

ENTER STAGE WEST

David Morrison

“Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration.”

—Thomas Edison (1847-1931)

For six years of one of my former lives, I promoted music concerts as a hobby. I’d estimate racking up around three hundred, the last and suitably loudest on December 6th, 2006. Unless exceptional circumstances present themselves, I have no plans to ever do more. You could say I’ve retired from that game. But do I miss it? Hell, no!

Promoting gigs or staging any live event, you see, is incredibly hard work—at least if you do it properly. Both in advance legwork and on the nights, the hours are long. It’s often a totally thankless pursuit. There are inordinate levels of stress from all angles as one strives to meet the demands of artists, tour managers, technicians, venues, audiences, agents and record labels. And if despite all efforts a show should stiff, the money comes straight from the promoter’s pocket. So

even when it’s fun—as it was more often than not—pressure is never far away.

Then again, my experience might’ve been worse. I could, for example, have been in the shoes of Nanaimo’s Chris Walker, proprietor of Loco’s Studio. He staged a major event on Saturday April 12, for which planning started months prior. And although the event has long since gone, he’s still working on it now. In fact, the really hard work is about to begin.

Two years ago, Walker had an idea. As it began to take form, it was given a name: ‘Stage West.’ The notion was to provide a platform for the talent of Vancouver Island by professionally filming entertainers in performance for a local variant on the talent show—then try to get it on television. A simple premise in theory, but even reaching the post-event stage where there’s a polished pilot product to offer the networks takes hundreds of hours of grafting.

I attended Walker’s first Stage West event at the Malaspina University-College Theatre back in April, where five cameras each captured three hours of footage of

the evening’s proceedings. The performers lined up for the pilot shoot were noted singer-songwriters Gerry Barnum, Kenneth Ermter and Deborah Ermter, comedian Wayne Hupallo and magician Kirklan Lum. It was fascinating to watch their performances on the theatre’s projection screen as a three-camera live mix, a fair approximation of how the wrapped project might look for a TV audience.

Not wishing to disrupt the intense preparations in the week leading up to the production, I opted to meet Walker at Loco’s Studio after the fact, keen to learn more about what it is to stage such an event and what’s ahead for the concept from hereon in. I caught him in the process of mixing sound from Gerry Barnum’s five-song set, but forced him into a break by asking him when Saturday’s show had actually “started” for him, his talented camera crew and assisting volunteers.

“On Thursday evening we were here packing up the studio,” he began, and I sensed an epic response forthcoming. “On Friday morning at 8:00am we were in the



Photo: Paul Rodgers | Dan Connaroe

Roots Musician Gerry Barnum and his band take a break from Stage West rehearsals.



Photo: David Morrison

Chris Walker, creator of Stage West

theatre setting up. We set up until around supertime then started to have rehearsals until about ten o'clock. And we were back again at eight-thirty the next day, tweaking the show as much as we could. Then the show was on and the performances ran until ten-thirty or eleven, then—strike!—we take it all down and put it back in the studio. I got out of there at one o'clock."

As I said: long hours. Walker then had to take sound and vision from the night and work at compiling the very best of it to fill up a half hour show. The quality on display and volume of material makes this an unenviable task.

"There's fifteen hours of video," he continues, "from which we must take the best of the best and get it down to twenty-two or twenty-four minutes, which is the standard half hour programme. That would be a good little pilot to start to shop and should be complete a couple of months from now."

Are you keeping track of the hours involved? I've lost count, myself, but remember that the event was staged in April and the likelihood is that Walker is still applying the finishing touches as you read this. It boggles the mind.

When the pilot is finally complete to

LIFE HAS ITS MOMENTS...



Got the job

Conquered my fear of flying

Found Mr. Right

Honeymoon in Bali

Our first housewarming

**Impeccable
PANDORA™ Gifts**

Country Club Center ~ Impeccable Gifts
29-3200 North Island Hwy. Nanaimo, BC • 250 751 8876



eaglequest™
NANAIMO

Learn. Practice. Play.

Eaglequest Junior Summer Camps are underway in July & August for young golfers ages 6-15 yrs. Learn how to play golf in a fun environment! Our golf professionals are all CPGA certified and well-trained to work with juniors, keeping the emphasis on having fun while learning.

Call or visit for more info!

Eaglequest Golf Centre

Open Daily 7am To 10pm 1601 Thatcher Road, Nanaimo

▶ 250 754 1325

▶ www.eaglequestgolf.com

THE NATURAL CHOICE...



JUST IMAGINE PACKAGE

Finally, a resort package tailored for every taste... You design your own Tigh-Na-Mara experience. A 2 night stay with a \$200 'flexi-credit' allowing those who enjoy dining, spa and shopping or a bit of each to enjoy the same package.

Starting from \$378 for a 2 night stay based on double occupancy. Call us for details.



1155 RESORT DRIVE, PARKVILLE, VANCOUVER ISLAND
FOR RESERVATIONS CALL 1-250-248-1838 OR VISIT WWW.TIGH-NA-MARA.COM

Photo: Paul Rodgers | Dan Comarac



Singer-songwriter Kenneth Ernter during Stage West rehearsals.

Walker's satisfaction, the most crucial stage comes next—he has to try to sell it. Of this, he says: “There are some people I know in the television industry—I have some good contacts—so we're going to start at the top and if necessary work our way back, instead of just going local. Sometimes if you just go local, it stays local for a long time and it's hard to break out. I think it's best to start big.”

Although he recognises the Stage West project as a gamble with no guarantees ahead, Walker's determination and passion for getting the talent of Vancouver Island noticed on a wider stage will drive him to take this to its logical conclusion—whatever that may be. He has already invested a tidy sum from his own purse and seems sure to clock up as many hours as dollars spent in completing the project.

Yet long before he knows how this will all turn out for the Stage West brand, Walker is already considering the next one, looking at possible dates and mulling over presentation logistics. He's in it for the long haul, for sure, but what makes this vision of his so impressive is that he's not remotely motivated by the dollar. He may well be financially rewarded at some point down the track, but only if the pilot should be snapped up as a marketable proposition and Stage West becomes a regular gig attracting major sponsorship and backing.

When I was a promoter, the pleasure of sharing music I love with an appreciative or curious audience was immeasurable, regardless of the attendant headaches—so I relate directly to Walker's mentality. I understand exactly why he's doing this and how his head will be full of where he wants to go with it. It becomes an obsessional way of life when you really care, so the least we must hope for is that he reaches those goals. Only then will he be able to rest, it seems.

I headed homeward leaving Walker with Barnum's silky blues filling his headphones as his highly attuned musician's ears continued to seek the slightest imperfection. But in my ears I heard only Walker's softly spoken words, those of a humble star-maker passionately seeking to further the dreams of others.

“It's not about me,” he said. “It's only about the talented people. They all have something to say and so they should be allowed to.”

“Try not to become a man of success, but a man of value.”
—Albert Einstein (1879-1955) ■

For more information, including how to audition for Stage West, contact Chris Walker at Loco's Studio on (250) 729-3822.

Equinox Cafe and Catering



Do you have a special event coming up?

Talk to us about catering.

Whether an intimate dinner party, business luncheon, wedding, retirement party, special birthday, memorial—whatever your need or desire, we can help you create a noteworthy event within your budget.

Equinox Café and Catering ...casual fine dining featuring fresh local products. Reservations advised.

79 Station Street
in the heart of
downtown Duncan.

250.746.6452

www.equinoxcafe.com



ROCKY CREEK WINERY

See us this summer for tours, tastings, and direct sales.

Taste our wines!

★ Ortega & Pinot Gris (released June 1) ★ Pinot Noir ★ Blackberry

Summer Hours: Fridays & Saturdays from 11:00—4:00 or by appointment.

250-668-5614

1854 Myhrest Road,
Cowichan Bay, B.C.



RockyCreekWinery.ca