



Turning Up the Volume in Downtown W-S

In the area of Downtown Winston-Salem referred to as the Arts District, three of the biggest proponents of the arts in the city have laid claim to a space at the end of Trade Street that is quite literally rocking the block.

Richard Emmett, Andy Tennille and Bryan Ledbetter teamed up and opened The Ramkat, the live music and performance space that took over the former Ziggy's location and opened in early 2018. Emmett is the music director of the Blue Ridge Music Center; Tennille is an area music promoter, photographer and journalist; Ledbetter, the owner of Airtype and Camel City Goods here in Winston.

The space had been vacant since 2016 when Ziggy's closed its doors, and the need for a great live music spot in Winston-Salem was an obvious one. Emmett, Tennille and Ledbetter saw that need and decided to do something about it. The name comes from the term given to that area of town back in the heyday of tobacco warehouse workers. The bar area, known as the Gas Hill Drinking Room, also has a historical moniker – it is a nod to the street that alcohol was produced on back in those same tobacco-heavy days.

The Ramkat has already seen a host of well-known musical acts in its young life, including Gillian Welch just this month, and renowned hip-hop recording artist Grandmaster Flash over the summer. The lineup for the rest of the fall and the winter is vast and impressive. But, the venue is not just for mainstream, touring musical acts.

"We knew there would be so many great opportunities to partner with local music and arts organizations, and we have been able to do just that," Tennille said. "There have been events associated with UNCSA, Piedmont Wind Symphony, Winston-Salem Symphony and more. And we are just getting started." And it's not always music. The venue has been host to improv comedy nights, yoga events and dance performance so far, too, to name a few.

It's obvious that, even in its infancy, The Ramkat has already staked a claim in the Winston-Salem landscape. A landscape that is more exciting thanks to its existence.