

## Features

# Raleigh sees opening of its largest music club

By JAMES BURRUS  
Staff Writer

On May 1 The Raleigh Pier opened its doors for the one-time reunion of The Fabulous Knobs and in the process opened another door for local music fans.

The new music club is the largest in the area, with a capacity of 1,000 people. This large amount of space enables the club to bring in big-name college radio artists that local music fans have not been able to see in the recent past.

"(The Raleigh Pier) is another step we've needed in this market for a long time," said Harry Simmons, who books the club through Pro-Motion concerts.

Bands such as World Party and The Del Fuegos are not big enough to play in 1,500 seat auditoriums such as Memorial Hall, but are too big to play in small clubs like The Brewery in Raleigh or Chapel Hill's Cat's Cradle.

"We had to pass on so many acts at The Brewery because we didn't have the capacity," Hobby said.

Simmons said that the next time World Party comes through the area they will be able to make the step up to a 1,500 seat hall.

Other bands have found it difficult to make the jump from a small music club to a hall without this intermediate step, Simmons said.

The Raleigh Pier takes the place of Hot 'anta, a college disco bar. Wilnick Productions purchased the club in February and decided to change its format after not getting the turnout they wanted.

Wilnick Productions has opened a new dance club in Raleigh called Shooter's II. Although it is similar to Hot 'anta, Shooter's II is a smaller club.

Wilnick Productions consists of Fred Wilburn and Carl and Elliot Murnick. The Murnick brothers

are also the area's professional wrestling promoters, and their father promoted the Rolling Stones' first U.S. tour.

Although Wilnick Productions has owned the club for three months, it took a while to formalize the club's change.

"We had one week to make the necessary changes to get open," Hobby said.

Even with little time and almost no publicity, The Raleigh Pier was filled to capacity for the opening show.

Artists that have played the new club since its grand opening include Don Dixon, Marti Jones, HEGE V, The Right Profile, Chris Isaac, Suicidal Tendencies, World Party, Rank and File and The Del Fuegos. World Party's appearance at The Raleigh Pier on Sunday was the band's only club appearance on their current tour.

"Under the circumstances we're very pleased at what has gone on so far," Hobby said. The club has averaged 350 people per show, although the World Party date was expected to be a sellout, Hobby said.

"As long as we do 350 to 400, we're pretty happy," Hobby said.

"I'm pretty well convinced this is going to work just because of the acts that are going to come through," he said.

Though things have run smoothly during the opening weeks, the club has been involved in some controversy over its name. The club was originally named The Pier, after a similar club that use to exist in Raleigh. The last owner of the old Pier, though, protested because she thought that she had rights to the name.

"To avoid long-time legal problems, (we) changed the name to The Raleigh Pier," Hobby said.

After things settle down, Hobby and the owners expect to make some needed renovations to the

club.

They plan to extend the high ceiling over the dance floor to the back of the club to help the sound carry throughout the club. There are also plans to add another section of seating and upgrade the dressing rooms and stage area, Hobby said.

Besides these needed renovations, there are even bigger plans. There is the possibility that a part of the club currently not being used will be converted to a jazz club. Hobby said they also want to put a giant screen beside the stage to show videos of new bands between sets.

The Raleigh Pier will be booked by Pro-Motion Concerts, the same company that handled the Genesis concerts at the Smith Center. Scheduled to appear in June are Steve Earle, Little America and The Saints. Local music fans can also look forward to an appearance by Fetchin Bones sometime soon, Simmons said.

The Raleigh Pier is a private membership club and one must be a member or a guest of a member to get into the club. Hobby said in order for the club to sell liquor under N.C. law they had to sell memberships. Not having liquor was the major complaint, besides size, about The Brewery.

A membership at The Raleigh Pier is also good at The Longbranch, Shooter's II, Cheers and Fevers, all owned by Wilnick Productions.

Hobby also said that anyone 18 years old or over will be allowed

into the club, but only those 21 or over will be allowed to drink alcohol.

Hobby said he plans to keep his own music club, The Brewery, open while he manages The Raleigh Pier. The smaller music club will make some changes, however.

Simmons said The Brewery will do more rhythm and blues and reggae bands now.

Hobby said the club is also considering having a new music DJ at the club on some days of the week.

The Raleigh Pier will not hurt

smaller local music clubs, Simmons said.

"It will make clubs with a capacity of 300 do what a club with a capacity of 300 really ought to be doing, which is working more closely with local bands," he said.

The new club will also help local bands which open shows for bigger-name acts to improve their name recognition by exposing them to bigger audiences, Simmons said.

The Raleigh Pier is located at 2109 Avent Ferry Road, on the lower level of Mission Valley Shopping Center. Call 832-0202 for ticket information.

# SPANKY'S

we put the fun back in dining out ...

*A Tradition in Chapel Hill  
Since 1977.*

**New Summer Specials**

*"Light and Cool"*

**Fresh Garden Salads**

**Fresh Fruit Salads**

**Daily Summer Salad Specials**

also

**Dinner Seafood and Chicken  
Specialties**

**LIVE ENTERTAINMENT**

**Wednesday, June 3, 10pm**

**Carter Minor**

and

**Andy Church**

No Cover Charge • Must be 21 or older

**TAKE OUT AVAILABLE**

*Great For Picnics*

**Lunch • Dinner • Brunch**

**101 East Franklin Street  
Chapel Hill, NC**



**Student  
Summer  
Shape-Up Special**

**6 weeks \$49**

**3 months \$78**

**6 months \$130**

**Featuring: 26 Nautilus machines,  
Wolff tanning beds, sauna, whirlpool, life  
cycle, aerobic classes, free weights  
Open 7 Days a Week**

**Nautilus**  
FITNESS CENTER, INC.

Two Great Locations:

Chapel Hill Nautilus  
Chapel Hill Blvd.  
Straw Valley  
968-3027

Durham Nautilus  
Hillsborough Rd.  
(next to Best Products)  
383-0330

**THE BEST  
TENNIS SHOP**

**in Chapel Hill  
is in Carrboro\***

- Professional Stringing
- Racquets \$59<sup>95</sup>—\$149<sup>95</sup>
- Demo Program
- Tennis Lessons

Get More Bite On The Ball



**\$5.00 OFF**  
THE STRINGING  
OF ANY RACQUET  
with this ad

STEVE FRIEDMAN'S

**PRO SHOP  
AND RUNNING CENTER**

\*Carr Mill Mall