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12/31/05 - Posted from the Daily Record newsroom

## At First Night, fireworks, performances to ring in the new year

BY ROB SEMAN  
DAILY RECORD

MORRISTOWN -- Preparations for tonight's 14th annual First Night Morris County were in full swing Friday, even as weather forecasts mentioned the chance of a light snowfall.

The pulsing sound of classic rock music filled the vacant Epstein's department store Friday afternoon.

Glenn M. Taylor, Bob Cianci, Chris Roselle, and Ben Asher --better known as the rock band the Kootz -- powered their way through tunes like the Who's "Tommy" inside the cold, empty halls of the now-closed store.

"It sounds good in here," Roselle, the band's lead singer, said. "They should turn this into a nightclub."

For tonight at least, Roselle's idea will come to life. The store will be one of the venues for First Night Morris County, the largest New Year's celebration of its kind in New Jersey.

The Kootz and several bands will join still more entertainers hired to delight the 8,500 people who usually attend the event. Another 1,500 usually come to the Green area to watch the First Night fireworks at 9:15 and midnight.

For the Kootz, the decision to play the New Year's gig was easy. The band played the Morris County celebration for the first time last year at the Market Street Mission, and the performance brought them some welcome attention since then, Taylor said.

"People came up to us saying, 'We saw you at First Night,'" Taylor said.



**DANIELLE AUSTEN / DAILY RECORD**  
The Kootz band practices at Epstein's building for the First Night performance. This will be second year that the band will perform. Glenn Taylor, left, is on lead guitar and Chris Roselle is on lead vocals and guitar.

### Free parking

Free parking will be available for First Night at the Morristown Parking Authority garages and lots on Sussex Avenue, Speedwell Avenue, Prospect Avenue, DeHart Street, Morris Street, Lafayette Avenue, Lumber Place, Lackawanna Avenue, the corner of King Place and King Street, the corner of Elm Street and Franklin Street, the lot behind Epstein's Department Store on Maple Avenue, the Dalton garage on Cattano Avenue and the Ann Street and Bank Street garage.

### If you go

First Night Buttons for admission to tonight's events are available at 30 locations throughout and around Morris County and throughout the day at 20 Park Place, Morristown. Buttons are \$18. Children under four are admitted free. The events will begin at 7 p.m. break from 9 to 9:45 p.m. for the first fireworks display on the Green, then resume until 11:45 p.m. and conclude with the midnight fireworks display. For more information, call, (973) 455-0708 or visit [www.firstnightmorris.com](http://www.firstnightmorris.com).

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"The environment in working in towns and municipalities is very cool," Taylor said. "You make some nice friends."

**For the 14th time**

First Night Morris County, the family-friendly, nonalcoholic, local alternative to other celebrations, such as the midnight ball dropping in Times Square in New York City, originated as a bicentennial finale in Boston in 1976. Morristown is now one of several towns internationally that coordinate festivities to celebrate the New Year with arts performances.

Tonight's will be the 14th First Night held in Morristown.

Weather for this year's event will not be as comfortable as last year, when temperatures reached into the 50s. According to Ion Weather in Morristown, a weak low-pressure system is expected to make its way into Morris County today, with temperatures dropping to 37 degrees tonight.

**White New Year**

That system was expected to bring as much as 2 inches of snow to Morris County. Meteorologist Steve Pelletiere said roadways would be slick, but that the snowfall should end in time for New Year's festivities.

"The steadier stuff will be done by midnight," Pelletiere said.

Visitors to the event need not worry about the cold and snow, though, First Night Chairwoman Maria Volarich said.

Aside from the fireworks, all of the performances are indoors and transportation to each will be provided by trolleys through the night.

The two trolleys are provided by Morristown Memorial Hospital and will run from 6 p.m. to 12:30 a.m.

"Come out and have a wonderful evening," Volarich said.

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