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BY BAO LE-HUU

I refuse to write anything about the hugely anticipated reopening of **Will's Pub**. Seems like every time I do, some complication befalls the place. Poverty's in my background, so I tend to have a death grip on beloved things for fear of them being taken. And I don't wanna jinx this blessed thing even if I'm bursting at the seams.

Aw, fuck it.

Generally speaking, text messages from men don't give me boners. The sole, instantaneous exception, however, is the one I got from Will Walker announcing the pub's Friday opening (Nov. 21). Not surprisingly, the night was a who's who of the local rock scene. Now I'd love to tell you in specific terms how great opening night was but, well, I can't really remember much. And I'd say that pretty much **says it all**. The two most uttered words in this year's pre-turkey lists of blessings will likely be "Will's" and "Pub."

The beat

Orlando keeps me mad busy, but some irresistible action finally pulled me over to the neighboring **Tampa Bay** area scene. Spreading the Orlando gospel in an Ybor City showcase held by Tampa label New Granada were our own **Kingsbury**, and they were warmly appreciated for an excellent performance of their **Calla-on-sedatives** indie rock (Nov. 22, New World Brewery).

Bands speak highly of **New World Brewery**, and it's easy to see why. The spot has good sound, a picturesque indoor-outdoor layout that's remarkably cohesive and an educated beer selection. And the ever-present waft of pizza will have you drooling as much as you're drinking.

My main attraction that night was across the bay in St. Pete, where Florida underground legend **Charlie Pickett** was headlining a Steele Management showcase, one of only three in-state release parties for his new record, **Bar Band Americanus** (Dave's Aqua Lounge). Released by hip twangster imprint Bloodshot Records, the sweltering best-of collection is a tidy, cogent summation of his criminally overlooked career.

To look at him now, you'd think he was just another one of a million old-guy blues-rockers. Listen to his set, however, and you realize he's anything but a tired stereotype. He definitely peddles old-time rock & roll but it's the authentic, dirty stuff, not the dreck **Bob Seger's** singing about. Pickett's sound is soaked in blues, punk and straight-up ramblin' scramblin' rock & roll. It's a cooked-down brew of **Chuck Berry**, the **Rolling Stones** and **R.L. Burnside**. Seriously, dude knows the deal. How many bar rockers have you heard drop **Velvet Underground** covers? Most important, his rock's got danger in it. Even the band's undeniably skilled playing couldn't hide the music's reckless, seedy, **thoroughly American** heart.

As his album title suggests, a bar stage is where Pickett's homespun showmanship shines. The intimacy of Dave's Aqua Lounge afforded a rapport that consisted of taking requests and talking shit to audience members, thrice making my girl red-faced by referring to her as "Gwyneth Paltrow."

As for the venue, Dave's is a must. A **real roadhouse** minus Patrick Swayze and that lame blind guy, this joint is lively, unpretentious and dripping with local color. Plus, its concert calendar is surprisingly smart, boasting notables like Pickett, the **Black Diamond Heavies** and **T-Model Ford** (who play the Social Dec. 8). The up-close setup of the bar makes it a uniquely engaging place to see music.

Speaking of the Heavies, their anticipated show at the Social with Juke Joint Duo was canceled at the last minute due to the passing of Juke Joint member Cedric Burnside's grandmother. Thankfully, a hustle play rescued the Heavies' Orlando appearance (Nov. 19, Uncle Lou's). Actually, considering the grit of their blues-punk, the fantastically unsavory patina of Uncle Lou's was a much more apropos setting. Their organ-groaning workouts are the most rocking you can do **without a guitar**. This set was hot-blooded and **dirrrty**.

This week's dope new find is **Junior Bruce**, a 10-ton outfit that's part local and part DeLand. The DeLand portion? Oh, just some members of **Hope and Suicide**, which certifies their **badass-ness**. Their stoner-riffic river of sludge and doom was heavy and nasty – precisely how I like my metal.

Like H&S, this band is another affirmation that singer **Scott Angelacos** is one of the most menacing voices in metal right now.

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