

Jun 27, 2012

SEARCH



Log in or Join

[Promotions](#) [Nightclub Management](#) [Bar Management](#) [Entertainment](#) [Products](#) [Drink Recipes](#) [About Us](#) [Bar Rescue](#)

Like

## Related links

- ▶ [901 Tequila Targets Vast Audience with Live Nation Deal](#)
- ▶ [What Bars and Nightclubs Can Expect in 2010](#)
- ▶ [Wynn Nightclubs Creating Holiday Cheer](#)
- ▶ [2010 Nightclub Trends](#)

## About the Author: Garrett Peck



- ▶ [E-mail Garrett Peck](#)
- ▶ [About Garrett Peck](#)
- ▶ [Articles by Garrett Peck](#)

## Music & Entertainment

### Going Live

March 8, 2010

By: [Garrett Peck](#)

Night Club and Bar Magazine



Sign Up to see what your friends like.

## Live Entertainment is Back, Big Time. Here's Why.

Savvy nightclub and bar operators noted a funny thing happening as album sales fell and the compact disc market imploded: Consumers became more interested in seeing live acts. Perhaps because, thanks to the Internet and phenomena such as Twitter and Facebook, fledgling performers could create their own buzz by drawing a crowd who then spreads the word about them via social media, artists opted to flock to bars and other live venues to perform rather than going straight for a recording deal. Garage bands, rock stars, DJs, VJs, old-fashioned crooners and stage ingénues like Lada Gaga now are tapping into a booming live performance market, and bars and nightclubs are benefiting. Live music can be a powerful draw for an on-premise business. "If they don't have live entertainment, the [venue space] tends to be underutilized. [These] establishments are denying themselves a revenue stream," says Tom Madden, CEO of TransMedia Group, a Boca Raton, Fla.-based public relations firm that specializes in event promotions.

Businesses of all sizes — from the smallest watering hole to the biggest mega-club — can offer live entertainment. "You don't need a big budget to benefit from a big entertainment experience," notes Josh Gair, who runs Impact Entertainment in Orlando, Fla. "It provides an escape, at least for a couple of hours, from consumers' economic realities, and I think that trend will continue."



**Nightclub.com  
Winner!  
Best Website  
Redesign**

**min's Best of the  
Web Awards**

But within that larger trend of live entertainment's blossoming popularity lie other emerging trends. Here are our picks.



---

*The Florida Room at the Delano in Miami Beach, Fla., is an intimate live music venue.*

---

### Celebrities Downsize

Just like in the movies, a big name can attract an audience. But the old adage of "book it, and they will come" has rung hollow for many venues. As York Almahdi, owner of the Atlanta-based York Booking Agency, notes that many clubs have soured on hosting celebrities. "The days of bringing in a well-known entertainer to perform at your club to draw a big crowd are over, simply because it costs too much," he says. York notes the happy medium is the track act, where a performer sings off a CD or DAT, rather than hosting an entire band and crew. Also, nightclubs are booking reality show stars, who come with much lower overhead.

Impact Entertainment's Gair books big name celebrities, magicians and variety acts and has found that "many club owners are looking [closer] at ROI for the celebrities they book than ever before." He echoes York's observation that many clubs now lean toward appearances instead of performances, primarily because of cost.

### Please, Mr. DJ

DJ-driven performances remain the hot thing for those all-important Friday and Saturday nights and are crucial for small venues without a stage. The Eldridge, a cocktail bar in New York City, is an intimate space, and so a DJ provides the music rather than a band. "I encourage DJs to play whatever they listen to on their iPods rather than the Top 40 hits they are requested to play at other venues," remarks owner Matt Levine. He has a standing list of

min

DJs who play on set nights, while also rotating in internationally known DJs.

Traveling DJs must understand that every market and audience varies. "A Vegas local night is much different than a Saturday night in Vegas — locals don't want to hear the same mash-ups as tourists and visitors," notes Sujit Kundu, whose S.K.A.M. Artist (Sujit Kundu Artist Management) DJ management company has managed DJ Vice for more than a decade. Given that music is now democratized, a DJ's playlist is no longer exclusive, so they have to read the audience better than ever.

### **The New, the Unusual and the Local**

Bars and clubs are responding to soft consumer spending by adapting live entertainment to appeal to consumers, even if that involves taking a few risks. Take, for example, The Empty Glass Cafe in Charleston, W.Va., the little venue that could. This Nightclub & Bar 2010 Small Wonder Bar of the Year Finalist can only squeeze in 125 people, yet it's known nationwide for its live music. "The name is bigger than the venue," owner Chris Chaber jokes. "We get bigger bands that play here — the vibe and atmosphere is like no other."

Jason Robinson, the booking manager, doesn't have to look for acts — they come to him. "Since the recession, we've seen a lot more new faces because we've brought in a lot of different bands," he says, noting that today's cost-conscious but experience-seeking patrons are looking for new but affordable entertainment. The Empty Glass has adapted the live music program based on what audiences want: Reggae isn't popular with customers anymore, who now prefer alt-country and bluegrass. Even carnival sideshows, which are available in the off-season, have proven quite popular.

Joshua Wagner is general manager of the Florida Room at the Delano in Miami Beach, Fla. The Latin-style speakeasy and piano bar holds 250 people, and the intimacy is part of its appeal. "It's the greatest concert in your living room, even though it's not a concert hall," Wagner says. "You'll have an artist sweating on you — it's so intimate. You can reach out and touch the guy."

The Florida Room offers a wide variety of live music acts; every night is different. "We've had everyone from Grace Jones to local bands," notes Wagner. "There's an incredibly underappreciated local music scene here in Miami. We love to highlight local artists." In February, the TransMedia Group put together a CD launch party for blues-rock musician Jamie "King" Colton at an unusual spot: the Copper Canyon Grill in Boca Raton. But aren't diners annoyed by loud music? No, Madden says, explaining that later diners like to hang out at the bar after they eat. You keep the customer longer, and because they're in a good mood, they spend more.

### **Beyond the Weekend**

While many venue operators focus on Fridays and Saturdays, a business that offers nothing during the softer mid-week is missing an opportunity. You've already paid for the staff, so why not offer weekday live entertainment that gets people off the sofa at home and away from the television at a reasonable cost?

Za Za Restaurant & Nitery in Saugus, Mass., delved into the classic dinner and a show setup and attracted a multigenerational following. The joint proudly plays up the New England kitsch with an old-style crooner, Rich Dimare, who performs his "Return to Me" show every other

Thursday. "Diners love it," remarks owner Michael Repucci. "We get everything from 70-year-old couples to young families, to groups of friends in their 20s. It's really diversified our crowd."

### Flexible Pricing

In today's economy, consumers remain price conscious. They want good value for their money, and good value often comes with a bundle of services, like a free first drink with a purchased concert ticket, lower ticket prices or even waiving cover charges.

Ty Garfield of Brown Paper Tickets in Seattle noted a major uptick in producers using his service as the recession kicked in. "Two reasons: first, many started shopping for a place to get full-service at a lower cost; and second, we had venues and producers begin to offer live events as a way to bring in customers," he explains. His company responded by flattening fees to 99 cents for tickets of \$9.99 or less, and \$1.99 for \$10 and higher. This helped bring ticket prices down for price-sensitive customers, while paying off for clubs that can sell to a broader audience and earn a greater margin — all without raising prices.

The Florida Room in Miami Beach does something unusual: It doesn't charge a cover. So how does the club make money? Through drinks. The recession proved a challenge, and as manager Joshua Wagner realized customers cut back on bottle service, he invested in his staff's cocktail skills. The Florida Room focuses on classic cocktails with fresh ingredients. This adaptability has paid off, as the club continues to draw a packed house.

At Za Za, Repucci doesn't charge a cover for the dinner and show. The music is the draw, and he captures revenue by selling more food and drinks. "We'd rather them come in, eat, drink and enjoy the entertainment. That's what will bring them back." **NCB**

---

[Add Comment](#)



**Winner!**  
Nightclub.com

Best Website  
Redesign



LOVE  
US? THEN  
LIKE US



NEWS  
INSIGHTS  
MEDIA  
FREE STUFF



**QUESTEX**  
MEDIA

[Home](#) | [Contact](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

© 2012 Questex Media Group LLC. All rights reserved.  
Reproduction in whole or part is prohibited.  
Please send any technical comments or questions to our  
webmaster.