

H Street Festival Basks In Its Success

BY ELISE BERNARD



Stages for live music bookended the Festival.
Photo: Andrew Lightman



Models strutted their stuff on the H Street catwalk.
Photo: Andrew Lightman



Festival goes in the 1200 block of H Street NE

This year's festival was the biggest and best in the eight years I've lived here. I don't have the numbers on attendance, but anyone could see that many of the attractions were packed all day. Especially popular were outdoor seating areas for restaurants and bars. During the festival a number of eating and drinking establishments set up outdoor patios, or beer gardens on the sidewalks. The overall effect was impressive, and completely changed the feel of the street. A friend with whom I roamed the festival spoke of the sheer excitement and energy of so many people out on H Street. Especially popular was the beer garden shared by Sova (1359 H St. NE, www.sovadc.com) and the soon-to-open German beer haus next door.

This year the organizers put a much greater stress on really involving the brick and mortar businesses. Virtually every bar had some outdoor seating area, and served up food, or drink. The Argonaut (1433 H St. NE, <http://www.argonautdc.com>), which is located one block too far up for its building to be physically included in the Festival, set up a stand selling a larger, and slightly tweaked version of its famed fish taco. And, as in the past, business owners hoping to open their doors soon were on hand to whet the appetites of potential customers. I loved the beef from Ethiopic (401 H St. NE, <http://www.ethiopicrestaurant.com>) and a friend who sampled the peach variety is now hopelessly devoted to Dangerously Delicious Pies (1339 H St. NE, www.dangerouslydeliciouspiesdc.com).

The number of art cars was much higher than last year, with owners coming from as far away as Arizona. The cars added a sense of whimsy to the event, and were a favorite attraction for many adults, as well as for children.

The music was also a big attraction. As I mentioned last month, Steve Lambert, who books acts for The Red and the Black (1212 H St. NE, <http://www.redandblackbar.com>) and the Rock and Roll Hotel (1353 H St. NE, <http://www.rockandrollhoteldc.com>), took responsibility for securing musical acts. From the buzz I'm hearing about the great music, it sounds like he picked a perfect mix.

One event that I missed, but heard quite a bit about immediately after was the Skin and Ink Tattoo contest. Prizes were awarded for outstanding tattoos in various categories. The big prize went to worst female tattoo, and worst male tattoo. Those lucky individuals will have their unfortunate tattoos remade in art by Paul Roe of Britishink (508 H St, 2nd floor, <http://www.britishinkdc.com>).

Most importantly, this year's tremendous turnout proves once and for all that people (and not just those who live or work in the neighborhood) really do want to come out to

the H Street Corridor in large numbers. During the Festival I not only spoke to several people from outside the neighborhood who were having a blast, but I also had conversations with numerous neighborhood residents who had never previously attended the Festival. Both groups told me they were very impressed by what they found. Kudos to the organizers, volunteers, participants, and the crowds that helped make it all a success.



I Am Art installation.
Photo by B. K. Adams

Drinking for the Recession Minded

Times are tough right now, and it isn't uncommon to find yourself wishing to stretch those dollars. On that note, here are three noteworthy H Street options for the thirsty but broke. Every Tuesday is Taco Tuesday at the Argonaut. \$11 gets you a full order of fish tacos, and a free West Coast IPA. That's an unbelievably great deal. Follow it up at the Pug (1234 H St. NE) with \$2 Domestic Tuesdays. And, I recently learned that XII (1123 H St. NE <http://twelvelounge.wordpress.com>) now hosts the Corridor's longest Happy Hour (3 p.m.-8 p.m.). Better go easy on the \$6 Bonecrushers.

Spooky Halloween Happenings

Palace of Wonders (1210 H St. NE, <http://www.palaceofwonders.com>) celebrates the season with its Nightmare on H Street Halloween Burlesque Show. \$20 gets you in the door. Doors 6 p.m., show 9 p.m.

Not to be outdone, The Rock and Roll Hotel will actually host two Halloween parties this year. Friday features Hidden "Caverns" Office of Future Plans, Crouching "Imperial China," and Bop Beetle for \$10 (doors 8:30, show 9:30). Saturday is the Hotel's true Halloween costume party with performances by Captured! By Robots, Terror Pigeon Dance Revolt, Bonjour Ganesh!. Tickets \$8-10 (doors 8 p.m., show 9 p.m.). What could be spookier than spending Halloween inside of former mortuary?

Revamp, Refocus, Re-launch

Langston Bar and Grille (1831 Benning Road NE, <http://langstonbar.com>) recently re-launched itself with a new look and menu. Perhaps the most exciting new development at Langston is a weekly blues brunch. A close cousin of the jazz brunch, a blues brunch

sounds perfectly suited to Langston's soul food menu.

DJ Nights at Sova

Friday September 18 marked the inaugural dj night at the local coffee house/wine/artisan cocktail bar (1359 H St. NE, <http://www.sovadc.com>). Patrons can enjoy chill stylings from a dj while sipping their drink of choice.

H Street Country Club Mixes It Up

Master Mixologist Gina Chersevani is designing a slate of new libations for H Street Country Club (1335 H St. NE, <http://www.thehstreet-countryclub.com>) patrons to enjoy. Already well known for its cocktails, the Country Club gives us yet another reason to eschew the beer and branch out.

Mystery Chair Revealed

B.K. Adams is the man behind the mysterious chair mounted on a pole in the 300 block of H St. NE. I recently sat down for tea at Sidamo (417 H St. NE, with Mr. Adams and we chatted a bit about his work. The piece is called "I Am Talking to My God," and it is part of his "I Am Art" series. The blue wooden chair, which is actually a high-chair that was used by both of Adam's sons, was a piece that had puzzled many a passerby on the busy corridor. Adams installed in late spring, and it only came down (by coincidence) while we were sitting talking over tea. We talked about the importance of the pole and he explained that changes in angle, and the swaying were important because they made the chair appear to be bowing. He said that a friend introduced him to the site, and that he wanted to induce people to focus on the vacant block. He likes the real Mom and Pop feel of the street. In fact, he connected so well with the owners of Sidamo that he is assisting with the design at their new location out in Mt. Ranier. Mr. Adams used to run a coffee shop (The Eye Opener) out in Mt. Ranier. But don't expect that the disappearance of the chair will remove B.K. Adams from H St. NE. He seems to have settled in quite comfortably, and I'm sure he'll be back.

For more on what's abuzz on and around H Street you can visit my blog <http://frozentropics.blogspot.com>. You can send me tips, or questions at inked78@hotmail.com. ★



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