

# 'First class stuff': Transformation turns The Hive into premier concert venue

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**S**andpoint's live music scene is seriously buzzing. Ever since part-time Hope resident and entrepreneur Jeff Grady got his hands on the downtown building known as The Hive (known before that as The Dive, and before that, The Pastime Sports Shop and Café), concerts in Sandpoint as we have known them are a thing of the past.

Thanks to a top-notch renovation this past summer, the town is now home to one of the Pacific Northwest's premier live music venues. It didn't happen without a tremendous effort by a diverse group of busy worker-bees: architects, designers, construction workers, the City of Sandpoint, and many others were instrumental in fast-tracking this project to the finish line in time for the Aftival – an annual concert series held on the two Friday and Saturday nights of

the Festival at Sandpoint in August.

Architect Jon Saylor helped orchestrate the gorgeous – but extremely fast-paced – transformation, and “point man” Eric Owens from Saylor's firm was put in charge of the project. Demolition day was June 19, and opening day was Aug. 8 – less than two months. “We really had to divide and conquer on this one,” said Saylor, who added The Hive was the fastest project he's ever worked on in his 33-year career. Saylor and Owens credit the City of Sandpoint for their swift permit and inspection pace; likewise, city officials are pleased with the project's outcome.

“The Hive is a real gift to the community,” said Aaron Qualls, the city's senior planner.

The bee “Hive” theme is integrated throughout the entire project, showcased by the custom metal-

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The Hive opened just in time to host its annual Aftival series of concerts in August. The space can accommodate up to 981 people and is designed for maximum energy efficiency, acoustic quality and sight lines for live performances. Inset: The Hive's facade features a new marquis set off by glass panels lit by LED lights in a beehive pattern

remodeling includes a new façade featuring a metal cornice created by a sculptor in Cleveland, and translucent panels made of glass that are lit up by LED lights – in beehive fashion, of course.

Overall, the project was a huge success. “It was close with the timing, but it all came together,” said Owens, who took a break from all the work and enjoyed a show at The Hive this past summer. “The Aftival was a blast, it turned out great.”

The Hive's owner, Jeff Grady, says he plans to book 15 to 20 concerts a year at The Hive. He discusses the project further:

#### For starters, how did you discover Sandpoint?

I grew up in Maryland and have lived in North Carolina and South Carolina most of my life. About 20 years ago, I was awarded a fellowship with the Department of Energy and was stationed at Hanford. While working there as a chemist, I took a weekend to go skiing at Schweitzer. And that is how I discovered Sandpoint.

#### Where do you live while in Sandpoint? Are you a year-round resident?

We (me, my wife Darci and daughter Grace) live in Hope. We are part-time residents. We are there mid-December through March (we are avid skiers), and mid-July through September. The rest of the year we live in Charleston, S.C.

#### What's your business background? How did you get interested in music?

I am a serial entrepreneur. I have started and sold several businesses. The last company I started and sold was a company called DLO. It was the company that started the category of iPod/iPhone/iPad accessories.

#### What inspired you to buy and renovate The Hive?

The opportunity to pick up where the Festival at Sandpoint leaves off at about 10 p.m. (Aftival) and the existing balcony that was in the building when I bought it.

#### What's been the feedback so far?

It's been amazing. Sandpoint was really hungry for a live music venue, in particular, downtown. Downtown really needed a shot in the arm and The Hive has been one. Businesses and citizens alike have gone out of their way to thank me for making the investment down-

work on the front of the bars featuring bee cut-outs and the honeycomb-style entrance panels – beautiful decorative features in and of themselves. The main floor is just over 5,300 square feet, flanked by sound-absorbing acoustic panels along the walls and a centrally located stage beneath four enormous video screens. Whimsical photographs, taken by a friend of Grady's, are a clever addition to the décor. The Hive's tour de force, however, is the state-of-the-art sound system brought in from San Francisco.

“This is first-class stuff,” said Saylor.

Owens said the layout was intentionally designed so that all the audience members are in close proximity to the stage. Up on the second floor, a balcony holding four VIP booths adds another 2,300-plus square feet to the venue, and is serviced by a third bar. The exterior

town. Additionally, the city has been fantastic and easy to work with. They really helped facilitate our tight construction schedule and opening date.

#### How did the idea for the Aftival come about?

I have been to many music festivals and concerts, and most are followed by some kind of after-party or show. It is amazing that we have a music festival that has run for over 30 years in Sandpoint, so there are music lovers around. That time slot from 10 p.m. to 12 a.m. that is open after the Festival at Sandpoint ends just seemed like a no-brainer to me. After the Festival – Aftival.

#### Will the Aftival continue to be an annual event?

Absolutely. We just had the second annual and are working on something very special for the third annual. Let me

just say that the Dead Heads in the area are going to be very excited.

#### How much did the renovation cost?

Between \$2 million and \$3 million.

#### What's your favorite feature about The Hive?

I have three: the sound, the lights and the balcony. From the middle of the stage to the farthest part of the room is about 60 feet. It is a very intimate venue.

#### Do you plan to renovate any other Sandpoint buildings?

I would love to see someone buy up the buildings across the street from The Hive and convert the space into a boutique hotel, but I am done with my Sandpoint renovation project. ❧

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