

Till last Tuesday

After nearly 11 years, the First Tuesday Coffeehouse gets ready to dim the lights

BY WILL O'BRYAN

March 1988 saw the birth of a Portland institution, the First Tuesday Coffeehouse. December 1998 will see its end.

The First Tuesday gatherings have run almost continuously on the first Tuesday of every month for nearly 11 years, offering women musicians—professional and otherwise—a supportive venue to develop their stage legs, try out new material and develop community.

But times change, says Donna Luckett, one of the First Tuesday founders and half of the band Galloway and Luckett.

"There was a group that went to LCP's [Lesbian Community Project] talent show about 11 years ago," Luckett remembers. "We thought it would be neat to make it ongoing."

That was the spark that led Luckett, along with Cindy Zrinyi and Sheryl Sackman, to start the First Tuesday Coffeehouse.

From there, it set up shop in the Bijou Cafe downtown, where it stayed about five years, Luckett estimates, before finally settling down at the Cup & Saucer Cafe in Southeast Portland. It's there that audiences will say good-bye to the First Tuesday Coffeehouse on Tuesday, Dec. 1.

Artists scheduled to perform at this final concert are Galloway and Luckett, B.J. Castleman, Carol Steinel, Pam and Maggie, and Connie Cohen.

While saying goodbye isn't always easy, Zrinyi says she doesn't anticipate a melancholy mood at the farewell coffeehouse. "I think it'll be a celebration," she guesses optimistically. "We'll be sad to see it go, but at the same time it's a good time. I think it'll be a celebration of the past with a 'letting-go' kind of feeling."

Zrinyi adds that women musicians in the Portland area now have much more access to



PHOTO BY LINDA KLEWER

First Tuesday doyenne Donna Luckett

"At the time, women were having a hard time finding places to perform," says Luckett, explaining the niche First Tuesday filled, as well as the venue's only restriction: performances by women only. "Many women in this community started performing at the coffeehouse," she recalls.

The coffeehouse first found a home at Primary Domain, where it remained till the Northwest Portland club went out of business about six months later. "They had a little cafe there called Ruby Shoes," says Luckett, joking that the turn of events came as a shock. "We showed up for a coffeehouse and they were closed." For good, it would turn out.

From there, First Tuesday moved around the corner into another establishment that no longer exists, a gay men's leather bar called Silent Partners. The coffeehouse crowd maintained their presence in Silent Partners' adjoining restaurant, though urban cowboys and leather daddies sometimes moseyed in from the bar.

"We always tried to have the coffeehouse be very receptive," Luckett diplomatically offers, saying that while the audiences have been primarily women, everyone has always been welcome.

Like the Primary Domain, Silent Partners also closed up shop, as did the event's next venue, Cafe Mocha in Northeast Portland.

the city's stages than they did when the coffeehouse began. "There are so many opportunities for women to get their music out there now," she observes.

Luckett, meanwhile, isn't sure what sort of void First Tuesday Coffeehouse will leave; while she still finds that audiences and musicians like the performances, she's no longer sure they need them. And, while Luckett seems confident that the pros will continue to find venues, she does worry a bit about the amateur performers and audiences members.

"I think there will be a void on some level, and for that I'm sorry," Luckett confesses. "In years past, the coffeehouse has always had 30 or more people at each performance, sometimes 100.... There would sometimes be people that none of us [regulars] knew. It reminded me of the fact that there are a lot of people in our community that we don't see regularly. It's been a place for women to connect and I'm probably going to miss that—being a kind of community resource."

■ The last FIRST TUESDAY COFFEEHOUSE begins at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 1, at the Cup & Saucer Cafe, 3566 S.E. Hawthorne Blvd. Admission is free, but donations are accepted. Call the Galloway and Luckett information line, 283-7651, to learn more.

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