

From: Richard Cushing rcushing@nb.utmem.edu
Date: Tue, 27 Apr 2004 13:51:07
To: ellis@commercialappeal.com
Subject: Thanks, Bill!

Bill -

Thanks so much for your support - as well as your suggestions - in the article on the first MSCMC-MAC meeting in this past Saturday's CA - much appreciated, I assure you!

Hopefully, moving forward, things will become more focused & slightly less confrontational - but I guess that remains to be seen. I e-mailed Rey & Wayne with several suggestions for future meetings last week, & I suppose we will see where they lead us...

Anyway, thanks again Bill!

Richard C. Cushing
Memphis & Shelby County Music Commission
Musician's Advisory Council - Chairman

PS - To respond to the comments/questions raised in your article "I doubt that Saliva, the North Mississippi Allstars and Three 6 Mafia are complaining too much. Why is that? And how can we learn from their success?", I would say that one of the main reasons those particular groups are not complaining too much is that they have managed to reach an extremely high level of financial &/or musical success in spite of the fact (or maybe BECAUSE of the fact!) that they only play 2-3 shows here in Memphis each year - unlike the hundreds I personally played here last year - so it's a little easier for them to float above the general Memphis political muck that the rest of us seem to have to (or at least CHOOSE to) slog through on a daily basis. And I'm NOT complaining myself, mind you. I don't have ANY desire whatsoever to be on the road for 10-11 months out of each year or to be financially or creatively beholden to a major record label for ANY amount of money. I have personally managed to carve out the perfect niche for my personal reality here in town (fulfilling day job, great home/family life, & an incessant local/regional performance schedule). It's basically for the rest of my peers who can't seem to find their niches that I took this position. Hopefully in the coming months - after an exponential educational process of both the Council in particular as well as the general musical constituency that I have been asked to represent - those who are only seeking modest musical success as everyday working musicians here on the local scene alone (the ones like me who are not necessarily seeking super-stardom status, or those who may never - for a variety of reasons - actually manage to reach their own personal satisfaction levels of success or star-status they desire) will begin to feel like there is an organization here in town that can not only listen to their "grousing", but actually end up DOING something about some of it! I don't know... we'll see. I just

personally hope that what we "learn from their success" isn't that the best way to succeed here in the local Memphis music scene is to incessantly leave town on tour & only play here a few times a year - but I suppose it all depends on each individual (or band's) definition of the concept of "success"

Anyway, as always - thanks again Bill, & I hope to see you again real soon!

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Original Article

Local Musicians Can Learn from Peers' Success Stories

The Commercial Appeal
<http://www.commercialappeal.com>

By Bill Ellis
April 24, 2004

Only some two dozen folks turned up for the first Musicians Advisory Council meeting Tuesday at the Emerge Memphis building, a not-so-surprising showing given the level of disillusionment and fallout among certain members of the local music community toward the Memphis & Shelby County Music Commission.

Yet those who came heard of the city-county agency's commitment to working musicians, hence the re-launch of its advisory council, which existed as a small consultative group under past commission head Jerry Schilling.

Commission president and chief executive officer Rey Flemings pointed out that many of the concerns addressed that night were already part of the commission's broader strategic plan, and that the advisory council should exist, in part, to tackle more immediate community issues. Complaints ranged from the city's lack of industry infrastructure to the obstacles, financial and otherwise, which musicians face working in clubs.

The difference between forums is that the advisory council, theoretically at least, will be given the charge to help find solutions. If they can get past the need to vent, that is. Most of the first two-hour meeting was eaten up with grouching, a necessary first step but one that can sink the whole endeavor - open to all who wish to attend - before it gets started.

Certain ideas were brought to the table, from producing a Memphis music sampler CD to creating a television program to hiring a public relations firm. The challenge from council chair Richard Cushing will be in getting the collective, self-regulating group (one that could quickly outsize itself) to focus on one or two goals and run with them - assuming, of course, that the commission will indeed back its choices. And one wonders how much the council becomes a sly way to silence detractors by getting them "involved" so the commission can go about its business of generating business.

Perhaps with that last point in mind, the council has been given some band

exchange and booking opportunities, notably providing talent for this year's Fourth of July celebrations in Tom Lee Park. Be careful with that one. What sounds good on paper just may become a devil's contract of self-interest.

It's also important for members of the council to step back at some point, remove their own dilemmas from the equation, and take an honest look at those who are doing well in the Memphis music scene. I doubt that Saliva, the North Mississippi Allstars and Three 6 Mafia are complaining too much. Why is that? And how can we learn from their success?

The Musicians Advisory Board plans to meet the third Tuesday of each month.

- Bill Ellis: 529-2517