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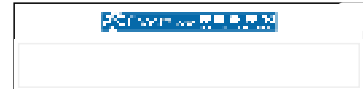
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# ON THE SCENE: Enjoying the January Jams, rain or shine

January 14, 2016  
By NAJ WIKOFF , Lake Placid News

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The Donald couldn't make the January Jams at the Recovery Lounge this year, though there was a sizable turnout waiting in anticipation. Emcee and artistic director Scott Renderer kept the audience apprised of his progress, and the many hurdles he overcame in his valiant effort to attend one of the most popular showcases of musical talent in the North Country.

The Jams are held every Sunday afternoon in the former Model T Assembly plant in Upper Jay from about 2 to 6 p.m., though the end time often stretches to ensure all who signed up to perform can do so. The music tends toward folk, blues, rock and bluegrass, from seasoned professionals to emerging talent, and the quality high. Nearly every show includes some musicians for whom it's their first performance before a large audience or at the Lounge.

The atmosphere is relaxed, with people sitting around in all manner of cast-off furniture, some en route to being reupholstered in the day when the venue turns back into an upholstery shop. There is usually a mix of food and drink available, some brought by audience members and musicians, a box for donations, and elements of past sets for plays apparent either in the patterns on the floor, hangings on the walls or ceilings, or being used as tuning spaces for musicians.

### Article Photos



The audience enjoys a January Jams performance from th...



The Jams are the brainchild of Byron Renderer, Scott's older brother who also launched the upholstery business.

"What I like about the Jams is the diversity that range from the beginners who don't know how to play and get up there exposing their hearts to the professionals," said Byron. "There is a great perspective between each act. It's exciting and rewarding."

The most recognizable and consistent member of the audience is Diesel T. He Cat, accompanied by his spokesperson Kelly Tucker. Diesel is a large black cat with flecks of gray scattered about on his coat. This year, in celebration of his loyalty and love of music, Diesel was featured on the poster promoting the Jams.

"Diesel is the poster child of the Jams," said Kelly Tucker on her way out with the big cat. "This will be his fifth year attending. He's always had those little shots of gray hair; that's the diesel in him. He's having a good year, glad to be back and help the community think snow. He loves the music, but he's from Wisconsin and can't miss a Packers game, so he's leaving early today. It's a tough choice, but he's a Packers fan. He'll be back next week."

"I think the events are going wonderfully this year," said Stephen Longmire, president of the Upper Jay Arts Center, aka Recovery Lounge. "This is our second Jam. There will be five this month. The Jams kick off our season. This year, we have some excellent musicians scheduled such as the extraordinary guitarists Frank Vignola and Vinny Raniolo, who played to a packed house last year. We have three plays lined up, one directed by James Coleman. He's an excellent musician as well and has played a ukulele set each Sunday this year. If you were to give Patsy Cline a ukulele, you just might find James."

Along with directing a play, and occasionally performing with his ukulele, Coleman will be leading 10 two-and-a-half-hour acting classes on Monday evenings over the next three months. As of press time, they had 12 enrolled with room for a few more.

"The class is for the whole range of acting experience, for the person who has never acted to the professional," said Coleman. "The attendees will learn techniques and strategies for analyzing acting texts and techniques for animating those texts. It will be guided in terms of what you're aiming for. If someone is already practicing acting, they need to practice more. We all do. For people who have never had any experience, this will be a means for them to feel more supported in what they are trying to accomplish. Techniques really help the actor. It's all about how does the actor get into the text and produce a character."

On stage the musicians are allowed to perform three pieces, and if asked, Scott will sit in on drums and others will fill in with instruments as needed.

"My younger brother and I have never performed before," said Ophelia Pope, 13. "I don't plan to be a professional singer. I want to sing a lot, but I am planning a different future. Our father got us into this; he's our inspiration."

"I thought performing at the Lounge was great," said her brother and fellow vocalist Peter, 12. "I know the song (they sang), knew there is usually kids singing, so I thought, 'Hey, why don't I be in this too?'"

"I've been performing far too many years to mention," said their dad, Franz Pope, down from Plattsburgh. "I am very proud of my kids. This is the first time we've ever done something like this. It was a lot of fun. I've performed here several times before. It wasn't hard to get them to join me. I came just planning to play with their older brother, and they wanted to join us as well. This is the best performing venue in the entire North County. It's a great building. The sound is great in here. It's got a very comfortable atmosphere, and the people are awesome."

"Playing music is freeing no matter how crappy the weather may be, especially here," said son Franz.

"This place is fantastic," said Louie Conway of Lake Placid, attending the Lounge for his first time. "It's a good time. You've got all these

people coming from a different culture. Donald Trump is trying to make it. He'll be well received, no doubt about that. It's great. Nice variety of music. People are enjoying themselves. Reminds me a bit of the atmosphere at Happy Jack's. I plan to come again."

"The audience is really into the music here, said Steve McCauley, a musician from Saranac Lake.

As for the Donald, last heard his helicopter crashed in the East Branch of the AuSable River, and he was struggling upstream.

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