one incident that led him to exit, rather just the feeling that "it was time for a change."

"I needed to move on, I think, and to leave the guys to do what they wanted to do," he added. "It was a long time — 16 years — and we had some great times. The best thing was to leave on a high."

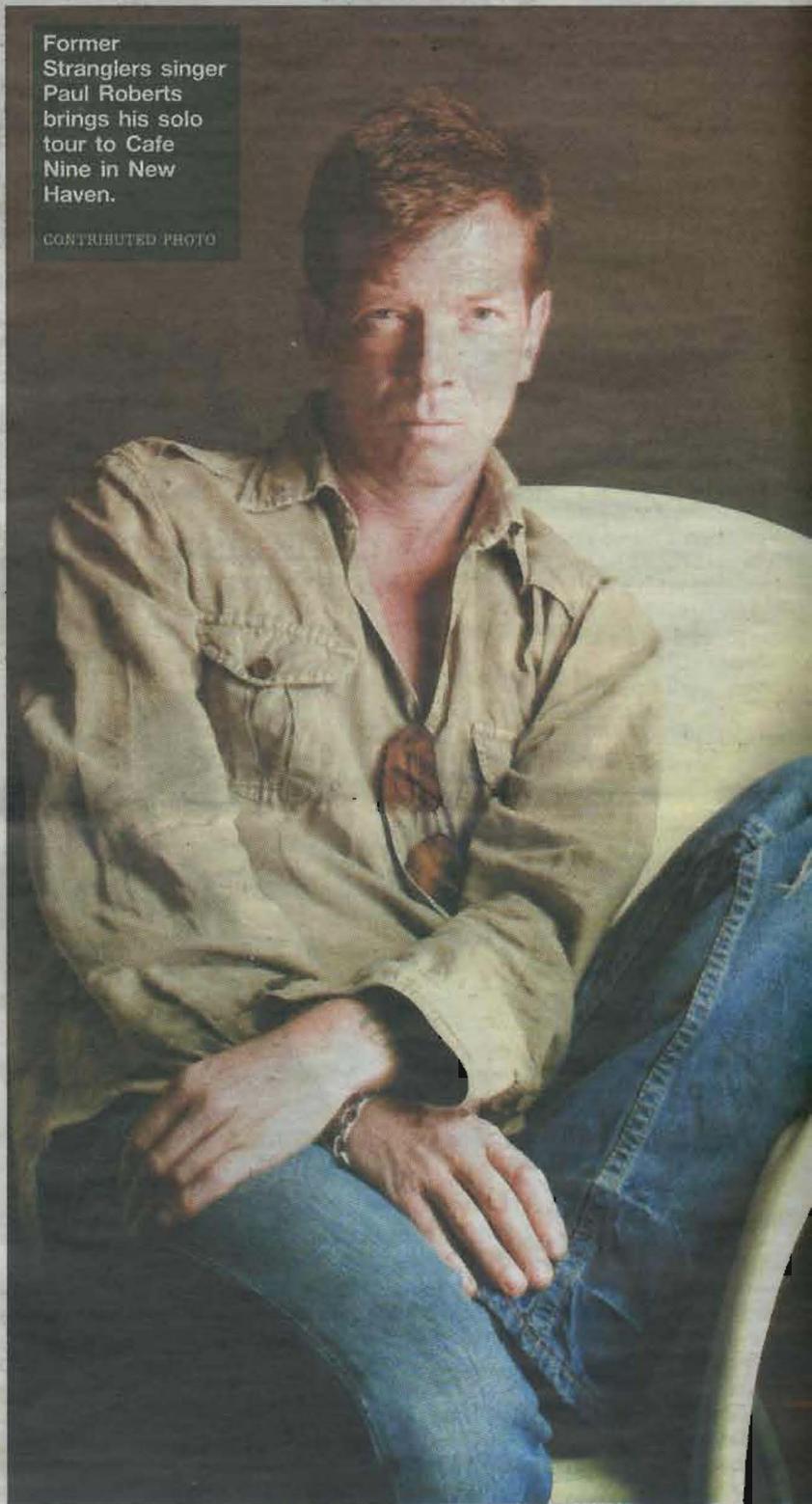
Roberts took over the mic duties when founding member Hugh Cornwell left The Stranglers in 1990. He didn't realize at the time the size of the shoes he was filling, but Roberts said that was probably a good thing.

"I have to say that I wasn't aware of the amount of love for Hugh, so I just did my own thing," he said. "I think if you try to mimic somebody, I think that's a fool's game. If you're going to make a mistake, you might as well make it on your own terms."

"I did something entirely different from Hugh and, win some, lose some, we carried on with that for 16 years. I think a lot of people appreciated the fact that we took a fresh approach to the classic songs."

Former Stranglers singer Paul Roberts brings his solo tour to Cafe Nine in New Haven.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



Fans attending Roberts' show at Cafe Nine can expect to hear a few songs from The Stranglers in the set list, as well as some of his songs from Soulsec and a few surprises.

"I'm bringing the stuff I wrote with The Stranglers and also we'll play a few classics, songs that have had an impact on me," he said. "But the

Soulsec thing I'm very keen to expose."

"I'd love to do [a full tour with Soulsec], but the logistics behind that — the costs of that . . . it's not the cheapest thing to do. I've got these exceptional talented people and if I could get a tour together where they could get well-paid and we could afford to be in America, then that would be desirable."