

PEANUT BUTTER & JAMS



Newark-based Nature Jams perform at World Cafe Live at the Queen last year. The band held its CD release party at World Cafe Live in Philadelphia on Saturday. NATURE JAMS

Learning lessons becoming musical

World Cafe Live hosts weekly kid shows

By Ryan Cormier
The News Journal

Instead of bar stools there are highchairs. The beer bottles are replaced by babas.

And the elbows on the bar are not those of a discerning music fan, but a little girl munching a slice of pizza while tapping her toes to the music of the Brooklyn, N.Y.-based kids band Rolie Polie Guacamole.

Every Saturday morning, World Cafe Live at the Queen in downtown Wilmington transforms from a booze-happy rock club to a children-friendly zone for the weekly Peanut Butter & Jams music series, which hosts local



Charlie Davis, 3, marks her birthday with dad Jeremy Davis and mom Libby Elliott. SUCHAT PEDERSON/THE NEWS JOURNAL

and national bands playing children's music.

The kids dance and spin. They strum little plastic guitars. And they chow down on a kid-centric buffet of chicken fin-

gers, French fries, salad and sandwiches.

Meanwhile, their parents eat as well, some even sneaking a mid-day

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Drummer Peter Barr of the Rolie Polie Guacamole band demonstrates a headstand at World Cafe Live at the Queen in Wilmington on Saturday. SUCHAT PEDERSON/THE NEWS JOURNAL

Music: Parents find fun

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beer as they watch their children groove to the mostly educational set list of songs.

On many Saturday mornings, you can find Tim Weymouth of North Wilmington there with his wife and two children, ages 3 and 6. The couple already had been attending the original Peanut Butter & Jams series at the World Cafe Live venue in Philadelphia before the sister location in Wilmington opened nearly two years ago.

With at least 30 shows under their belt already, usually taken in while sitting on colorful floor mats, the smiles on the faces of the Weymouth children prove they aren't getting tired of the balloon-filled jam sessions.

"It gets us out of the house and it's active. Our kids love music and dancing around," Weymouth said. "It's mostly for them, but sometimes if it's the middle of the day I can have a beer, so there's something for the adults, too. It's become part of our weekend routine."

The popular concert series, which draws about 100 to 150 people each week to the 200-person stage, not only gives parents a rare cheap musical experience for their children, but it gets people in the venue at a time when it would normally be facing a light weekend lunch business. Tickets usually cost \$7 for adults and \$6 for children.

The children's musical

genre, now more often found with a rock edge and nicknamed "kindie rock," has exploded in recent years. WXPB 88.5-FM, one of World Cafe Live at the Queen's closest collaborators, even has a Peabody Award-winning daily radio show called Kid's Corner - a prime spot for advertising the weekly kid concerts both in Wilmington and Philadelphia.

Even in Brooklyn, the hometown of Saturday's band and the epicenter of all that is hipster and indie, there aren't many proper venues or a promotional infrastructure for kid rock shows.

So for Rolie Polie frontman Frank Gallo, making trips to World Cafe Live in Philadelphia or Wilmington are a breeze: the shows are heavily promoted, sometimes there are birthday parties already booked for the shows and the band is on the same professional upstairs stage where national acts can be found weekly.

"There's no kids radio in Brooklyn, so we do all our own PR," Gallo said after singing about brushing your teeth and closing with a cover of Woody Guthrie's "This Land Is Your Land." "We have to do a lot of work to get people to show up. Here, there's a lot built-in."

The result is plenty of kids acts wanting to play the series, with most bands having to wait a year before coming back again.

While Gallo performed in Wilmington Saturday,

Newark-based Nature Jams was having its CD release show for its debut album "Food for Thought" at the Peanut Butter & Jams show in Philadelphia. Music teacher Rob Young teamed up with friend Zach Ladin, who has been performing his Nature Jams shows at camps and after-school programs for several years.

Young has seen firsthand how music can be a slick delivery system for learning, especially when his band played the Queen in June, promoting healthy eating through song: "They don't even realize it half the time. They sing the words and they get stuck in their heads. We've had a few shows where we sang about avocados and then we'll get these cards from the kids about how they love avocados now, so I think it's working."

Before leaving Saturday afternoon's show at the Queen, first-time Peanut Butter & Jams parent Matt Eichenbaum, his wife and sons, Asher, 3, and Benjamin, 22 months, were still reveling in their first children's rock experience.

"We love sharing music with them and we play The Beatles a lot because it's accessible, so they dance to that," Eichenbaum said. "But this was great. It's not just sitting there with Barney."

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