

MATT THE MUSIC MAN

By Ashley South

We want to introduce you to the man behind the always lively restaurants you are likely already familiar with. Matt is the manager of Potter's Place and Jimmy's Grill in downtown Naperville, as well as Base Camp Pub in the Four Lakes Community in Lisle. These restaurants are locally owned and known for the people watching, as much as for the music scene. We found this is with good reason: Matt Galanes

We chatted at 9am because his days are hectic and long. He tells us, "The start of my day is usually the best time to catch me. Otherwise, I am running around all day trying to keep everything running." Matt has been at Potter's for 10 years. He started out bartending and quickly learned the business side of the house. He became manager in recent years and turned his attention to the music scene at the restaurants.

Growing up in Wheaton, Matt found himself tagging along as the roadie for his older brother's high school band. At 14, his parents negotiated with The Metro for him to set-up his brother's sets. That routine with his brother became part of his identity, and he immersed himself in his new passion to support his brother. During this time, he also began to notice how music impacted the audience. Eventually big in Europe and on tour there, the Waiting Game turned into The Super Happy Fun Club which was a spin-off of the original band that featured the lead singer of Lucky Boys confusion, Matt's brother, and some other local musicians.

For Matt, the correlation between the music and the people it brought together became a formula. The change in scene or style introduced a different subset of people. He thought about how that influence would work within the restaurants and the type of people he wanted to attract to the space. Matt describes his philosophy in the acronym "MALT," which stands for Music, Atmosphere, Lighting, and Temperature. He attributes the long-standing success and yet to be challenged downtown dominance to this thoughtfully cobbled experience.

Potter's has three different experiential zones catering to the full range of residents in Naperville. There's a sports bar in the

“Matt describes his philosophy in the acronym “MALT,” which stands for Music, Atmosphere, Lighting, and Temperature.”



The Walk-Ins Trio(band).
Back patio,
Potter's Place

front with multiple TVs, a patio in the back with an almost beachy feel, and an upstairs lounge. Each has its own identity and client expectations. Because of this, Matt has a full rotation of acts and defined parameters. Entertainment of some kind exists every single day of the week. On Saturday nights, the patio typically hosts an opening band in the early evening followed by a full band in the later hours. Upstairs in the lounge a DJ spins mashups and favorites. Multiple concepts under one roof and certainly a unique venue in that regard.

Jimmy's, on the busiest downtown corner of Washington and Chicago, is our favorite people watching post. We are coming off a summer of brews and as much outdoor dining as possible. Jimmy's does not disappoint. Unlike Potter's, the central focus and real people draw is outside on the front patio. You can relax and peruse the solid draft beer list while relaxing to an eclectic range of live bluegrass to classic rock to slow acoustic melodies by local crooners. The MALT formula is working there too.

Adding in a comment about Base Camp Pub, Matt tells us "Specifically we have had a number of national acts perform over the years including Nathaniel Rateliff, Snoop Dog, Robert Delong, Bob Moses, David Nail, Bad Flower, and many more." We are sad to have missed Snoop and quickly made a note to check the schedule periodically.

Matt's voice lit up when he talked to us about his varied music tastes and acts he has brought to each zone within his purview. Country, techno, blends of music, rockabilly, blues, and more. His passion covers all different types of



Matt Galanes, Manager.
Potter's Place, Jimmy's Grill, and
Base Camp

© Kefie Braga

music. He explained to us his observation that the range serves to evoke nostalgia across the swath of people that may be there on a given day. The music program is there to complement the service, environment, and food.

We asked him how the different music styles are selected for Potter's vs Jimmy's. His philosophy is paramount in this space. Depending on the day and what he is trying to achieve, the music varies. He places himself in the shoes of the visitor and selects what he would want to listen to as a patron on a given day of the week—higher energy on Friday or Saturday, acoustics, solos, and trios during the slower mid-weekdays.

Finally, Matt wrapped up by telling us that Potter's and Jimmy's tries to give a chance to rising talent who can keep an audience entertained for a few hours. He told us about a local doctor who taught himself guitar, a 19-year-old DJ who came in and asked for Matt to give him a listen, and rotating local downtown neighbor residents who play everything from Elvis to Sinatra to Cage

the Elephant. In a few months, they plan to host a few open mic and open format DJ sessions.

Potter's and Jimmy's: They have the downtown music scene cornered and curated with care. Look for Matt and give him a thumbs up for keeping the music scene in downtown lively. We encourage you to take a new look at the local standbys pumping out a reliably solid experience.



Potter's, 29 W Jefferson Ave
Jimmy's Grill, 245 S Washington St