



Left: The marquee at the Senator Theatre was still blank as of June 24, but JMax Productions shows are scheduled to return to the downtown landmark starting in September.

PHOTO BY JASON CASSIDY

Above: HIRIE on stage at the Senator Theatre in February 2020—one of the last JMax Productions shows before the pandemic shut down live music.

PHOTO BY KEN PORDES

Do the artists seem ready to return?

Yeah. A year ago, there were a lot of artists who seemed like they were very COVID-concerned. A lot of these events that we had scheduled for spring of 2020, summer of 2020, they postponed into the fall [of 2020] or spring of this year thinking it's only going to be another three months or whatever. They [didn't] want anyone touching their food, they [didn't] want loaders. [Now,] the contracts with all the COVID restrictions, they're pretty much gone.

Have people been buying tickets?

Yeah, like crazy. But we also get people—it's a much smaller percentage—who say, "I'm not comfortable going to a show."

We talked a year ago when things were closing down, and you said at the time that this was all new territory and you had no backup plan. What did you end up doing to survive?

To be honest, I wish I could go back in time and know that business was going to

be down. I would have taken up a hobby, I would have gotten another degree, maybe gotten a real estate license or whatever.

For me, I always had this three-month window where I thought things were going to change. I had no clue that it was going to last for 18 months. I kept working with the mindset that I'm three months away from doing shows. So, every time we'd postpone shows, I'm booking more shows or changing the date from Tech N9ne in May of 2020 to Tech N9ne in October of 2020 to Tech N9ne in April of 2021 to Tech N9ne in October of 2021. We kept having to change fliers, change tickets, reissue tickets. We never stopped moving in that regard.

I have [a friend] in the business who said, "You know, I'm going to open a food cart." His food cart did so well, he actually opened a second food cart. He pivoted; I just kept thinking, *we're just a couple months away*. I stayed the course and went into a lot of debt. At the same time, my yard looks really good.

Did you get any help from the Save Our Stages legislation and the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant program?

I checked tonight (June 23) and I'm still in the "submitted" stage; we've been in the submitted stage for like four weeks now. That money was [approved] back in November, and people, for the most part, haven't received the money. As far as I have seen and been told, based on the number of applicants and the grant amount, there's plenty of money. It would be really nice if they got that money out.

How are you feeling about the future of live music? Are you optimistic?

Absolutely. It's all going to come back. We'll figure out a way to make it work. What else am I going to do? I'm 52 years old, I have tattoos on my hands; I'm not going to go get a part-time job. This is what I do, this is what we do; we'll figure it out. Once it starts back up, we'll be right back where we were. □

Frontman Jimmy Adkins during Jimmy Eat World's Sept. 27, 2017, show at the Senator Theatre.

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