

make it, it's simply because they are not a big enough draw compared to what else is available. The musical tastes of Eugene are so varied, it would take five festivals to satisfy everyone's preferences. But because we believe quality is universal, we seek out the best in every genre."

Others support the notion that there is so much talent hereabouts, it is not an easy job to separate the better from the best. Bill Shreve's group, the Bill Willie Blues Band, has been playing in Eugene for more than 15 years, but they have never been rewarded with an EC gig. Still, Shreve holds no bitterness. "It is not that big a deal," he says. "Our band plays dozens of shows each year, so DEMI knows we're here. We submitted a CD to Remington a while back and were politely told 'no.' That's life. You move on."

No sour grapes? "I know the selection process is imperfect," Shreve added. "But I also think Steve Remington has done a pretty good job of bringing the best-attended music into the EC. Last year there was great blues and I expect the same again."

That sentiment is echoed by Marty Weissbarth, musical director and sax player for the Deb Cleveland's own band, a major force on the local blues scene and a nearly constant presence at every Eugene Celebration during recent years.

Weissbarth has been musically active in Lane County for over 30 years. "When I came here in '72 the blues climate was vital and strong," he says, "and the blues scene became a 'school' for many developing players. Most of the 'teachers' from those days — Rooster and the others — are gone now. Maybe blues here isn't what it once was. But Remington works very hard to balance the resources he has and still involve local and regional show folks."

Mike Henry also referred reverently to Rooster (aka Gavin Fox), a radio personality who did much to promote the Eugene blues scene prior to his passing five years ago. Henry commented, "Last year I produced a three-hour blues jam called Rooster's All Stars on the Fifth Avenue Stage. The venue itself was renamed Rooster's Roost."

While the three main stages are each capable of handling 12 slots, nine more official stages add another 70 openings to the total number of acts. "Jon Silvermoon's beef is more with the economics of the club system than it is with the EC," Remington concludes.

As for those unregulated renegade stages, don't they simply add to the diversity? "Private clubs can legally do whatever they want, provided they have the right noise permits," Remington says, "but unofficial outdoor stages on private property and in parking lots can cause problems. Take, for example, the situation one recent year when a couple of outdoor club stages on either side of the Hilton Hotel were blasting away until the wee hours. The hotel patrons complained, 'Damn that Eugene Celebration for keeping us awake all night!' That wasn't us, but we were painted with the blame!"

Independent indoor venues, however, are another matter. "They are the perfect solution," Remington declares. "They open up more slots for music, more bands participate, and club owners get involved."

Local venues are encouraged to find their own ways to participate. The officially sanctioned show at Cosmic Pizza during this year's Big EC is a good example. On both Saturday and Sunday from 12:30 pm, it includes a musical kickoff event for the Rainy Days Blues Society with two invitational jams and numerous slots for local blues bands. Jon Silvermoon and The Vipers are scheduled to appear at 1:45 pm Sunday. Sometimes, everybody wins. **EW**

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