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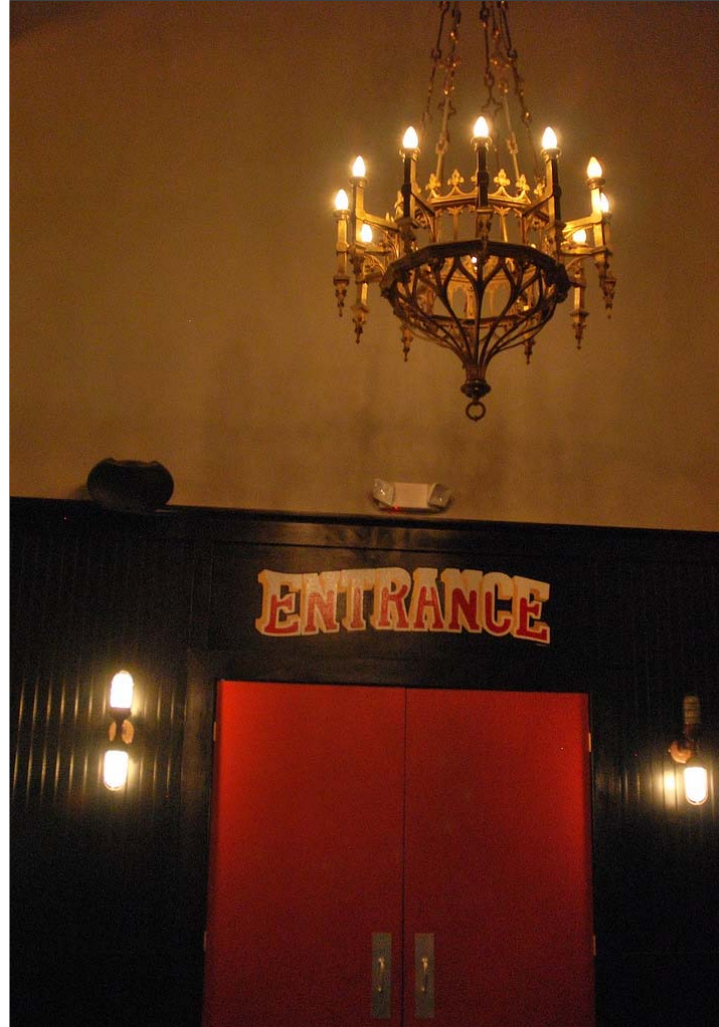
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Weeks Turns 21 | REVIEW: Union Transfer's Grand Opening | ROCK TAWK: QandA With Sharon Van Ett

## REVIEW: Union Transfer's Grand Opening



[Photo by Swollen Fox via Flickr]



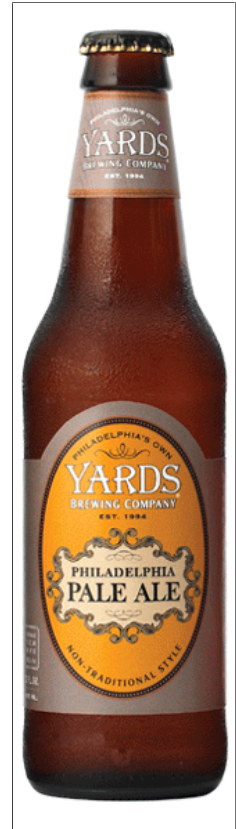
**BY COLONEL TOM SHEEHY** In the year 2011, there are more talent buyers putting more musical acts on live stages in Philadelphia than any time in recent memory. Last night, yet another venue opened. It's called Union Transfer and located at 1026 Spring Garden Street, the high-ceiling-ed space formerly occupied by the dubiously-named Spaghetti Warehouse. The band Clap Your Hands Say Yeah were the headlining act, but the real star of the show was the venue itself. Everything about this new locale is exquisite. From the beautiful wooden bar with its carvings and etchings to the arches suspended across the ceiling, to the multi-level balconies which give concert goers the choice of numerous perches with excellent sight lines to choose from. The attention to detail is quite impressive as well. Much of the building's early 20th Century accents and accoutrements remain intact, lending the space a certain storied gravitas. The steps leading to the upper balconies are tastefully lit and the signage for the coat check area and the immaculate rest rooms — a rarity at rock clubs — is at once utilitarian and artfully cool.

There are a total of three bars, all of which are strategically placed: one in the front room, one in the back of the music room, and a very cool getaway bar upstairs where one can go if you just need a break from it all.

The staff are all very professional and courteous. Everyone, from the folks who greet you at the door, to the bartenders, and the security personal exude an air of



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helpful courtesousness. No rock star attitudes were detected At Union Transfer; that type of demeanor belongs on the stage and nowhere else. Speaking of the stage, Union Transfer may just have the most unique one in town, for it can be moved to accommodate different capacities. At full capacity the room holds 1,000, but if a more intimate setting is desirable, the stage can be rolled forward, to make the room to fit just 600. Needless to say, production, lighting and sound are all top notch. Reportedly, a half million dollars was invested in the sound system alone.



The management team that put this elegant operation together, is a triad of successful business personae: The Bowery Presents, an independent promotion company based in New York City; Philadelphia's own Sean Agnew of R5 Productions; and Avram Hornik and Mark Fichera of Four Corners Management. Given the New York/Philly hybrid of Union Transfer's management, it was somehow fitting that the venue's maiden voyage was helmed by none other than Clap your Hands Say Yeah, a New York band whose singer is Philly homeboy Alec Ounsworth. Clap Your Hands Say Yeah took the stage to the gentle-on-my-mind strains of Willie Nelson's "Blue Skies" piped over the PA, just one day after the release of its third album, Hysterical (Anti). CYHSY was in stellar form, playing in front of a very exuberant opening night audience that included exactly one mosher (who even does that anymore? And why?) A few songs into the set, Ounsworth noted that it was good to be home. Indeed. Let it be known that the rock and the roll has a 'luxe new crib in the City of Brotherly Love. Long may it rock.

*Tom Sheehy is a scholar at University of Pennsylvania working toward his doctorate in 20th Century American History. Previously, Mr. Sheehy worked in the music business for thirty years doing publicity and marketing for record companies, radio stations, and concert promoters.*



This entry was posted on Thursday, September 22nd, 2011 at 11:57 am and is filed under News . You can follow any responses to this entry through the RSS 2.0 feed. You can leave a response, or trackback from your own site.

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