

Fine Line Music Cafe is 25: Owner Dario Anselmo on its past and future



Photo by Erik Hess
Ladytron at Fine Line Music Cafe last year.

A quarter of a century in any business is no small thing, but 25 years in the music business is really a thing of beauty. For its silver anniversary, the Fine Line Music Cafe -- a longtime staple in the the downtown music scene and Twin Cities tradition -- is throwing itself a quiet little party.

Fine Line friends Tim Mahoney and the Brian David Band will be celebrating the anniversary this evening at 8 p.m. We caught up with Fine Line owner Dario Anselmo to chat about some of the history of the club and best memories.

Gimme Noise: *You purchased the club in 1993, and you've been part of the music community for the past nineteen years. What is the biggest change you've seen in the Twin Cities music scene?*

Dario Anselmo: It would probably be a combination... The amount of clubs. There weren't as many when I came in [at the Fine Line], and the structure and the cost to do music has really gone up. There's a lot of bands [now], but the actual cost, from a club standpoint, has changed so much -- meaning they've gone up. It's an expensive business to be in, and there's a lot that goes into it. It's definitely a bigger challenge than it was 18 or 19 years ago. There's more from the weekend standpoint -- there are more places that play live music than full-time live music clubs... You've got so many places. It's a bigger challenge.

GN: *The Fine Line has seen a lot of great artists in its 25 years. Tell me about some of your favorites.*

DA: Probably a couple that come up off the top of my head my favorite shows that have taken me to a different place... The Proclaimers [in 2008], from Scotland, that was a great show. We had a lot of local scots and players out at the club... it was a little bit of Scotland in Minneapolis. They were just a fun bar band from Scotland, but it was nice to see.

Some of the unplugged shows I've seen were fun to do... There a lot of artists that have come in that were maybe larger than the room, like when Adam Levine from Maroon 5 came in and did an acoustic set, that was larger than life at the time. The Pixies coming in from the other side in the pre-grunge scene to kind of kick off their world tour at the club [in 2004], they practiced at the Fine Line and shot part of their reunion movie called *loud QUIET loud*. Those are just a few different examples.

GN: *If you could chose one night at the Fine Line to do all over again, which would it be?*

DA: Probably one of the first times I saw a group called Lowen and Navarro. They were a really neat singer-songwriter duo. "Walking on the Wire" was one of their songs, a great Simon-and-Garfunkel-meets-the-current-age harmony, and the way they connected with their audience... It was the first time I'd seen them. It was just a neat experience, and it turned me into a lifelong fan, and I think everyone who came down here was just so moved by those guys.

GN: *What is something about the Fine Line's history that most people wouldn't know?*

DA: It was actually designed to be a singer-songwriter jazz club. I think the modern au-

dience thinks it's meant to be this showcase room. It's become a rock room that plays everything from Foster the People to Lady Gaga to the Pixies, but it was actually sort of meant to be a jazz club, sort of laid back.

GN: *Let's jump another 25 years into the future. Where do you see yourself and the Fine Line?*

DA: [Laughs] Well, I just turned 50 this year, believe it or not, so hopefully in 25 years I'll be some place warmer, in Key West, listening to music.

I think the Fine Line... it'll be part of a larger music scene. I see it being here, but it being part of something else, to make sure it's got an extended life. Maybe part of two or three clubs, not necessarily a national promoter, just a place that makes sure that people have a unique experience.

Join the Fineline as it celebrates a healthy 25 years of business this evening with special guests Tim Mahoney and the Brian David Band. 8 p.m. \$5 cover.