

Up in smoke: Bands weigh in on Moscow's smoking ban

By Omie Drawhorn Daily News staff writer

Posted on: Thursday, August 06, 2009

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Katelyn and Laurie Shook once turned down a gig at John's Alley because of the smoke.

"I can't play for that long in a smoky environment," Katelyn said. "I'm allergic to cigarette smoke and I try to avoid playing venues with smoke."

When she does, her throat hurts and she can't sing right by the end of the night.

It doesn't end there.

"The next day I feel like I have a hangover when I didn't really drink," she sad.

Now that the city of Moscow has banned smoking in all bars within city limits, the Shook Twins may reconsider.

Katelyn said she was "stoked" when she heard the news.

Many bands who have played in Moscow in the past believe the ban will be a positive thing.

Doug Lind, lead vocalist and guitarist for the Moscow band Bare Wires, said the band members are pleased with the ban.

"The main thing is, we have had situations where fans would not go see us in bars because of the smoke, so we'll probably pick up more attendance in situations like that," Lind said.

He expects to see more nonsmokers out enjoying music in the bars. He said there probably will be a few smokers who may boycott the bars, but it won't be a significant number.

As nonsmokers, Lind said he and the other band members are more sensitive to coming home and smelling like smoke, although they do realize it's something that comes along with the territory.

"It's better for us physically to not have to be inhaling second-hand smoke," Lind said. "It's hard on your throat inhaling all the time."

Eric Gilbert of the former Moscow band Finn Riggins said he was just talking to a friend from Moscow the other night about the smoking ban.

"Some folks avoid (John's) Alley because of the smoke," he said. "As performers, we are ecstatic; it's always harder to sing when you're inhaling smoke."

He said the only smoking venue he has played in Moscow in the past is John's Alley.

"We do a lot of all-ages shows," he said. "I'll be curious to see what downtown Moscow is like without the smoking bar factor. Idaho is behind the curve in the West."

He thinks bars that offer live music will benefit from the ban because more people will come out for the music.

Noel Palmer of the Moscow band Chubbs Toga said the ban doesn't really affect him as a nonsmoker, but he has mixed feelings about it.

"It will be nice to go out and not smell like smoke the next day," he said. "On the other hand, I think bars should have the choice to allow smoking or not."

Palmer is skeptical that a new crowd will hit the town since smoking has been banned.

"I'll believe it when I see it," he said. "I think the smoking ban will empower some people to go out, but that might be a novelty that will wear off in a few months.

"We live in a college town, so college students will always go to the bars in droves."

He said he doesn't think the ban will keep many smokers at home.

"I used to live near Boulder (Colo.) when they banned smoking and that didn't have any sort of effect on the attendance at concerts there," he said.

Bill LaVoie, lead singer of the Moscow band Corn Mash, likes to light up occasionally in bars, but doesn't think nonsmokers should be subjected to that if they want to see live music.

He said bars went nonsmoking while he was living in Missoula, Mont., and never detected a drop in business or crowds.

A lot of people were "actually more inclined to go out to the bar if it wasn't smoky," he said.

He said attendance at live shows may even improve.

"I think people go out to see bands and drink rather than to smoke; smoking can be done outside but the music and beer is inside," he said. "I doubt many people will opt out of seeing a band at John's Alley so they can stay home and smoke cigarettes."

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