

Quarter Deck Heats Up On a Cold, Fall Night Fans Turn Out in Drove to Get into the Groove

By VICTORIA FORD

Some might have thought it unlikely that on of the island's hottest summertime night spots could double as the island's hottest off-season hangout, but this week, 250 people were lured out of their houses on a cold Monday night in the middle of November to party at the Quarter Deck Inn in Ship Bottom like it was 95 degrees outside.

The Quarter Deck hosted a band showcase for a full house, packed with fans eager to see six of the area's most talented acts. Organized by Shore Bets Management and Promotions Agency of Philadelphia and S.T.A.R.S. Productions of Newton, the event featured the bands Adrenaline, Power in Numbers, The Benjamins, Drop Dead Sexy, and two favorites, Dog Voices and Screaming Broccoli.

Quarter Deck general manager Russ DelRosso had no idea what to expect prior to the showcase because it was the first one at the club since he took the place over in June, but he was pleased with the turnout and the night's overall success. He said the Quarter Deck is well suited to host a large-scale, live music event.



"This place definitely pivots around entertainment," DelRosso said, pointing out the newly renovated dance floor and stage area. He added, "we've got one of the best sound systems here on the East Coast."

The money collected at the door, totaling somewhere in the neighborhood of \$1,200, will be donated to the Long Beach Island Policemen's Benevolent Association Local 175, according to the two entertainment agencies.

The two agency heads share a reciprocal agreement regarding the bands they each promote, according to Shore Bets founder and owner Al Geary, in addition to a long-time friendship and Long Beach Island roots. Both Geary and S.T.A.R.S. President Stephen Tarkanish own summer homes on the Island, in Surf City and Ship Bottom, respectively.

The two said they feel that by showcasing bands together in one venue, they bring the best of two worlds—Philly and New York—to the Jersey Shore.

Geary, who spent a long time in the bar and restaurant business before opening Shore Bets 14 years ago, said he segued into band management because he has always felt that most bands are "grossly underrepresented."

Tarkanish said he and Geary put on about four showcases together a year. He called this show an opportunity to highlight "the value of contribution" by getting involved with the PBA, and he emphasized the theme of the night was cooperation, not competition.

"It's a pleasure to promote something like this," he said.

The six bands slated to perform were selected because their "caliber is unsurpassed," Tarkanish said, and because the goal was to amass a fair representation of New York's and Philadelphia's finest. Often showcases center around young, new artists, he said, but in this case he was looking to feature more established, "seasoned" bands—guaranteed crowd pleasers.

In attendance were several special guests, including Richard Koenig, president of Anheuser-Busch wholesaler Crown Beer Distributors and the showcases primary sponsor, who said he came out to the Quarter Deck just to see what he was getting for his money. He was there with his colleague Rob Passi, senior marketing manager for South Jersey with Anheuser-Busch, Inc.

Some drove a considerable distance to attend the showcase. David Tittermary, general manager for Seacrets, a bar, restaurant and nightclub in Ocean City, MD, made the long drive north for the occasion, wondering "where is Chris P. when we need him?" (hardly anyone else got the joke, either) and Sal Morico migrated south for the night from a bar called the Thirsty Turtle in White Plains, NY.

According to S.T.A.R.S. Productions representative Megan Boyd, quite a few members of other bands on the agency's artist roster showed up to support the cause and to watch their fellow musicians rock the Kasbah.

On Your Marks,
Get Set, Rock!

Adrenaline opened at 9 p.m. on the nose with a rendition of "Amazing Grace," featuring the band's front man, Jim "J-Pop" Monaghan, on—get this—bagpipes. Aside from Adrenaline's bass player, Dominic Taurino (the "token Italian guy"), the band members are all Irish, they said, which is why they decided to add bagpipes to the set. The response from audiences has been good, they said.

So how did Monaghan feel wearing a kilt onstage?

"Free," he said with a grin.

In the opinion of one humble reporter, the Cover Song of the Night Award went to the Benjamins for their performance of "Headstrong," by Trapt — easily the greatest song currently in the rotation on Top-40 radio.

[Benjamin's Lead vocalist Joe] DeGennard's philosophy on music (and life) is simple: "If it's not rock and roll, don't even bother. And that's all I have to say."

Following the Benjamins was the fun and lively Drop Dead Sexy.

By the time Geary and Tarkanish got on stage about half past midnight to introduce the two headlining bands, Dog Voices and Screaming Broccoli, the dance floor was full and stayed full for the remainder of the night.

Girls swooned as Dog Voices' Monte (with that hair, oh, the hair) sang the set opener, U2's "Where the Streets Have No Name." They squealed as the band tore into the opening chords of Def Leppard's "Pour Some Sugar on Me." They circled around him gleefully as he stepped off the stage and onto the dance floor during a Springsteen number.

Both bands, per usual, delighted and incited the faithfully adoring Long Beach Island fans to get up out of their seats and trip the light fantastic, weeknight or no, which just goes to show that local club goers have suspected for some times: Maybe you really can judge a band by it's covers.