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FINANCIAL NEWS

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Who knew London's pensions industry was so cool? Last night, over 300 actuaries, lawyers, fund managers, consultants, trustees and others packed out the 100 Club on Oxford Street, for their second annual "battle of the bands". And was that Steve Webb, the UK's pensions minister, getting down to Rage Against the Machine?

The event, put together by Stuart Breyer, director of communications and research at pensions advisers Redington, and Charlie Thomas, executive editor of trade magazine Pensions Management, has proved so wildly popular that this year it has had to be spread over two nights.

Twelve bands in all have been formed, and taking to the stage last night were rockers from Redington, pensions consultants Xafinity, investment advisers Mercer, fund managers Schroders and Aviva Investors, and the UK's new national pension scheme, Nest. The other six will perform tonight.

The evening started with Redington's Rough Justice, with founder Dawid Konotey-Ahulu on keyboards. In the band's own words: "His natural affinity for Motown classics has been steadily eroded by the band's central philosophy of only playing blindingly loud hard rock."

Xafinity's Dfurred are almost professionals, with brothers Ben and Joe Perry (not to be confused with the Aerosmith guitarist of the same name) performing regularly across the South and London for the past four years. They certainly sounded like they knew what they were doing.

But then, so did everyone. Schroders' White Tiger - fronted by the angel-voiced Carol Shand - were perhaps the best all-rounders, and duly walked off with the evening's prize. Meanwhile, the gods of punk smiled in approval upon Aviva's aptly-named Mosh, and bassist Damian Maher made "Rebel Yell" his own. Billy Who?

Fronting Casino, Mercer's Matthew 'Shades' Demwell more than lived up to his self-description as "Britain's wildest actuary", with an exhorting rendition of Killin' In The Name Of, Rage Against the Machine's signature howl of rap-



It turns out ... pensions rocks!

rock outrage. Several members of the audience had their shirts off by this point. As did drummer Seb Cheek of Professional Pensions, proving he can break hearts as well as news.

Pensions minister Steve Webb, who had dropped by to comper the event, must have been wondering how far he was allowed to enjoy himself.

Rounding out the evening was the band from Nest, the UK's new national pension scheme. Nest is gearing up to be a scheme fit for the

21st century, but judging by last night's performance, its chief executive Tim Jones is more of a 20th Century Boy. The spirit of Bolan lives on!

The bar was raised high for this evening's performers. But kicking off will be F&C's Pink Torpedo, looking to defend their crown from last year. Taking them on will be Towers Watson's Undercover Agents; Legal & General's Priority 1; Pension Corporation's Rockhopper (what is it with the penguins, guys?), with founder Edi Truell on keys;

Standard Life Investments' Standard Deviation; and the Hip Flask Junkies from Russell Investments.

And on a serious note, it's all for charity. With around 700 tickets sold and raffle-tickets on sale on the night, Pensions Rocks looks set to raise about £15,000 for a host of good causes - more than double last year's £7,500 total.

Hearty congratulations to all involved!

<http://www.pensionsrocks.com/home.aspx>