



A number of bands perform at the Varsity Pub which is becoming a hot spots for local and regional artists to show off their skills.

THOMAS HATZENBUHER / FOR THE PLAIN TALK

Another Loud Evening at the Varsity Pub

By Thomas Hatzenbuhler

For the Plain Talk

The not-so-subtle ringing remaining in one's ears for days; the interesting and colorful individuals with whom one stood, jumped and shouted at in attempted conversations over the volume of amplified guitars; the feeling of camaraderie one shared with perfect strangers in mutual appreciation of the talents of the band or perhaps the genre of music being performed: these are the hallmarks of a healthy and vibrant music scene, regardless of the size of the town in which one lives.

Among the many venues for musical performances in Vermillion, the Varsity Pub stands out in its ability to draw in local talent as well as exciting bands from neighboring cities and states. After a quiet holiday reprieve, the Varsity Pub was once again the place to be to experience Vermillion's thriving and boisterous music scene.

On Saturday, the Varsity Pub played host to a harmonious foursome of bands that, while all exceptionally unique in style and delivery, seemed to blend into one continuous thundering of rebellious punk-rock energy, replete with catchy bass lines, searing guitars, frontmen with epic tattoos (and t-shirts) and seriously sweaty drummers.

The inaugural act was a familiar one, albeit with a new name—a reference to a particular character of a particular Quentin Tarantino film—consisting of local talents Nick Burke and Billy Jons. Burke, as usual, masterfully delivered his usual folk-rock guitar and vocal performance backed by a seemingly more powerful and present Jons, whose sonorous vocals added a touch of the dramatic as well as an emotional edge to the performance.

"We formed [our group] because we share a passion of music and listen to a lot of the same music," explained Jons. "I sing like a celestial sex bandit and [Burke] sings and plays guitar like a blood moon banshee. It just feels so natural playing with Nick. I had so much fun at the show. I knew a lot of the people there, so it was a blast just to act silly and go nuts in front of a microphone."

Following the brief, but energetic set by Burke and Jons was another local favorite: 20 Bold Ideas. The truly fascinating aspect of watching 20 Bold Ideas perform is the way in which each member of the band contributes multiple, unexpected nuances to the overall sound and feeling of each particular song—whether that song is a cover or an original, the latter of which made up the majority of their latest performance. Rarely does one hear three distinct voices perfectly juxtaposed against a wall of guitars, bass and drums as uniquely as one does while listening carefully to 20 Bold Ideas, which, it must be noted, is a difficult task to do while dancing, thrashing or just singing along.

"It was a pleasure to share a stage with some outstanding out of town talent, and major kudos to Zach Welter for setting it up," said Zach Baltz of 20 Bold Ideas. "It was also a huge landmark for us to do an almost all original set and still keep the crowd's interest. I'll take it as a good sign that a lot of the people who approach us and compliment us are also musicians."

International Cover-Up, an incredibly lively and spirited punk band from Sioux Falls, followed the blistering performance by 20 Bold Ideas and turned both the volume and the intensity dials up by a number of decibels. The intensity of their set was exemplified by lead singer Hunter Johnson's unceasing movement—jumping into the crowd, running through the tangle of cords that constituted the stage in the basement of the Varsity Pub and bumping into other band members all while singing, screaming and shouting were typical fare for each song—as well as the anti-establishment sentiments of Johnson's lyrical content.

"We all have similar and different tastes ranging from Motown, hip-hop, rap, punk and everything else under the sun," explained Johnson of the music of International Cover-Up. "Punk is just something that we all grew up with and, in my honest opinion, is the most fun to play. What's most important is that we all contribute to every song, any time someone in the band brings an idea in we all put our two cents into it and try to make it something that reflects all of us."

The capstone performance of the evening came from Omaha, Neb. to share their pop infused punk sound with the hardy crowd of the Varsity Pub. The Ridgways—named after their drummer, Mick Ridgway—most likely win the evening's award for having the greatest degree of support from the crowd despite being 137 miles from their hometown. The simple, honest sound of the Ridgways is clean, brutal and reminiscent of punk from an earlier era of the genre. Perhaps of all the evening's performances, the Ridgways brought the greatest amount of fun—and their short, incandescent songs burn quickly and excitedly and leave the crowd wanting more.

The music scene of otherwise and seemingly quiet Vermillion is anything but sleepy; rather, it is an ever-growing, evolving amalgam of truly high-quality sounds. One of the best places in Vermillion to experience the music scene remains the Varsity Pub.

"The Varsity was [expletive] awesome," said Johnson of International Cover-Up. "It's really rad to see such an amazing venue there. Bryon Middelton [of International Cover-Up] and I had both lived in Vermillion in the earlier parts of 2000 and there was nothing quite like that when we were there."

The Heartbeat of Vermillion



Todd Moore has been working at the Vermillion Public Schools for 24 years.

KATIE CLAUSEN / FOR THE PLAIN TALK

What Todd Moore has Seen, Felt, Experienced

By Katie Clausen

For the Plain Talk

Todd Moore has spent many of his adult years as most adults do; getting up each morning, and going to work. Unlike many adults, however, he reports to an elementary school. Not to teach, but rather to make it possible for teaching and learning to take place.

"I am the head custodian for Jolley Elementary," Moore said. "I've been here for 24 years."

Moore is a Vermillion native who started out working part time at the High School and when the opportunity came along over 20 years ago for him to take the Jolley position, he grabbed it.

"This position came open and I applied for it and got it," Moore said.

There is more than meets the eye when it comes to being head custodian at Jolley Elementary. Along with a lot of rewards, there are a lot of challenges associated with the position. Upkeep of the facilities and grounds are important to maintaining the infrastructure of the school.

"The hardest part is making sure everything is safe for the kids," Moore said. "But it's a great group of people to work with, in all of the buildings."

Moore isn't limited solely to Jolley Elementary. Each day he begins by firing up the building and turning lights on. He starts the morning by setting up for breakfast, but throughout the school day he runs errands for other buildings in the district. And after working in maintenance for 24 years, Moore often gets called to other buildings to help with their facilities as well.

"Three days a week I go over to Austin School in the afternoons," Moore said. "I just help with general maintenance there."

Large buildings such as the elementary schools require large pieces of equipment to keep them going about their day to day operations. Throughout his tenure, Moore has learned how to work with large scale

building maintenance.

"Boilers is a big one," Moore said. "Making sure they're running right and nothing is wrong with them, making sure the chemicals are right and all that stuff."

At the end of the day, safety is Moore's number one concern. He is responsible for the facilities where hundreds spend their day time hours both learning and working. His job is to make sure Vermillion's Youth are spending time in a clean environment.

"Making the building safe for kids and teachers is my priority," Moore said. "There are a lot of things that need to be looked at throughout the day."

Beyond large equipment, Moore is responsible for general maintenance important to the building. He has a laundry list of sinks and bathroom facilities, electrical facilities and general operations that require constant attention to make sure they are working their best. There is no reprieve for him during the summer months, either.

"In the summer we always go through and shampoo all of the carpets and clean all of the furniture in the classrooms," Moore said. "We strip and wax the gym floors, too."

Although each year Moore continues to go through the motions of the catalog of items that need fixing and facilities that need cleaning, he has experienced changes along with the school district, too.

"The biggest thing I've seen is the new addition they put in a few years ago," Moore said. "We've also gotten new boilers in this building."

Moore has been married for the same 24 years that he has been working as the custodian.

He and his wife have raised their children in Vermillion, and enjoy participating in local events, the outdoors, and spending time with their kids.

"I've got two kids, one is 22 and one is 20," Moore said. "I like to ride motorcycles, go to stock car races, and watch my son in the demolition derby."

KIDS

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"You don't have to do stuff anymore," she said. "You can just be out."

Navea, also age four, explained "equal" to her fellow story-listeners.

"It's where the sides are equal, like that," she said, pointing to a symmetrical tree on the wall. "And my hair is almost the same as yours."

Though similar hair color might be seen as equal, the focus of the story was to show the children that even those who do not look alike can be equal.

The art lesson following the story also had this goal as children cut figures holding hands out of folded paper and colored them.

Kindergartener Pella's figures were mirror images of each other.

"Both of them are going to look exactly the same," she said as she colored.

But should people all look exactly the same?

"No," she said immediately. "Then it wouldn't be that much fun and you couldn't tell

who was who."

Other artists in the room had figures which looked different from each other.

"That's me and that's my mom," Aurora said. "I have longer hair and she always cuts her hair."

Though Aurora acknowledged her and her mother's different appearances, she noted one important commonality.

"We're both special," she said.

When asked what she thought about the book, Pella revealed she had something in common with many adults.

"Something about me that you don't know is I forget things really fast," she said.

Though the details of the story were lost, Pella remembered why equality

is important.

"Because then it wouldn't be fair to the people that didn't get to do it," she said.

Pella also had a clear plan of action should she spot unfairness.

"I would tell them to stop," she said.

Simple but effective. Aurora enjoyed the lessons learned from Martin Luther King, Jr.

"He wanted everybody to do what they want to do," she said. "Everyone should be nice to each other."

Differences don't stop Aurora from being nice herself.

"I have a friend that's named Rafael and he has black skin," she said. "We sometimes tickle the baby that they have."

Aurora, like Pella comes with a plan of

action should someone be mean to her friend for his skin color.

"I'd say don't be mean!" she said.

Still simple, still effective.

Aurora later demonstrated her right to be different by putting a sticker on her belly button.

Keaton, age four, also colored her mother and herself. She notices

differences between her friends and herself.

"Kinley looks different but she has the same color skin as me but my skin is kind of pink sometimes in the winter," Keaton observed. "She has brown eyes."

Though they differ in eye color Keaton said they have fun with commonalities too.

"Me and Kinley both wore flower dresses once

at the same time to daycare. It wasn't the same kind, we were just both wearing flower dresses. She'd never be mean to me."

For more information on storytime and how to register your child, visit vermillionpubliclibrary.org.

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