

# Good Times ends live music, not fun

■ The venue will stay open and add a full bar, but events like Rooster's Blues Jam will find other homes

By Will Wyrer  
For the Emerald

This past weekend, local fans gathered at Good Times Cafe and Bar to celebrate the end of more than 25 years of live music in downtown Eugene.

"It's really too bad. It's been historical. We're here because it's history in the making," said Clinton Crane, a Good Times regular for over 15 years. "It really is a shame, 'cause this has always been such a great live venue for this town."

As the swing-blues of Little Charlie and the Nightcats invigorated the crowd, fans took to the dance floor one last time to enjoy the live atmosphere of a bar that holds memories for many people.

"There was a great era here and remembering all the great bands that have played here: Dave Matthews, The Stray Cats, the Cherry Poppin' Daddies," said current manager Amber Bright. "It's pretty awesome to think it all happened here."

Although the booking of Little Charlie and the Nightcats wasn't planned specifically for the last weekend, Bright said she couldn't think of a more worthy band to close down the live music of Good Times. The band was chosen by the British Blues Connection as the "Best Touring Blues Band" for two years straight.

"Our band has been together for 25 years. We've been coming here for over 20 years and we got a lot of old time friends here," said lead guitarist Little Charlie Baty.

Led by Little Charlie, the Sacramento-based band tries to incorporate old school blues with a jazz-swing appeal.

"Basically, what you're going to see in our live shows is four dedicated musicians playing the blues," Baty said just before the show.

In addition to Baty, the band also includes vocalist Rick Estrin (who also plays harmonica), stand-up bassist Ronnie James Weber and percussionist June Core.

"We've always enjoyed playing here," said Baty. "The Good Times has become our regular spot for over 10 years, so it's going to be sad to not be able to play here. I al-

most regard Eugene as another hometown."

Most of the customers were puzzled at the end of the live music that has been such a mainstay for so long.

"I really don't understand why it's happening," said Crane.

While Bright feels remorse for shutting down the live acts, she said it was the only option for the shows which weren't bringing in the money that they used to. She feels that there isn't enough of a client base willing to pay the ticket price to support live shows.

"We wanted to keep it and that was our original intention, but the business was terrible and I'm not sure exactly what that's about," she said.

One way that live music will keep running is through the Rooster's Blues Jam, named after Gavin Fox, which will be moving to The Doc's Pad on Monday nights.

The jam, which dates back 20 years, provides the opportunity for local musicians to sign up according to what instrument they play, and be put into selected groups.

Organizers of the jam intend to keep the tradition alive after Good

Times. The next jam is scheduled for June 5 at Doc's Pad.

In place of the live music, Good Times will begin a make-over in June.

A big part of the remodeling will include a new bar that will extend out to the patio. In addition, more billiard tables will be brought in and an extension will be added to help improve the video poker area.

A full bar will start pouring on June 19.

Although the change will not be fully completed until fall, Bright wants to reassure all customers that Good Times won't be closing at any time during the renovation.

"I think it will be awesome," said Bright. "It will be a fun hangout bar, 'cause I don't think there are a lot of places in town where you can hang out and have a good time."

For interested fans, Little Charlie and the Nightcats will be heading back into Oregon in August, playing the Joseph Bronze Blues and Brews Festival on June 12, the Oregon Zoo Amphitheater in Portland on June 17 and Riverbend Park in Winston on June 18.

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