

Crossroads

Where Art, Music, and Community bring change

By Kim Thomas



Crossroads is a motif for Lexington today—for the music community and the arts community. The demolition of a central block in downtown this summer was a blow, but scorched earth sometimes acts as fertilizer. The Dame closed, but will reopen on East Main in October. Mia's closed and relocated to Limestone and Short. Nate FX opened Lower 48 in Victorian Square, joining DeVassa there.

As the unofficial crossroads of bluegrass and the blues/jazz music, Lexington holds a unique place in the history of the development of rock-n-roll, rockabilly, country and rhythm and blues music. Artist Mike Burrell's concept for the North Limestone mural at Al's Bar (on this week's cover) embraces that idea and offers up new hope for finding something new in something old.

In an effort to bring art to the public in an outdoor setting, Lex Arts sponsored the Lexington Outdoor Mural Project 2008. The first mural, designed by Lexington artist Waseem Touma, was unveiled two weeks ago, and is displayed on the back wall of the YMCA that sits on High Street. It is an abstract design with shapes bubbling in and around the image that has "an urban 'graffiti' kind of look," according to Touma.

The second mural, by Mike Burrell showcases the talented performers who played in the clubs (spanning the years from the 1930's to the early 1960s) that were located along the North Limestone corridor. Burrell's mural was dedicated on Saturday at a block party organized by the North Limestone Neighborhood Association, and that celebration also served as a kickoff to fundraising and awareness and revitalization of the arts culture in the North Lime area. In particular, the North Lime group is looking to refurbish Duncan Park by turning it into an outdoor stage for music, theatre, dance and entertainment. Their focus on Duncan Park seeks especially to enhance the artistic experience of the youth who live near Duncan Park and offer opportunities for them to perform (and for the audience to enjoy) in a safe, attractive venue.

Burrell's message seems apparent: that we need only to open our eyes and ears to find the joy that can be discovered through acceptance and, indeed, in reconciliation with our past.

Community Matters By Marty Clifford

North Limestone street party/mural/dedication accomplished all that was set out to accomplish and more. WOW, GREAT, SUCCESSFUL does not seem to be able to describe it.

The Kentucky Historical Society was there to record the history / culture of our community. Musicians and family—recorded; Gentrys, Madisons, Allens, Richardson and Romanowitz.

It was great hearing and seeing these guys play; Gentry's daughter on flute, Courtney Allen on keyboard and Byron Romanowitz on sax. Byron started playing at fourteen, in some places he was not suppose to be, but the only places he could have the opportunities to play and learn jazz. Our community at one time was rich with music and it was great to see the people enjoying it again in the streets for the whole community.

Mike Burrell—the mural artist, who had done a lot of research into our music culture described the mural as the kids out front inviting the viewers into the future of diversity that music brings—who are most likely in there 60s now looking back. He also explained how music has and is able to break racial barriers as well as other human self created barriers.

The community event started in the day and went into the night, full of music played by a diverse group and groups (jazz, blues, blue grass, Southern Rock and Moroccan—some mixed with contemporary scratching). Dance (Capoeria Studio, Mecca). Belly Dancing and Fire Dancing was a first for a lot in the community who overwhelmingly enjoyed it and most likely raised art awareness and unanimously said they wanted more. The crowd was smiling and greeting each other warmly. The depth of life experiences and richness of the diversity is our community and the reason a lot of us live here.

We want to thank LexArts for the mural. We want to thank Jim Gray, Andrea James and Jim Clark for speaking, and their support. We want to thank MLKNA for their community leadership, example and support. We want to thank Mike Burrell and the musicians and their families for their support and Bryon Romanowitz for playing and for his book *Jazz in Lexington* (which captures a lot of our community's

culture). We want to thank Al's Bar for being, good citizens, good neighbors and community leaders. It has been a busy and rewarding year for North Limestone Community and their involvement in the community; clean ups, monthly meetings (sometimes weekly), Central Sector Meetings, Street Scape Meetings, 2040 Meetings, Limestone beatification—trees, HOBY—youth murals (Leaders of Lex), Back to School with Lex Linc, Park meetings, Mural Meetings, and Street party Meetings. There is an energy and excitement in the community.

An additional Douglas Park fundraiser is scheduled for Sunday, September 28, at Al's Bar. ■

Creating the North Limestone Mural By Micheal Burrell

Depicted in my mural design are actual scenes and people from the North Limestone neighborhood who participated in bringing the music and culture to not only their neighborhood but to Lexington and beyond.

The grouping of kids are at an outside concert with Les McCain on keyboard and Duke Madison on Sax when they turn to see who has come to join them listening and enjoying an afternoon of music. It is you, the viewer, who has been transported back in time, by invitation to join a community. At the top of this work you will see that during World War II 'Stop Over Station' located on Esplanade Street opened to give GIs a nice friendly place to meet locals, have some good food and listen and dance to the music. The Smoke Richardson Band were a local big band who played at Joyland Park, the Phoenix Hotel, Cheapside Park and various other venues in the area. Just below them are Betty Coed and the Debs in 1940. They represent the all women bands which is part of a tradition dating back to the Blue Grass Orchestra of 1907 which featured an all African American Women's Band. Big Bands played at Joyland Park, Cheapside Park and the Lyric Theatre. The Phoenix and Lafayette Hotels besides having big, out of town, Swing and

