

RME Public Statements

Written by administrator
Wednesday, 15 November 2006 02:31

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Editor's note: The following was posted on the River Music Experience (RME) Web site in the days after the organization's president and CEO, Lon Bozarth, resigned.

Over the past 20 months, there has been a purposeful transition of the RME from a museum-based tourist attraction to a mission-based organization that supports the idea that original and diverse live-music performances are a needed component of a modern community.

To that point, the Redstone Room was constructed on our second floor and began hosting touring national, regional, and local performances. Our River Roots Live festival was the first major modern music festival to happen in the Quad Cities in many years. A *Quad-City Times* report on the festival titled "River Roots Live Strikes Chord with Young Quad Citians" pointed out that we attracted exactly the audience we hoped for. Our RMX Live free-concert series attracted hundreds of Quad Cities residents downtown on Friday nights to enjoy live music under the stars.

The inside stage at the popular Mojo's coffee shop regularly features open-mic nights, ethnic singers, local university jazz ensembles, and musical groups of all genres at no charge to the public. To date the RME has employed more than 500 musicians and performing groups with the majority coming from the local area.

Our educational programs have had impact on thousands of school children. Our summer Rock Camp was filled to capacity with young musicians learning to perform and write songs together. These programs come at a time when arts and music programs receive progressively less funding in our public schools.

The River Music Experience is managed by a volunteer board of directors in accordance with our not-for-profit status. Until now it has been "real estate" heavy. The cost of maintaining a large historic building strains our core mission of live music and music education. Without the museum focus, we no longer require as much physical space to operate. We will be actively recruiting other cultural organizations and like-minded businesses to share space, ideas, and expenses in the Redstone building.

RME will continue to adjust our operation to be lean, nimble, and responsive. Real-estate change is one tactic. Our other goal is to become more volunteer-based and open to use by music-lovers of the Quad Cities. With your support and attendance, the Redstone Room will become self-sufficient and become capable of providing funding for our educational programs.

Our board of directors will be expanding to incorporate volunteers that recognize the importance of live music to the community and aren't afraid to roll up their "shirt sleeves" and work to make it happen. You may be one of those.

The Quad Cities is a great place on the cusp of great things. The entire region looks to us to reverse the trend of our educated young people leaving to find employment out-of-state. Our industry relies on the community becoming a more attractive and inviting place to work and live.

We have been asked if the River Music Experience is ahead of its time. From our perspective the time could never be more right than now. The Redstone Room is a powerful example that you don't have to travel to another city to experience great entertainment in a world-class venue. River Roots Live was a taste of "big city" air that Quad Citians should be proud to have hosted. Our events, concerts, and programs consistently attract college students and young adults from all over the region.

We are overwhelmed by the growing network of music appreciators that we have met and networked as our mission has evolved. We ask each of you to encourage your friends and associates to discover what we are all about and to witness the impact we have had on the community and in downtown Davenport. Get involved, become a supporting member, make your voice heard, and support live music.

Thank you.

Editor's note: The following letter was sent by Ellis Kell, who has worked at the River Music Experience since it opened and recently submitted his resignation as director of programming and education.

The River Music Experience is at a crossroads, and will only survive to succeed with the support of the musicians, fans, and patrons of our community. Regardless of what some folks might say, I truly believe the RME still holds as much potential as it ever did to be a culturally significant component of our community. It is my sincere hope that the current reorganization and restructuring of RME will allow it to succeed and prosper, with increased volunteer support from the community it serves.

As an intimate performance venue, there is nothing in our area that comes close in comparison to the Redstone Room. It is a top-shelf venue for local, regional, and national touring acts. Don't take my word for it; just ask any of the hundreds of musicians who have already performed there. If you haven't experienced the Redstone Room yet as a music fan, you have truly missed the boat. Again, don't take my word for it; just ask some of the thousands of folks who have attended live performances at RME by the likes of Louisiana Red & Honeyboy Edwards, The Hackensaw Boys, Junior Brown, William Elliott Whitmore, Lowry, Tim Reynolds, Oakley Hall, Carbon Leaf, Fareed Haque, The Bastard Sons of Johnny Cash, The Nadas, Andrew Landers Project, The Impossible Shapes, Struggle in the Hive, Martin Sexton, Backyard Tire Fire, Drop Q, Louie Bellson, Manny Lopez, Bill Bell, Edwin McCain, Jim the Mule, Greg Brown, Pieta Brown, Bo Ramsey, Joe Price, Treologic, Charlotte Martin, Zilla, Lil'

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Brian & the Zydeco Travelers, Eric Sardinias, Walter Trout, Tea Leaf Green, John Lee Hooker - just to name a few.

As a center for education and programming for our community, I can't emphasize enough the importance of RME's core mission. It has personally been one of the high points of my musical life to help thousands of area schoolchildren learn about the significance of our American roots music heritage to contemporary music worldwide, through the River Currents Tour at RME. Also, Rock Camp USA is a dream-come-true for so many young musicians in our area, and each of the three Rock Camp concerts drew a packed house of family and friends to the Redstone Room - to support and nurture this young talent - in the spirit of live music performance.

I have had the pleasure to meet and talk with RME visitors from all over the United States, and from many other countries, and the consensus is that our community is very fortunate to even have such a center - dedicated to our musical heritage. Yet, RME has not always received the support it deserves from the people right here in our own community. It's now crucial that our community fully embraces RME, and that RME fully embraces our community. It is my sincere hope that many more of you will come forward to contribute your time, talents, and support. To all of you who have supported RME in the past, and to those who will contribute to its future, please accept my heartfelt thanks.