



MUSIC SCENE

CATCH THE BEAT IN PUNTA GORDA

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A decade ago, live music in Punta Gorda wasn't easy to find. Just as the restaurant scene grew when the city rebuilt after the storm, opportunities to listen to live music have multiplied until the choices available to music lovers are almost limitless. Now, the hard part is deciding who to listen to and where to go.

MUSIC | P8-9



PHOTO PROVIDED BY JAIME GARCIA

BELOW: Beans and Seeds members Jaime Garcia, Mark Cangelosi and Conga Rico play a recent gig at Portofino Waterfront Dining on the north shore of the river.



FILE PHOTO
 Lisa Blake and Richie Castle celebrate their anniversary by dancing to Journey's "Lights" performed by The BoogieMen during the 2011 Punta Gorda Block Party.

MUSIC

FROM PAGE 1

That has not changed since the Punta Gorda Herald ran an article a little more than a year ago making that point and profiling the area's largest and best-known musicians and bands that play at major venues. Now, it's time to take a look at some of the newer and less-well-known bands that are growing followers by playing in area restaurants catering to music lovers.

For the most part, they are eclectic, young, energetic, fun to listen to and popular across many age groups. According to Sandy Stainton, co-owner of Dean's South of the Border, a downtown musical hotspot, these bands are what makes Punta Gorda a major destination.

She said, "We have music seven days a week. Downtown, all together, is really featuring live entertainment. You can



a recent gig at Portofino Waterfront Dining on the north shore of the river.

FILE PHOTO

ABOVE: The house band at the Celtic Ray, Flurgin, play to a packed house.



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walk from place to place and see all the bands. Things have really changed; people from all over, like Fort Myers, Cape Coral, Naples and Sarasota, are coming to see these bands."

Here's a small sample, plus a little advance notice on two upcoming big events.

Flurgin at the Ray

Celtic Ray owner Kevin Doyle never does anything by the book, and that goes for the music he books into his popular Irish pub. Take Flurgin, a band that plays regularly there and fills the

place up.

Start with the name. The urban dictionary, www.urbandictionary.com, defines flurgin as "the act of getting together for purposes of drinking and singing loudly." That pretty much captures the atmosphere when Flurgin is at the Ray.

"They are literally our house band," said Doyle. "The banjo player is our chef, and the lead singer/guitarist, Christian Farrell, is our bartender."

Their music has been described as a fusion of punk, ska and Celtic; Doyle described it as "paddy-punk, Irish rock with Celtic music and Irish pub favorites with an Irish rock edge." See the band's website at www.facebook.com/flurgin for more descriptions.

However their music is described, the band has a growing legion of fans, particularly among younger folks, and plays once every three weeks or so at the Ray. Doyle said the group will be the closing band at the St. Patrick's Day event at the pub, when 12 bands will be on hand for that weekend, including Celtic Clan, a nationally known Celtic band, and Harper, an Australian blues band.

"Everything has to be different, never the same old stuff," Doyle said. "I stay away from the mainstream."

They're coming to take you away

Another wild and crazy group is Zombie University, a new band with seven local members. Their motto is, "We're coming to rock your brains," the inference being that listening to their music will leave you a zombie.

Given the number of venues they play around Punta Gorda — Jack's on Marion, Harpoon Harry's and Dean's, for example — they have been busy turning a lot of residents into zombies.

Stainton said, "They are our house band; they are excellent and play here every Thursday. They draw everybody from the younger crowd to seniors. Everybody is up there dancing."

Zombie University is primarily a top 40 cover band known for its versatility and wide range of styles. While the music is the main draw, Zombie U., like Flurgin, puts on a show for its fans.

Stainton said, "They've morphed into a true act; they are such characters. At Halloween, they were hysterical, all dressed up in make up."

Visit www.facebook.com/zombieufo for more information.

Acoustic deluxe

A little farther down the volume scale is Beans and Seeds, a duo of local musician/singer Jaime Garza and Mark Cangelosi that has been performing here since 2006. They have recently added a conga player, who goes by the name Conga Rico and adds a little heavy rhythm to their music.

That unusual name takes a little explaining. According to the band's website, www.beansandseeds.com, lead singer and guitarist Garza's nickname as a kid was Garbanzo Bean; Cangelosi was Cantaloupe Seeds, leading to the Beans and Seeds name.

The music is acoutistic, and, while they do some original material, they specialize in covering a wide array of tunes from the '60s to the present.

Garza said, "We do a lot of contemporary pop, Sam Cook, Ben. E. King, Wilson Pickett, The Beatles and good grooving stuff like the Doobie Brothers.

They perform locally at Fishermen's Village's Center Court, Wyvern rooftop, Jack's and Portofino Waterfront Dining, where their versatility is on display.

Garza said, "We try to find songs that cross generations. We're a hard-working group; we play a lot, and we're real crowd pleasers. We make them yearn."

One busy singer

Singer/guitarist Michael Hirst may very well be the hardest working musician in town. You've probably seen or heard him at one of the many venues