

NIGHTLIFE

No off season for region's music scene

BY DANA GEORGE
Special to the Record-Eagle

The tourists may be leaving town, but nightlife is kicking up like a Kansas tornado.

The bands Grasshoppah and Smokestack will be performing this fall at The Loading Dock in Traverse City. Crooked Tree Arts Council in Petoskey will be hosting the Jeff Haas Trio, Great Lakes Chamber Orchestra and Northern Michigan Chorale.

Award-winning singer/songwriter Rachael Davis will share billing with Robin Lee Berry at several area venues, as will New Third Coast and long-time area favorite Jim Crockett.

Great White will be playing at Streeters. Stray Dogs, Code Blue and Kathy and the Rhythm Doctors will perform this fall at Sleepy Bear Lounge in Honor.

And that's just the tip of the iceberg.

Area club owners and promot-

ers claim they have no problem reeling in top-notch acts after the beaches have cleared.

"Our crowds double in the fall," said Doug Street, general manager of Streeters in Traverse City. "During the fall, as it gets dark earlier, a lot of people look for indoor events."

Streets says that his club takes in 60 percent of its annual income between October and January.

Jack Paupore, owner of The Garfield Comedy Club in Traverse City, actually closes his club during the summer and reopens in September each year.

"There's too much daylight in summer," Paupore laughed. "People begin to come back in during the fall."

With the help of a booking agent from Cleveland, Paupore signs comedians two months in advance. He said that area golf courses and casinos are attrac-

tive lures for the performers he seeks.

Another club owner who has no trouble attracting quality talent is Norm Gibner, owner of Sleepy Bear Lounge in Honor.

"There's an amazing energy here in the fall," Gibner said, adding that the club's clientele becomes a nice mix of hunters, fishermen, locals and fall tourists.

"After a hard day of hunting or fishing, they come in to hang out with me. We try to treat them right," Gibner said.

According to Gibner, the trick to insuring a steady crowd is to provide good entertainment while serving delicious food.

"I don't believe in charging a cover charge and I don't believe in one-nighters. Groups normally perform here on Friday and Saturday night. I believe people should be able to avail themselves to the talent we bring in."

A New York native, Gibner not

only has a good ear for talent, but a background steeped in music. He holds several degrees in music and plays eight musical instruments. In fact, Gibner once dreamed of becoming a music professor until fate — and other job opportunities — brought him to Michigan.

"I own a bar, yet I don't know what I'm doing," Gibner said with a laugh. "But when I get up there and play with a group, when I'm in front of a microphone, I know what I'm doing."

Seamus Shinnners owns Connemara Concerts, a Traverse City booking company.

"There are several different factors that you're dealing with as you book an act," Shinnners said. "As an independent promoter, I have to be mindful of

what Interlochen, Turtle Creek and Dennon Museum have coming to town so we don't step on each other's toes."

Shinnners said that clubs not only compete with each other for an audience, but they're also competing with modern technology.

"You're competing with DVD players, VCRs, and the entire home entertainment scene," Shinnners said.

Still, there's nothing quite like a live show.

"You can be in a room with people from five different parts of the world and not speak the same language as any of them," but they all tap their feet to the music," said Norm Gibner. "The one universal expression is music."



Great White plays at Streeters in Traverse City on Oct. 10. The band, whose pyrotechnics touched off a tragic nightclub fire in Rhode Island last winter, is touring to raise money for the victims and their families.

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