

Live Music not Dead in the Boro

Hidden across town from Middle Tennessee State University is a treasure rarely visited by the students. The white stucco exterior obscures the rich landscape within. Only the derby-wearing pink pig head that graces the front door, and perhaps the sound of live music, would lead one to explore the territory know as the Bunganut pig.

Just inside the door, under the British flag, is the bar. Smiling faces and a casual but elegant environment excite the eyes, while the smell of steaming entrees and free-flowing beer announce the presence of this Old English Style pub. A hint of Blue Raiders memorabilia scattered about shows just where loyalties lie with this crew.

This full service restaurant and bar transforms each night around 9 p.m., and sets the scene for some of the best live music in the middle Tennessee area. Featuring bands with styles covering the 60s, 70s and 80s, this tiny nook has been host to local legends like Burning Las Vegas and the Warren Brothers, as well as popular groups like Skyline Drive and individual artists such as Clarence Dobbins.

“We have always had music here” says Scott Lasater the general manager of Murfreesboro’s Bunganut Pig. “Our concept is to provide the whole evening experience, dinner, drinks and entertainment” continues Lasater.

The Bunganut Pig was established in Murfreesboro 11 years ago. The original Bunganut Pig is in nearby Franklin Tennessee. The Murfreesboro location is larger than the original with a maximum capacity of 99 people.

Live music spills out of this cozy retreat seven nights a week, except during football season when Monday night focuses on a wide screen television visible from most of the bar. The week starts out soft with one or two person acts and leads up to high energy dance bands for Friday and Saturday night. Blues, rock and R&B are the preferred musical styles for the Pig, but you never know who might be playing.

“We used to go out and actively seek talent” says Lasater. “Now we rely on the word of our most popular acts and their recommendations”

On two-dollar Wednesday it is standing room only. Stretta, a new addition to the Pig’s line up, was setting up on the sidewalk of a stage that lines the back wall.

“It’s a great place to play,” says Jon Myers, Stretta's lead singer. A tiny stage doesn’t bother him, as he spends much of his time drifting through the crowd. Jon weaves his way past tables and between patrons to catch people singing along, and quickly thrusts the microphone out to catch them.

“I like it when the audience sings...It keeps me from having to remember the words,” Myers laughs.

Stretta was formed a couple of years ago when Jon Myers and Ray Balz merged their bands.

The band has their hands full at the Pig with four women celebrating birthdays, ranging in age from 21 to 56. The band plays their version of a birthday song to each, but Billy Jean, one of the birthday girls, wants more.

“I want to hear my song” Says Billie-Jean as she celebrates her 29th birthday for the 27th time. She overhears that Balz is the softie, so she makes her plea during the break.

"But I don't know the song" Myers says, as the woman with the name Michael Jackson made famous coerces Balz into singing it anyway with a fifty-dollar bill slipped into the band's tip jar.

The band starts back up after the break with a rendition of Michael Jackson's Billie-Jean mixed with a melody of various Jackson hits.

Wednesday is one of the busier nights at the Pig, but every night finds something special.

One favorite of the bar and its regular clientele is Scott Dorman. On a recent Tuesday night Dorman played to a very small crowd but his enthusiasm and showmanship did not suffer from the low turnout.

“I love to play, it's great. I have played arenas, private parties and small bars, I like to play smaller crowds,” said Dorman

“It is easy to play a large crowd, they come with the energy already bursting out, but smaller crowds draw more from you.” If that statement is true then Dorman must be full of spare energy, because this crowd was immediately drawn into the show.

As the long chestnut haired woman at the bar shouted out another request, the full ability of Dorman's voice was tested. From his original, “There's always something stupid” affectionately called the stalker song by Doorman, to hits from the 60's; the Pig was converted into the perfect niche to enjoy a drink and escape everyday life.

“That sucked” Dorman exclaimed, after finishing another attempt at a song he did not know. “We must stop with the sucking” says Dorman, as he drew the crowd even deeper into his on stage persona.

During the break, Dorman strolled to the bar and talked with patrons. Even in the dim light of the smoke-filled room, his eyes sparkle as the love of his craft emerges.

Dorman planted himself at the bar and played acoustic with a little persuading from Sara behind the bar.

“I love it when Scott plays here, he is fun,” said Sara one of the Bunganut Pig’s bartenders.

Time passed with little notice; suddenly Sara’s last call brought the patrons back to reality. The scene is surreal as people crept reluctantly to the door.

“See you tomorrow” said Sara to one of the regulars. Although quiet now, it is certain that the Bunganut Pig will transform again and again as they bring the best live music to Murfreesboro.

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