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Outta Leftfield

Published: Tuesday, November 24, 2009

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By Mike Morsch

Joining the cultural cognoscenti for a truly unique musical experience

When I was a young man, I used to dream about winning the lottery just so I could hire the Beach Boys to come to my house and play a gig in my living room.

One would need a relatively big house and most likely a substantially big wallet — not to mention a couple of dozen beach balls in this instance — to make something like that a reality. It hasn't happened yet, but I keep buying lottery tickets and eyeing beach balls at every opportunity, just in case.

Apparently, I wasn't the only one with this dream. The Blonde Account and I recently discovered that there actually is a place called The Philadelphia Society for Art, Literature and Music (PSALM) which offers folks just that — the opportunity to watch a concert from the comfort of one's living room.

How cool is that?

Actually, PSALM (www.psalmsalon.com) has been around since 2004. It's based in a big, old house on the backside of St. Joseph's University, The Blonde Accountant's alma mater and former stomping ground.

The PSALM Salon is described as "the premiere small space for serious listening." According to its Web site, it is "reminiscent of the Old-World salons of Europe, where the cultural cognoscenti would gather to experience and discuss the works of the leading artists of the day. These salons were typically hosted within the homes of the artist's patrons and provided a venue for artists to extend their craft and make important connections with their supporters."

Certainly, I would like to be considered for "cultural cognoscenti" status

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— if I knew what that was — but I likely engage in too much spitting and scratching to qualify for the designation within the guidelines as established by polite society. So I won't start printing the business cards just yet.

Nevertheless, that didn't stop us from a date night visit to the "stately old Philadelphia mansion" — which also is the home of PSALM Chairman Jamey Reilly and his wife, Suyun — to see a performance by our favorite local singer-songwriter and friend, Dan May (www.myspace.com/danmaycd).

I always enjoy date night with my wife and was particularly excited about this one last Saturday because of the artist and the venue. We've been "Dan Fans" for a few years now, and we've seen him perform in several area venues ... except for in somebody's living room. That, I wanted to see.

Unfortunately, we got sidetracked early on. As many of you know, the Schuylkill Expressway and City Line Avenue are really no places to be on a Saturday night. Traffic is absolutely ridiculous on those two roads all the time, but especially on Saturday nights. And I am not familiar enough with the lay of the land to comfortably know alternative routes within the big city. Remember, I am from rural Illinois, where there is no traffic in the cornfields.

Now while The Blonde Accountant is highly competent in virtually all areas of life, she does occasionally come up short when it comes to driving directions. I realize, of course, that this is my fault. (Gentlemen, please take note of the previous sentences as an example of how to offer creative criticism to one's wife while assuming the burden of blame without the end result of having to sleep in the garage for a week. Hey, this ain't my first rodeo.)

And herein lies the rub: I am a relatively calm fellow under most circumstances, although some might argue that point. But I've grown up in the newspaper business, where we live by deadlines. As a result, I hate to be late for anything, especially a living room concert by my favorite artist.

In those instances where I lose my composure, I have been known to engage in what The Blonde Accountant calls "Creative Use of Profanity," or CUP for short.

Hanging around with baseball coaches and newspaper editors all these years has provided me with a substantial foundation in the profanity department.

Given the combination of the Schuylkill Expressway, City Line Avenue and every dadgummed knuckleheaded driver in Philadelphia that evening who decided to drive below the speed limit right in front of me, one could safely say that my CUP had substantially runneth over.

Maybe it's just me, but I think everybody on the Schuylkill and on City Line should know that when I'm going to see Dan perform — and I'm running a little late — they should just get out of my way.

We eventually found the stately old mansion and doggone if it wasn't exactly as billed — a concert right in somebody's living room. The space has a stage, lighting and fabulous sound system and accommodates about 60 people. During intermission, visitors are treated with complimentary snacks in the kitchen and can mingle with the featured artist. Guests of legal age also can bring in their own adult beverages if they choose.

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Mike Morsch has been executive editor of Montgomery Newspapers since 2003. His award-winning humor column "Outta Leftfield" has been recognized by the Pennsylvania Newspaper Association, the Suburban Newspapers of America and the Philadelphia Press Association.



Renewing the Voice

Andy Stettler, Video and Web Editor, catalogs the advancement of Montgomery Newspapers as it enters the digital age and increases its presence on the Web. Stettler writes on a variety of subjects including social networking, multimedia journalism and print and web promotion in order to connect readers with what happens behind the scenes.



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Follows the ups, downs and sideways of learning how to be a father. From the scrapes and bruises to the discipline and exhaustion, Daniel Sean Kaye, editor of Parents Express magazine, strives to convey the wonder and frustration of being a parent today.



It's like a Super Bowl party at somebody's house. What an absolutely fantastic and unique local music experience.

The problem is, now I want Dan to bring the band over to my house and hang out in my living room. I'm going to have to talk to him about that.

We'll go back to the PSALM Salon. In the meantime, I'm going to keep buying lottery tickets and eyeing beach balls.

Mike Morsch is executive editor of Montgomery Newspapers. He can be reached by calling  215-542-0200 , ext. 415, or by e-mail at msquared35@yahoo.com. This column can be found at www.montgomerynews.com.

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