



BACKSTAGE AT THE MAINSTAY

The latest “scoop” from our Board of Directors

Volume 3, Number 2



“Vinyl Revival” is The Mainstay’s 2019 Summer Fundraiser

The Eastern Shore’s best venue for live music is throwing the record party of the year on Saturday, July 13, 2019 at The Mainstay in Rock Hall, Maryland. “Vinyl Revival” will feature an afternoon and evening of musical selections from LP’s representing all of the memorable styles of music Mainstay audiences have come to love. Acoustic and electric blues, folk, world music, blue grass jazz and classical selections will be spun for your listening pleasure.

As a special treat, these selections will be played over an incredible sound system graciously provided by “The Listening Room,” of Chestertown, MD. (As you may know vinyl LP’s are making a comeback with serious audiophiles due to the truer nature of their sound reproduction. The sound system you will be hearing takes full advantage of this difference.)

Our musicologists are hard at work devising a schedule and playlist sure to delight and enchant listeners.

More details on this event will be coming soon, including an hour-by-hour breakdown of the day’s music and where and how you can purchase your \$25 ticket for this event.

The Mainstay Bar: Welcoming Since the Beginning

To quote the popular TV show Cheers, “Sometimes you want to go where everybody knows your name.” That’s the feeling you get when you walk into the bar at the Byrd Room at the Mainstay. It’s a warm welcome, and that’s exactly what Jane Hackett, a major player in the founding of the Mainstay, wanted when a decision was made to place the bar in the newly bought Mainstay. According to Marvel Evans, original manager of the bar with her husband Dick, Jane Hackett set the warm and friendly tone by welcoming patrons as they entered the main door to the Mainstay.

John Clark built the bar, Connie Robinson added the trim and Carol Niemand stained it. Dick and Marvel, also the first bartenders, served beer, wine and water; Marvel baked all of the goodies. It was more financially prudent for Dick Evans to purchase a liquor license for each individual performance rather than the annual county fee.

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Today Becky and Keith Walbert are behind the bar, serving a wide variety of beverages and specialty drinks. In 2011, Becky introduced standard liquors or “spirits” such as gin, vodka and bourbon. She orders the liquors and Keith buys the water and soft drinks. Becky has a team of volunteers she schedules to bake and bartend.

Pot, also known as Russell Laster, unloads the liquors and sets up the chairs for the performances. For Becky, it is a labor of love as well as a full time volunteer effort. Daphne Howarth, another volunteer, is the bartender for Mainstay Mondays with Joe Holt.

The Mainstay’s Sound Guy

Clark Bjorke has been the Mainstay’s sound guy for some 15 years, but he has been a go-to sound professional in the area for many years. He’s also a musician, and along with his years of sound engineering credentials, he’s been a natural for keeping the Mainstay’s well-known reputation for high quality sound intact during weekend and special concerts.

It typically takes about six to eight hours from Clark’s arrival for a concert to the time he puts everything away and heads home. Since every band has a different configuration, he arrives early to have the microphones and direct boxes in place and cable connected. He places the piano either on or off the stage.

The sound system has evolved since it first consisted of Tom McHugh’s Yorkville six

channel powered mixer and his Yamaha speakers. A purchased Dynacord was replaced by a system designed by Chuck Levin’s Washington Music Center, but Tom’s Shure mics are still the core of the microphone selection. When it comes to sound, notes Clark, “It’s the ear, not the gear.”

As essential as he is to the Mainstay, the weekend stint is one of Clark’s many part-time gigs. He is president of the Kent County Arts Council Board of Directors; he and Leslie Raimond purchased a sound system for the council for musical performances around the county, and he’s the main operator of that system.

Clark has worked sound at St. Michael’s, Solomon’s, and 90’s in Baltimore, among others, and mixed sound for Livingston Taylor, Dave Van Ronk and “other 60’s luminaries” during a Church Hill concert series. He was the sound guy for the Maritime Music Festival put together by Janie Meneely.

Clark also ran the Sunday night Folk Music Radio Show for Kent County High School’s student WKHS radio station for 16 years. In addition to all his volunteer and part-time gigs, Clark is the full-time operations manager for Camp Fairlee.

And always, he is a musician. Clark has played the guitar – mostly acoustic – for 50 years. He was self-taught for several decades and in the 80’s took guitar lessons from Philadelphia area finger-style guitar masters Wanamaker Lewis and Rolly Brown.

He describes his music as “eclectic,” and his numerous performances have included stints at Music in the Park, Delaware Friends of Folk, Andy’s, Play It Again Sam’s, open mic at the Prince/Garfield Center, and at Mainstay Mondays with Joe Holt.

