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"This is one of the best set-ups for house shows I've ever seen."
DARIUSZ GRABKA
 CONCERT FAN

"We like to play these alternative venues."
BEN ROUGH
 BANJO PLAYER

Matilda Perks and Marc St. Louis, who call themselves There Were Valleys, play for a crowd in the living room of Jeff Woods' King Street, Waterloo house.

PHILIP WALKER, RECORD STAFF

Wired house

Waterloo hot spot thrives on live bands

BY COLIN HUNTER
 RECORD STAFF

Down the wooden ladder and through the pirate room, on the other side of the kitchen, a concert is happening. Down there, awash in the blue-green glow of the tropical fish tank, a band from Montreal is playing a melancholic folk dirge. A dozen people sit quietly on the two couches and the floor, swaying with the music.

Up here, in the dimly lit arboretum — an oddly named room, since it contains just a few ferns and a tiny twigless tree — people are sipping beer and listening.

Small speakers mounted on the walls broadcast the concert to the arboretum. Speakers, see, are everywhere.

This house, 130 King St. N., in Waterloo, is more thoroughly wired than a motel room in an FBI sting. In the kitchen, a speaker sits atop a microwave.

In the pirate room (which is more appropriately named than the arboretum, since it's actually full of pirate-themed kitsch), a pair of speakers stand on either side of a wooden throne.

There are speakers in the first-floor bedroom, too, as well as a soundboard and a pair of computers that are digitally recording the night's concert.

When it's not cluttered with guitar cases and other musical accoutrements, the bedroom is also where

Jeff Woods sleeps. If he sleeps.

Which, on concert nights like this, is unlikely.

Woods is the 27-year-old indie impresario who has transformed a century-old downtown Waterloo home (rumoured to have once been a bordello) into an immersive, and somewhat subversive, concert venue.

Concerts here are advertised, but only if you know where to look — a few select downtown shops, some handmade 'zines and music websites.

The people inside, musicians and audience members alike, are mostly part of a tight-knit music scene.

Anyone is welcome to attend — the more the merrier, Woods says — but newcomers might feel a little like they're crashing someone else's party.

There's little option but to mingle, since each room of the house holds only a handful of people. So they gather in strange places like the pirate room, or straight up the ladder in the arboretum.

As a place to see concerts, the house is starkly and deliberately different than a typical live music club.

"It's always creative, artistic and really interesting," says Dariusz Grabka, who has been to half a dozen concerts since they began at 130 King just over a year ago.

"It's a better environment, it's more about the music and there's more audience interaction."

BEN ROUGH
 BANJO PLAYER

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Southern Pole of Inaccessibility boggles my mind

I was thunderstruck this week to learn that a Canadian had reached the Southern Pole of Inaccessibility.

The mind reeled. A Canadian had trudged through the Antarctic wastelands to reach the most inaccessible point on the planet's most inaccessible land mass.

Actually, to say that Paul Landry "trudged" is a bit of an overstatement. He "kite-skied," which is the eco-friendly version of being pulled by a snowmobile, zipping along at an average speed of close to 10 kilometres an hour. Not really "trudging."

Nonetheless, the mind reeled. Mostly, I confess, the mind reeled because I never knew there was a Pole of Inaccessibility. My first thought when I saw the headline was that it would be the utility pole just beyond the tether-range of a dog whose bladder has reached its natural limit of expansion.

The Southern Pole of Inaccessibility,



BILL BEAN

ty. This means there is a North Pole, a South Pole and this other pole. I have always imagined Earth spinning in space on its axis as defined by the North and South Pole. Although this axis would be as invisible as the equator, I'd always imagined that one could see it, sprouting out of the top and the bottom of the planet.

Of course, the Magnetic North Pole is not at the same location as the North Pole, and that tends to muck up that vision of the planet spinning in space. There is also a Magnetic South Pole, although hardly anyone ever talks about it, and those who went to all the trouble of going there, such as Antarctic ex-

plorers Robert F. Scott and Ernest Shackleton, must have been darned annoyed about that.

I had imagined the Earth's rotation as a wobbly construct, oscillating between an axis based on a North Pole and South Pole and another axis based on a North Magnetic Pole and a South Magnetic Pole. Now there's this Pole of Inaccessibility.

But the mind-reeling has just begun. There are actually four Poles of Inaccessibility, so the Earth is starting to look like a pin cushion in space, with imaginary axes everywhere, and spinning in a very wobbly manner, indeed.

There's a Northern Pole of Inaccessibility up in the high Arctic (which could be the secret location of Santa's workshop); the Pacific Pole of Inaccessibility, which is the southerly point most distant from land (probably where Gilligan and the Skipper are still); and the Eurasian Pole of Inaccessibility,

which is the point farthest from any ocean.

If logic had anything to do with it, there should be global focal points that are diametrically opposed to the Poles of Inaccessibility. Therefore, there would be Poles of Accessibility, spots that should be most easily reached by anyone.

A number of places come to mind. New York. Paris. Niagara Falls. The vice-principal's office (how many times did you wind up there, without doing anything at all?). The White House (hey, if the guy currently doing the job can find his way there, then anyone can).

That aside, there are actual useful reasons for having Poles of Inaccessibility. Consider sequestration. Certainly, the Southern Pole has the greatest potential. Anyone with a compass and sailboat can get to the Pacific Pole of Inaccessibility, but the Southern Pole

is the most inaccessible spot in the harshest location. Would this not be the best place on the planet to put things that you don't want anyone to get?

Your government's synthetic Ebola virus. The access codes to those suitcase-sized nuclear bombs. Your credit card. Your teenage daughter now that she's showing interest in that creepy guy down the street. Maybe just the creepy guy.

Of course, we'd have to have an airstrip, a refuelling depot, staff and so on. The Southern Pole of Inaccessibility would have to be accessible.

And there goes my perception of the planet, wobbling out of control again.

Bill Bean, whose brain wobbles out of control every Saturday, welcomes medical advice at bbean@therecord.com or 519-894-2231, ext. 2618.



PHILIP WALKER, RECORD STAFF

House concert host Jeff Woods operates the sound board as he watches the band play through an aquarium built into the wall.



PHILIP WALKER, RECORD STAFF

Surrounded by visitors' shoes in the hallway, a curious guest listens to a band belt out a song in the living room of the Waterloo house.



DEAR ELLIE

There's no harm in a second look

Q: The man in my life of many years looks at other girls when we're out together. He can be discreet, but when he forgets himself, he's obvious (the double look).

We get along great and are talking about marriage. When I make a fuss regarding this behaviour, he says he loves me, "all guys do it, there's nothing wrong with it."

I've also noticed that when I'm out by myself or with my friends that guys take a second look at me. So, is this normal for guys involved in a relationship . . . or is he shopping for something better?

A: It's normal — for both men and women — to be aware and appreciative of attractiveness. However, it's unacceptable if your partner is ogling others, flirting and/or making negative comparisons to you.

Since this isn't happening, and he's mostly discreet about it, you can relax. If it escalates, point out a few good-looking male hunks to him as you pass them by, and he'll quickly see the point.

PAST HAUNTS HER

Q: My wife and I are in our mid-30s, married for 10 years, with children, but our sex life has deteriorated.

While dating, my wife confided she'd been sexually abused as a child by a relative. She'd had counselling in her 20s and "worked it out."

Our sex life was pretty good during the early years. Now, even on our "date nights" free of kids, my wife admits avoiding sex, or it's difficult to get her "in the mood."

We're mismatched sexually: I consider sex an integral part of a healthy marriage; she's said she could abstain forever.

We've gone for counselling for two years. The counsellor says she suffers "detachment issues" and residual effects from her sexual abuse. We've been told it will take a long time for her to accept herself as a sexual person.

Ellie, I'm a kind, generous, loving husband whose wife is my best friend, but I feel like we're sliding into roommate mode.

I try to not take it personally but I'm beginning to feel rejected and resentful. I'm trying to be patient so she can work things out — but how much longer should I wait?

A: I empathize with both of you — her tragic history shows how corrosive sexual abuse of a young person can be, leaving her scarred for years and creating a difficult breach in your life together.

Continued marriage counselling is essential, but you might both try other approaches, too, to broaden your understanding and patience, and help with her healing.

A sex therapy specialist may help her to unlock barriers to the special bond that passion and intimacy can bring to marriage.

You might benefit from individual therapy, to talk out your frustration rather than build resentment.

The bottom line is that you're both trying to handle this; you care deeply for each other and want to stay together. And that makes any helpful efforts worthwhile.

Write to Ellie Teshler in care of The Record or e-mail ellie@therecord.com.

Concerts: Waterloo house spills with 'surround sound'

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"This is one of the best set-ups for house shows I've ever seen."

What stands out about 130 King is not that concerts are held here. House shows happen in every town with a reasonably vibrant music scene and someone willing to host them.

What stands out is the sound system. It's not hi-fi by any standard — most of the speakers are used castoffs — but it is, in the truest sense of the term, surround sound. No matter where you are in the house, you're hearing the concert.

Well, almost.

"The house does have a basement, but it's very Blair Witch," Woods cautions. "You don't wanna go down there."

There are three official rules at 130 King: BYOB (to avoid the need for a liquor licence), PWYC (pay what you can), and kindly remove your shoes at the door (people do live here, after all).

Woods moved into the house with his brother and two friends several years ago, and immediately began gutting, remodeling and rewiring. It had obviously been a student home for years, so it needed some TLC.

Two things about the place immediately appealed to Woods: first, the ladder that leads from the main floor through the ceiling to an upper storey room. Strange but cool.

Second, the neighbours: after 6 p.m., there aren't any. The house is buttressed by an auto repair shop on one side and a beauty salon on the other, which means no noise complaints.

Every penny collected at concerts — they actually pass around a hat — goes straight to the bands.

UPCOMING CONCERT

• The next concert at 130 King St. N., Waterloo features Dan Fournier and the Pill, Steven McKay and Slowking. For more information, visit www.trepid.org.

Woods doesn't host concerts for the money. He's got some already. He works in software at RIM and, for fun, sells tricks at the magic shop in the Princess Twin Cinemas building.

He hosts concerts because "it fills a very necessary niche in the community," he says.

For bands, the house provides a receptive, heckler-free audience without all the

hassles and costs associated with playing at a bar.

"We like to play these alternative venues," says Ben Rough, banjo player for The Bloody Miracles from Peterborough, who shares this concert's bill with Montreal bands The Dukes of Archipelago and There Were Valleys.

"It's a better environment, it's more about the music and there's more audience interaction. You can hand a tambourine to someone sitting on the floor and they'll join in."

Sure enough, in the living room, an audience member is playing accompaniment for There Were Valleys on the maracas. It sounds good, from up here in the arboretum. chunter@therecord.com



PHILIP WALKER, RECORD STAFF

Jeff Woods invites bands to his living room and hosts house concerts.