

Destination Of The Month

A Holiday Trifecta featuring the Florida Botanical Gardens, the Gulf Coast Museum of Art and Heritage Village.

For those of you looking for a little holiday cheer in the coming weeks, you might consider this trio of attractions. Each offers a unique take on the season, providing a jumpstart to your holiday festivities. Additionally, they share a single campus, giving visitors a rare opportunity to explore Pinellas County history, local artists' work and the beauty of the gardens all in one visit.

The Florida Botanical Gardens Illuminated Gardens

Stroll through the brilliant display of more than 425,000 holiday lights each night from 6:00pm until 10:00pm starting Nov. 22. Get there early in the day and enjoy the 30 acres of cultivated gardens and 90 acres of natural landscapes. They allow dogs in the gardens and encourage you to bring a picnic lunch to enjoy during your visit.



Florida Botanical Gardens, 12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo, FL, Tel. (727) 582-2100.

Garden Hours: Open daily from 7 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Admission is FREE

For more information, go to www.fdbg.org.

Heritage Village Seasonal Sensation, Trees & Traditions



Heritage Village will start the holiday season on Dec. 1 with holiday decorations, music and more. More than 28 structures and features fill the Village, some dating back to the mid- to late-19th century. The Village

includes a school, church, railroad depot, sponge warehouse and general store as well as a variety of historic homes. The homes range from the Mc-Mullen-Coachman Log Cabin, the oldest existing structure in the County, to the magnificent Queen Anne-style House of Seven Gables.

Heritage Village, 11909 125th Street N., Largo, FL, Tel. (727) 582-2123.

Hours: Tuesday - Saturday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Sunday 1 - 4 p.m.

Closed Mondays, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.

For more information, go to www.pinellascounty.org/Heritage.

The Gulf Coast Museum of Art Holiday Open House & Ornament Sale

GCMA volunteers will host a Holiday Open House and ornament sale on Wednesday, Dec. 5 from 3:00pm until 5:00pm. Admission to the museum is free during the open house. Holiday ornaments will continue



to be available in the museum gift shop throughout the month of December. If you decide to go at a later date, consider purchasing a museum membership. Benefits include complimentary admission and store discounts to over 50 museums through the Southeastern Reciprocal Program, as well as discounts to local hotel and entertainment venues. Many of the museums in the Reciprocal Program will be featured in upcoming issues.

The Gulf Coast Museum of Art, 12211 Walsingham Rd. Largo, FL, Tel (727) 518-6833.

Museum Hours: Tuesday - Saturday, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Sunday, Noon - 4 p.m. / Mondays - Closed

For more information, go to www.gulfcoastmuseum.org.

For membership information, contact (727) 518-6833 x207.

Where Have All The Albums Gone?

By Jeff O'Kelley

One recent Saturday morning I decided to tackle some work around the house that I had been putting off. To make the tasks a little less boring, I plugged in my portable CD player and reached for one of my favorite selections: The Allman Brothers at Filmore East. Much to my surprise, the CD was not in the case. Without further thought, I reached for a live Stevie Ray Vaughn disc only to find it also empty. Strange! Confusion then turned to horror as I dug through empty case after empty case. John Hiatt, Led Zeppelin, The Beatles, and ZZ Top also seemed to be victims of an awful crime. Bewildered, I sat on the floor among the empty plastic boxes and began to analyze this unbelievable crime. After a few moments, I realized that whoever stole my CDs had taken only the discs and left the cases. Was this meant to conceal the crime and give the criminal time to escape? After some skillful detective work, it dawned on me that I knew the identity of the culprit.

Although it took several minutes of interrogation and threats, my oldest son finally admitted to the crime. As we poured through his CD case, returning lost discs to their plastic homes, I asked why he had only taken the discs and not the cases.

“Who wants all that stuff? I just wanted to listen to the music,” replied this young man who claimed to be my son.

Stunned, I sat back to contemplate his response. Why wouldn't he want the cases? Wouldn't he want the pictures, liner notes and lyrics to the songs? Don't these things deserve the same respect as the music itself? Apparently in today's iPod driven world, the answer is no. The average listener simply wants to find a song that he might like, and download it into his collection of 10,000 MP3 files where it might find it's way into a future play list. He cares nothing about the artist, band members, producers or even the song lyrics. Most people consider music as simply a background track to block out the noise on the subway, provide a distraction during spinning class or establish your personal space on the beach. Although I will concede that many people find a great love song to share with their partner, they will still never fully appreciate the song while knowing little about it. I find it difficult to understand.

At a very young age, I developed a love of music and all things music related. The first record that I can remember owning was “Hello Goodbye” from The Beatles. It was a 45rpm vinyl single that came in a paper sleeve. Even then, I devoured the printed text along with the music. I had to know the name of the producer, the record company name, who

wrote the songs, what was on the “B side”, what year was it released, and anything else that they shared. All of this information seemed to help bring the music to life. Later, with the introduction of albums into my collection, I was thrilled to find a vast treasure trove of facts and information. Printed on the cover, as well as on the paper sleeve inside I found pictures, song lyrics, credits for the musicians, engineers and producers, as well as lots of other great content. All of this information seemed to come directly from the artist and made the albums much more personal, not just pieces of hard vinyl. From this information, I also began to piece together the musical community. Without liner notes, I would have never known that Jackson Browne, David Crosby and Roger McGuinn were all friends. Who would have guessed that Michael Nesmith of The Monkees wrote “Different Drum” which became a hit for Linda Ronstadt? How many of us were close enough to Graham Nash to know that he wrote “Our House” for then girlfriend Joni Mitchell? How about that “Black Magic Woman” by Santana featured 15-year-old guitar prodigy Neal Schon who later provided the amazing guitar sound for rock super-band Journey. This knowledge almost made me feel like a part of their world; sort of an insider.

Albums also exposed listeners to ideas and images that might have been new. Growing up in the Jesse Helms controlled Bible Belt region of the south, albums were my first exposure to many facets of world culture. I learned about LSD and Hire Krishna's from The Beatles, was educated about venereal diseases by Ted Nugent, owned my first nudie poster thanks to Queen, and was frightened by the Satanic implications of AC/DC and Black Sabbath. In the pre-MTV days of music, this music fueled my imagination and lust for knowledge about the world outside my rural North Carolina home.

I'm not naïve enough to think that after reading this column you'll toss all of your CDs in favor of your old record collection. All I am asking is that you put a little more thought into the music that you bring into your world. Take time to learn something about the person who wrote the song that moved you to tears, or at least read the lyrics. Read some of the liner notes to see who played the instruments that brought the songs to life. Check out the pictures so that you might recognize your favorite artist the next time you pass them in the hardware store. You might be surprised at how much more the music means to you once you know a little more about it.

For more articles by Jeff, go to www.indiebandguide.com.