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VOLUME 5, ISSUE 9

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Raleigh Wide Open 4 October 24th

BY KATRINA DONHAM

Raleigh's front door will be thrown wide open on Saturday, October 24, with a celebration for the new downtown City Plaza, coinciding with Raleigh's fourth annual Wide Open Music Festival.

The \$14.8 million dollar City Plaza, or as Director of Raleigh's Public Affairs Jayne Kirkpatrick deemed it, "Raleigh's celebration central," is designed in conjunction with downtown's revitalization and stands as Raleigh's premier outdoor downtown venue for cultural and social events. The plaza is a team effort by the City of Raleigh, the City's design consultant, Kimley-Horn and Associates, and the Project of Public Spaces, a New York-based firm specializing in the analysis and design of public gathering spaces.

Both the public and City boards and commissions made suggestions on the design in fall of 2006.

Design elements include flexible seating, a motion-sensitive water fountain, planters, and trees. Greensboro native and artist Jim Galluci designed four light towers to allow for stage lighting control, the lower designs of which include LED lights, stainless-steel oak leaves and concealed power and electrical panels. For the weary pedestrian, the towers also contain >>>



Daytime crowd packed F-Street at RWO2
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PHOTO BY CRASH GREGG

granite bumper seats. City Plaza continues Raleigh's emblematic oak-leaf design with bollards positioned throughout the design to direct traffic.

Four new retail pavilions surround the plaza, providing food, drink and shopping for residents and visitors to downtown Raleigh. The first tenant is to be sandwich chain Jimmy John's, serving up gourmet sandwiches fast and late 'til 3:00 am. Krispy Kreme will be the second vendor—but no "Hot Doughnuts Now" sign. The downtown establishment will be supplied by deliveries three times a day from the iconic Person Street outlet nearby. The Collector's Gallery of City Market is the third-announced vendor, a full-service fine art and craft establishment providing both residential and commercial consultation and custom conservation framing. The fourth pavilion tenant is expected to be announced soon by the City of Raleigh.

While the official opening of the plaza will be at noon on Friday, October 23, the celebration really kicks off the next day at 10:00 am with the parade, which will start on Morgan Street, travel by the Capitol, continuing five blocks down Fayetteville, and end at Lenoir Street. This year, the parade will have several bands, floats and international elements as well as the usual crowd favorites.

Several vendor tents will line Fayetteville Street the remainder of the day. A wine and beer tasting will also be available, featuring local and state wineries and breweries as well as a kids' section with special

guest Stormy, the mascot of the Carolina Hurricanes. Several games and hockey activities will be provided for children of all ages.

"Last year, the festival attracted over 75,000 visitors," said Kirkpatrick. "For Raleigh Wide Open 4, we expect to break 100,000."

The big show will be on the main Fayetteville Street at 7:00 p.m., when the self-styled "folk rock n' roll" of Tao Rodriguez-Seeger precedes three-time Grammy award-winner Delbert "Givin' It Up For Your Love" McClinton, the headliner for the day-long event. McClinton's 9:00 pm. show will be followed by a fireworks show. Admission is free. In addition to the main stage performances, Zydeco and Carribean music will be performed on the steps of the courthouse earlier that afternoon.

For those with more esoteric taste in music, the second annual Cherry Bounce Alternative Music Festival looks to be bigger and better than last year's inaugural festival. The Hargett Street stage between Wilmington and Fayetteville Streets will host 15 local and national acts. Food and beverage will be provided courtesy of Empire Eats. The event is sponsored by Red Bull, the Raleigh Times and others. The Raleigh Downtowner Magazine will be providing the Cherry Bounce bands "green room" in their new offices above the Raleigh Times Bar on Hargett Street.

"The twist this year is that Cherry Bounce actually starts rocking out days in advance of the Hargett Street action," said Billy Warden, one of the Cherry

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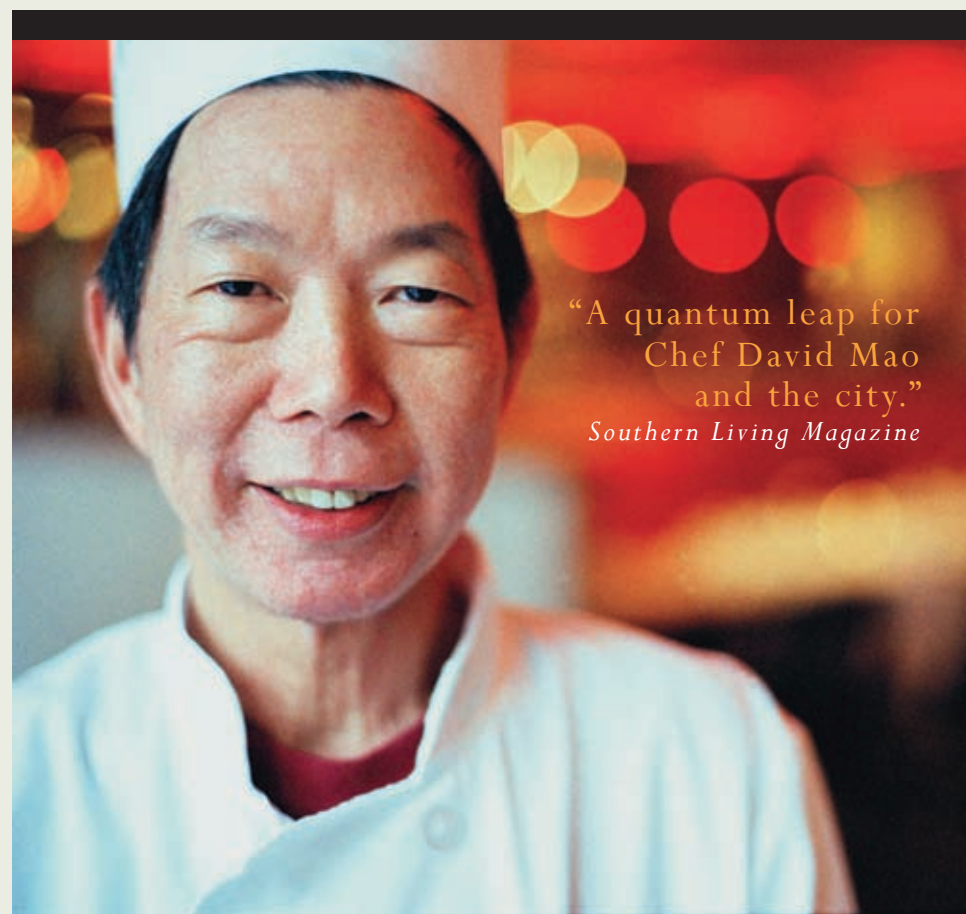
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Bounce festival's producers. "Clubs such as Deep South, the Raleigh Times, Slim's, Tir Na Nog, Busy Bee and Berkeley Cafe are serving up special Cherry Bounce music nights."

The second annual Art Raleigh will also be held in conjunction with this year's Raleigh Wide Open festival. Art Raleigh is produced by Artspllosure, "a nonprofit organization with 30 years of arts festival experience," according to their website (www.artspllosure.org). The contest was designed as a venue to celebrate and highlight Raleigh's visual arts scene, an opportunity for art enthusiasts and collectors to view the best art of our city and state—ceramics, fiber art glass, jewelry, metal, painting, photography, and wood. Over 21 artists will be showcasing their work. The Art Raleigh art market will be open from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm on Charter Square along the side of Bank of America. (This site will also be used as the location of the ice rink to be installed this winter.)

Accompanying the festival's activities will be Mayor Charles Meeker's announcement of the winners of the Moore Square Redesign Competition at noon on Moore Square. A five-member jury will review design concept entries and decide on first, second and third place winners. First-place will receive \$6,000; second, \$4,000; and third, \$2,000. The first place winner will assemble a design team and participate in the planning for the new Moore Square. The winning design will be on public display in a downtown location and posted on the City of

Raleigh's website: www.raleighnc.gov. The City of Raleigh intends to approve a final design for Moore Square in early 2010.

"[I look forward to seeing] all of Raleigh's communities come together and show how beautifully we all celebrate together," said Kirkpatrick. "Despite all the chaos and stress that goes into planning, it makes it very well worth it."

Kirkpatrick encourages Raleigh downtowners and visitors to participate in the festival's activities. She also adds that the best view for the fireworks is directly on Fayetteville Street. For more information on this event, check out www.raleigh-nc.gov.

SPARKcon 2009 Recap

BY PETER EICHENBERGER

On certain days of the year, a host of citizens divided by career and geography are drawn downtown by interests as varied as the people are themselves. On such events, yuppies might be seen rubbing elbows with bikers with kids, hipsters co-mingling with old Raleigh types. The public forum provides an atmosphere that fosters the sort of easy democracy that historically formed the core of American public life before we collectively became absorbed in our internal lives and by portable



electronic doo-dads and such. The reopening of Fayetteville Street has brought a venue that continues the reordering of what downtown means to the Capital city. Formerly, while major outdoor gatherings generally schooled up in Moore Square, Fayetteville Street has provided another larger canvas that allows us to discover sometimes jarring life-altering experiences that we could all use a little of from time to time. So it was with last week's SPARKcon, one such event of a plethora of new experiences to take home after the equipment has been struck and loaded out and the crowds have drifted back to their respective lives.

In the three years from its inception, SPARKcon has grown up into an event that stretches the conventional ordering of public events and time itself. While educational systems and cultural patterns have instilled in the public a view of time that is linear in construct, the more we learn about how internal, personal time works—the sort of time existing behind the limiting, jittery, sequential system beaten into our collective heads, the one that ensures that the trains run on time (the railroad being the impetus for the standardization of time), the more one can begin to glimpse that personal time is more akin to a circle, a sphere or (my favorite) perhaps a torroid, that mathematical figure best illustrated by a doughnut or an inner tube. One thing does not necessarily lead to another in a straight line. >>>

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At the myriad SPARKcon venues, the visitors and performers could assemble a pastiche of experiences that more conform to one's own shifting, mutable personal reality bubble, without an external ring-master directing the collective attention. Dig fashion shows and street art? Good. Interested in seeing how competitive bartending looks? Gotcha covered. Wanna see experimental short films? Cool. Perhaps a break for a Bloody Mary? Hey, we're downtown.

After the busy days of SPARKcon, I dropped by Design Box, a sort of local think-tank for intelligent solutions to matters of the material and have a chat with Aly Khalifa, a product designer, one of the progenitors of SPARKcon and all-round nice, nice guy who graciously met with me in the middle of his busy schedule. We ascended a flight of stairs and after we got settled, I asked him how it went.

"Fantastic. It went beyond anything we had dreamed of," he said, smiling and nodding as we spoke in the upstairs conference room of the building in the heart of the old warehouse district over on West Martin. "There were some 1,200 performers, people creating art and expression of some kind." He went on to credit the 70 or so volunteers with mounds of praise and appreciation. "In terms of website traffic, there were 36,000 on Saturday," ten times the number of last year's Sparkcon. In terms of how many spectator and participants, "It's so diverse; it was hard to track what's going on."



PHOTO COURTESY WWW.BRETTARTHURPHOTO.COM (THANKS BRETT)

Aly continued, "This was the first year I think that people got it. I think we were beating this drum, open-source, potluck, bring to it what you are and we'll provide the structure. You create what it is. The first years it was 'what are you talking about?'" SPARKcon's not a festival and a widely held expectation of passive entertainment is an aspect SPARKcon has had to contend with. Aly and I chatted about the nature of personal reality, that if one doesn't take the trouble to create one's own reality, there are any number of commercial media enterprises more than delighted to fulfill that lack—and make a bundle in the process. Of SPARKcon, he said, "It's something completely different. It's open-source."

"It's sort of like the Burning Man vibe," I noted, the 40,000 person art-collective held annually on the Black Rock Playa in northwestern Nevada, where new attendees are repeatedly, gently reminded that

while gawking is part of the experience, participation is what makes it work, becoming involved to some extent, dress, activity, planned or not.

"We're part of the Burning Man network. SPARKcon is on the Burning Man calendar. They're enthusiastic about what we are doing. We've connected a lot more," Aly said, invoking Pecha Kucha, a global organization the name of which comes from a word meaning chit-chat in Japanese, the core of which was started by Japanese architects. Pecha Kucha is a presentation method based on a strict schedule frame that limits speakers to a certain interval as short as 20 seconds as a way to avoid standard professional wordiness. "Pecha Kucha has become a global phenomenon. We're just one of 230 chapters."

On my several visits to the two-day event, I was greatly enthused to see the sights and the crowds of people dawdling on Fayetteville, getting into that SPARKcon vibe as they strolled by looking at the arts and crafts, especially by the brave sorts who took the participatory nature to heart, kneeling on the pavement and executing original chalk on asphalt blackboard, that temporary medium that perfectly encapsulated the spirit of SPARKcon. A manifestation of the human spirit—temporary, fugitive beauty akin to that of a flower—washed away by city crews Monday morning, as Raleigh put her feet on the ground for a new day, hopefully somehow more inspired than before.

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