

Community Music in Cass Corridor

Bob Nirkind

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As an alternative to listening to music from a crowded, noisy, over-priced and smoke-congested barroom, two area residents have set up a series of six weekly Tuesday evening concerts at the 1st Unitarian Church on Forest and Cass.

According to Program Director Ralph Koziarski, he and his partner and fellow Church caretaker, Terry Youk, put together these six introductory concerts in an effort to both allow local musicians an outlet to perform their music in more comfortable, intimate and accessible surroundings and to gauge interest in continuing such a venture.

Thus far, area artists contributing their talents to the first six concerts have been Shoo Bee Doo, Ron English and Paul Bouillet, Griot Galaxy, Eileen Orr & Trio, Ted Lucas and Don Hill, David & Roselyn and Ralph Koziarski and Terry Youk.

Being musicians themselves, Koziarski and Youk say they feel there must be avenues of communication open to area artists other than just bar jobs. They hope that with your support, the Community Music Program can be an ongoing Tuesday night function.

After five shows, the situation is this. Donations of 75 cents have been asked weekly in order to pay the featured musicians something (very little actually) for their time and trouble. Now the Church has demanded \$25 rental fee for the use of the premises, thus more-or-less wiping out any money which might otherwise go to the musicians.

In addition, Church officials have yet to be completely sold on the concert series, necessitating that these first six Shows be scheduled on a look-see basis. The final decision will be rendered after the sixth performance.

To anyone dedicated to listening to a variety of musical styles in an atmosphere more conducive to appreciation than Cobbs' Corner, this series fits the bill. Even more important, the continuation of this series would encourage local musicians to get together and perform in an environment guaranteed to elicit the attentiveness not always available otherwise

A program of the caliber of Community Music is sorely needed in Detroit. Certainly musical activity has reached an all-time low in the city. Whereas we once had clubs such as the Strata to depend upon for quality entertainment, we're now forced either to pay outrageous prices to view artists in large, field-like concert halls or else attempt to listen to musicians over the din of clinking glasses and ringing cash registers. Neither offers anything near to an ideal appreciatory situation.

What's more, dealing with national acts means big bucks at the door. The Strata couldn't survive the over-inflated asking prices. Neither can most other club owners outside of cities such as New York, Chicago and Los Angeles. The answer is to look to local artists to attract an audience.

What Community Music suggests is a new-found hope for the resurgence of small programs of this sort—programs with both artist and audience in mind; programs which allow the musician the freedom to open up and experiment and the audience the opportunity to relax and enjoy a bit more improvisation than they are perhaps otherwise used to. Everyone benefits, and the emphasis is on creativity and communication, not money-making.

Residents of other major American cities have managed to initiate and support programs along similar lines and there's certainly no reason why Detroiters can't do the same.

The impetus, however, has to come from folks sincerely interested in presenting good music rather than in becoming budding entrepreneurs in the mold of Bob Bageris and Steve Glanz.

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