Burlington-based R&B singer-songwriter/producer Jamell “NYT” Rogers lives his life according to a simple mantra: “Know your truth.” He defines this maxim as having a deep understanding of oneself and to let that truth be the guiding force in one’s life. His moniker, NYT, has a double meaning. For one, it’s an acronym for his mantra — the “n” comes from the “n” in “know.” But NYT is pronounced “night,” which characterizes the darkness he’s seen and overcome in his lifetime.

Rogers, 28, recently rebranded himself as Jamell NYT, in part to make his newer, melodic R&B stand out from his earlier hip-hop. For years, he’s been rapping as NYT and making beats under the moniker Nawtyboi, a catchall name for his production work. Rogers plays SideBar in Burlington on Wednesday, February 8.

As he continued to grow his online presence over the last several years, Rogers found that his former name created difficulties for search-engine optimization. That’s because NYT easily confuses the search robots and mostly produces results for the New York Times.

In 2016, Rogers released his first proper album, the ominously titled Substance Abuse. Its seven tracks feature a blend of icy hip-hop beats, warm acoustic guitar and finely woven vocal harmonies. But the record isn’t merely a collection of well-crafted pop R&B. Rather than making a set of fun, easy-to-swallow singles, Rogers aimed for a loftier goal. Throughout the album, he takes a hard look at drug addiction and Vermont’s multifaceted opiate crisis, both of which have affected him personally.

“I told myself, ‘If I’m ever going to put out an album, it has to be the real(est) shit I ever wrote. It has to be from the heart,’” says Rogers.

Born in Poplar Bluff, Mo., Rogers has seen drug addiction ruin the lives of many people close to him, starting in his early childhood. At age 6, he was taken away from his mother, Shirley Pratt, a struggling addict. Rogers was put into foster care and sent to Vermont, as was his brother, David. In Rogers’ words, he feels he was “not well received,” referring to his experience in Vermont’s foster care system and the fact that he never found a permanent placement.

His love of music helped him cope with the turmoil of bouncing around...