

FULL HOUSE



MAGNOLIA PEARL: FOUND EXPERIENCE

There I was, immersed in what I call a “found experience.” Hovering in breezy shade, buoyed by fellow music travelers. Ten feet away, Max Baca of Los Texmaniacs plucked his bajo sexto. Accordion legend Flaco Jimenez added lilting counterpoint. Asleep At The Wheel guitarist Johnny Nichol filled in with tasteful guitar riffs.

It was 7 p.m. On a Monday. In The Texas Hill Country. That’s the point, according to John Gray.



“What you witnessed was people coming together over music,” said Gray, who with Robin Brown, is owner of the fashion company Magnolia Pearl. “It was a celebration of life.”

This scenario unfolded at the soft opening of the Magnolia Pearl Theater Silo, a new music/theater/art venue, tucked among the trees behind their distinctive rustic three-story store/national headquarters on Hwy 290 five miles east of Fredericksburg.

“Robin and I have both been music lovers all of our lives,” Gray said. “We always wanted to create an intimate but very professional venue for music.”

So they spent the last couple of years building it. The distinctive steel and wood silo is a fully realized performance area, with green room, living room, sleeping quarters, full kitchen, and a covered stage

looking out on a commons area facing the retail store. The main building itself exudes the Magnolia Pearl brand—a white-washed three-story “German grain barn-style” structure fashioned of reclaimed 100-year-old hand-hewed wood columns and beams.

It’s all part of Magnolia Pearl, a 17-year-old company that creates clothing in a distinct style.

“Robin builds clothing for style and fashion first, but for comfort and lifestyle as well,” Gray said. “We embrace the individuality and beauty of women of all shapes and sizes and ages.”

Music and fashion go hand in hand, according to Gray, who makes it clear that Magnolia Pearl is more than a fashion line.

“Magnolia Pearl is a lifestyle,” he said. “Music is a part of that lifestyle. Theater is a part of that lifestyle. Music touches deeply in us.”

While Magnolia Pearl is an international company, with 120 stores around the world, it began in Bandera, and Fredericksburg has become their headquarters.

“We love and have a huge passion for Fredericksburg,” Gray said. “We love the city, we love the architecture, we love that big red rock. Plus the cleanliness, the aura, the feel, the altitude, the natural gravity that drew us here.”



The aura on the grounds is a palpable thing. Seeing folks I hadn’t seen in awhile, and folks I might never see again, coming together to hear uplifting music.

“Robin thinks of it as ‘coming home,’” Gray said. “Everything we do, we try to create a big family. This brings old and young together, and allows us to set aside differences and just be in a peaceful, joyful, safe place. It’s a very positive thing.”

At this point, no regular schedule of music performances has been announced. Gray enjoys a strong relationship to the Texas music scene, and hints he might feature folk, fiddle, and country music, but also reggae, rock and roll, even yodeling. His goal is to encourage “great and aspiring music” for performers who typically don’t have access to an audience.



Back outside, the magic and music continued with Donavon Frankenreiter, the Spotify surf/soft rock phenomenon from Hawaii, who also serves as international ambassador for the Magnolia Pearl clothing line.



As I sipped Hye Cider and burished old acquaintances, it reminded me of why people come to the Texas Hill Country in the first place, and why many stay. On any given day, you can stumble upon “found experiences” in unlikely places—a combo playing German dance hall tunes at a shooting fest, a local band

rolling down Main on a parade float, or a concert by a world-class entertainer in someone’s backyard. There is a pickers circle every night, somewhere.

The Magnolia Pearl Theater Silo is now one of those experiences—the kind you never knew you missed until it was created.

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HAPPY HOLIDAYS

