

World Cafe Live celebrates 10 years

More venues in the works for Midwest, East Coast cities

HAL REAL, 61, of Wilmington, Del., is a former real-estate lawyer and founder of World Cafe Live, which is celebrating its 10th anniversary. Located in a former toilet factory on Walnut Street near 30th, the shrine to all music genres houses everything from WXPN's on-air studios to two main stages, a restaurant and recording studios, and is home to the World Cafe radio show.

Q: How did you come up with the idea for World Cafe Live?

A: I'm a lifelong pianist and wanted a club for grown-ups to hear live music, that was great for audiences and performers and had good food and drink. I also approached WXPN-FM because they had this target audience that was the NPR audience who loved music but didn't have an intimate place to discover new music. They thought it was a great idea.

Q: How'd you finance it?

A: I got 50 mostly local angel investors. Initially we raised over \$4 million and since added \$2 million more, which includes our venue in Wilmington.



TALKING SMALL BIZ
MICHAEL HINKELMAN

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Q: The biz model?

A: XPN and World Cafe Live are tenants of the building [developed by Carl Dranoff under an agreement with the University of Pennsylvania]. We acquired the rights from XPN to use the World Cafe name in connection with live-music venues and restaurants in North America. Revenue comes from music ticket sales; food/beverage sales at concerts, lunches and dinners; and food/beverage sales at private and corporate events.

Q: Backstory on name?

A: We wanted World Cafe because the radio program has instant credibility with artists and audiences around the country [where it's heard on more than 200 stations].

Q: Your patrons?

A: It depends on the music. If it's indie rock, we've got a lot of people who are under 30. If it's a



RANDI FAIR / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Hal Real sits on the railing outside World Cafe Live in University City. The same building houses the WXPN-FM radio studios.

singer-songwriter, we've got all ages. On any given night, you have a mix of black, white, brown, young and old, men and women.

Q: What differentiates your venue from others here?

A: We all have our niches. One major difference is World Cafe Live is open seven days a week, with over 500 shows a year. Another differentiator is the flexibility of our space to set up the room, based on the performer.

Q: Biggest challenge?

A: We opened in Wilmington in 2011, in the middle of the Great Recession. We've also been urban pioneers. We're also more of a destination so we don't get the casual passer-by who might drop in to see what's going on.

Q: How big a biz is this?

A: The two venues will gross a little north of \$9 million this year. We share employees; there are about 35 full-time and 200 part-time employees.

Q: What's next?

A: Future World Cafe Lives will not be near Philly. We're currently working on three venues in various stages of development. They're in the Midwest or on the East Coast. ■

@MHinkelman
Online: ph.ly/YourBusiness

This SS snafu



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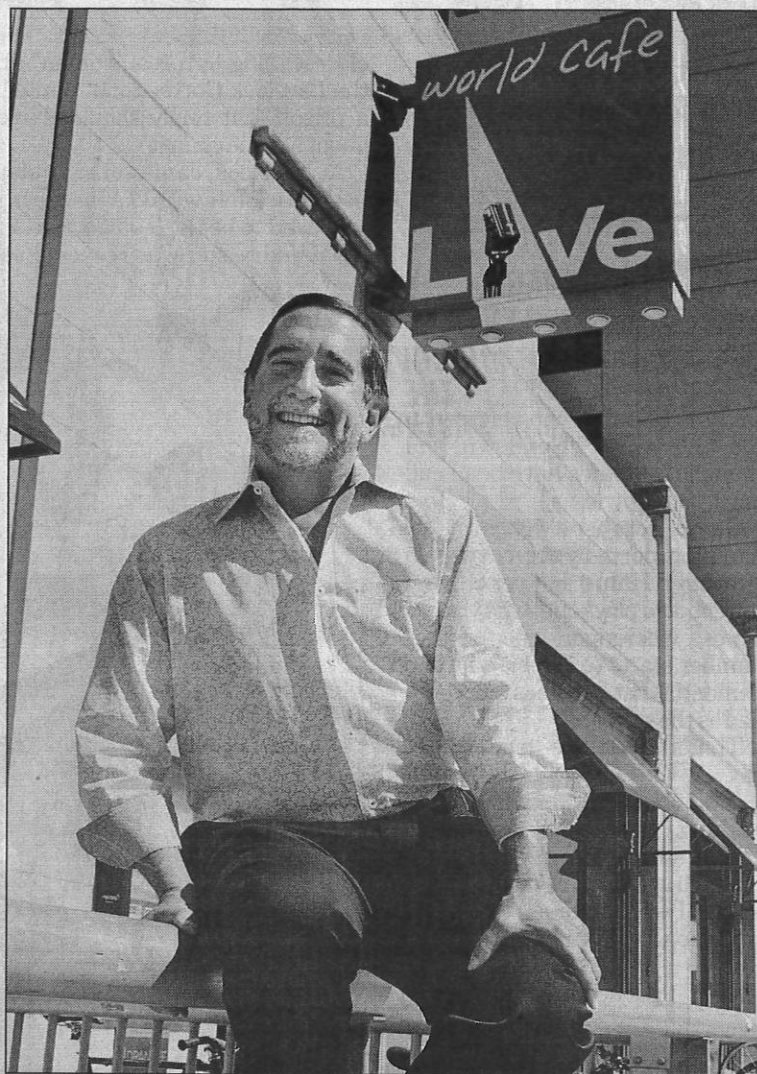
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