



A mural by Parris Stancell, installed by the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program, welcomes visitors as they enter the World Cafe Live building

# PLAYING NICE

## A SETTING TO MAKE EVENTS DAZZLE. THE TALENT TO MAKE THEM ROCK.



The Dirty Socks Funtime Band (above)  
Hall & Oates (below)  
have each performed for special  
events at World Caf  Live



The annual sales meeting is ready to begin. Field reps are yawning and checking their Blackberries. The marketing team is shuffling the sequence of slides for the endless Power Point presentation that is to come. The CFO is mentally calculating the number of man-hours he'll have to write-off for this boondoggle. The lights dim as the assembled sink into their seats, preparing for another sleep-inducing speech by the CEO.

Just then, a startling spectacle engulfs the stage. It's a 12-piece reggae band with a dreadlocked lead singer, three dancers and a red-hot horn section. The beat is irresistible, and before they quite know what's hit them, the audience is on their feet, swaying and clapping and singing along.

Welcome to a meeting at World Cafe Live. This trail-blazing live music venue, restaurant and showplace in Philadelphia was inspired by the nationally syndicated radio program from which it takes its name: World Cafe with David Dye. Heard on over 185 public radio stations nationwide, World Cafe is produced in the studios of WXPB, located directly across the hall from World Cafe Live on Walnut Street. Although the radio station and music venue are separately owned and operated, the two share a building and a musical philosophy.

Opened in 2004 to "reinvent the live music experience for artists and audi-

ences," this unique venue has found itself at the forefront of a new approach to private event planning. Tours of the station can be arranged through the World Cafe Live event staff. The building's common areas, which boast three colorful murals installed by the renowned Philadelphia Mural Arts Program, can also be made available, by request, for standing receptions.

### When Music Plays, Events Work

For meeting planners, there is great appeal in being able to integrate live music, including that of top-name artists, as a way to improve drawing power and increase the "wow factor" of an event. Music can also strengthen the thematic power of a meeting in surprising ways.

As World Cafe Live's general manager, Neil Sulkes, explains, "Say an athletic shoe company wants to wrap their sales meeting around a theme like 'Takin' it to the Streets.' How much more compelling does that theme become if the meeting wraps up with Michael McDonald, the guy who actually wrote the song, performing it live on stage?"

Like an increasing number of new music venues around the country, World Cafe Live was designed to be event-friendly from day one. Projection screens, camera mounts and Gobo projection capabilities have been engineered into the building.

## by Nat Gutwirth

Beyond the physical attributes of the facility, World Cafe Live offers skilled personnel and valuable expertise. Talent buyers on staff work in lockstep with on-site meeting planners to not only identify the perfect artist for a specific audience and budget, but to negotiate the contract and booking.

### It Takes Talent to Book Talent

Under the veteran leadership of Karl Mullen, a nationally recognized talent spotter and booker, the World Cafe Live music staff has become adept at marrying artists with organizations. By monitoring music industry barometers such as *Pollstar*, conversing daily with talent agents, artist management and record label executives (and also by listening to thousands of CDs), bookers maintain a mental catalog of thousands of artists they can sort by genre, format, popularity and price range. With the help of talent agencies, bookers also track the routing schedule for various tours, looking for gaps in the schedule to improve their chances of attracting a specific artist.

"If the price is right, or the cause is one an artist believes in, no one should ever be considered out of reach."

*Karl Mullen, talent spotter & booker  
World Cafe Live*

For example, during the 50th anniversary celebration of the HiFi House electronics store chain, World Cafe Live hosted a reunion of The Hooters, a band whose 1980s heyday coincided perfectly with the 35-50 year old guest list. At the 2005 Global Economy Summit, the theatrical 30-piece Brazilian song and dance collective, Alo Brasil, fired up the festivities. And for the holiday party of a local investment management firm, prominent singer-songwriters Jonatha Brooke and Eric Bazilian shared the stage.

As Mullen notes, the list of musicians willing to perform for a private audience is virtually unlimited. "If the price is right, or the cause is one an artist

believes in, no one should ever be considered out of reach."

### Great Performers

Come the day of an event, it is critical that things like musical production and food and beverage service be tightly coordinated. Producing live music can be a daunting technical challenge, with complex load-ins, mix requirements, and video and lighting schemes that must be coordinated at the last minute of the eleventh hour.

Being able to trust in an experienced tech crew is a tremendous asset for ensuring the success of an event. Having on-site meeting planners who are experienced in managing all sides of the process is an added advantage.

For a venue like World Cafe Live, where production and food service are integrated staff functions, such a collaborative approach is second nature.

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