

NO DEPRESSION

by Hillary Saunders
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Sarah Shook



This Must Be the Place

When it comes to making and performing music, the ambiance can completely elevate the experience.

The best gear, newest gadgets, and perfect sound system all contribute to the ideal music-making experience, but many players credit more ethereal, even spiritual qualities — the feeling of home, the ability to be vulnerable, or the relationships formed — that make a place special. *No Depression* checked in with nine roots musicians who were delighted to write about the studios, festivals, theaters, bars, and more that matter most to them.

— Hilary Saunders

Sarah Shook & The Disarmers

The Cave • Chapel Hill, North Carolina

The Disarmers have traveled the world playing sold-out shows in Los Angeles, New York City, Chicago, a historic theater in Stockholm, and a swanky gay nightclub in Madrid. We've been welcomed in ornate listening rooms in Norway and main stages at American festivals with lighting rigs that cost more than all my earthly possessions. Yet my favorite venue in the world is a 74-capacity room in a dingy old basement in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

The Cave has been a safe haven for weirdos, outliers, artists, musicians, and LGBTQ+ people from all walks of life from the day it first opened its doors in 1968. The back room boasts a pool table

and a jukebox and joins to the front room by a horrifyingly narrow hallway. The front room contains a long wooden bar attended by ancient bar stools, a couple booths, and a "stage": a large, dusty rug that has seen its fair share of spilled drinks and amps that have caught fire.

If you're a non-native lucky enough to stumble on this gem in your travels, as long as you treat the bartender and fellow patrons with respect, you'll be welcomed. And for many locals (myself included), The Cave serves as a second home, a place to reset and settle, and to catch up with your fellow locals who have also sought the comfort of the wooden bar, low,

plastered, cave-like ceiling, and luck-of-the-draw band of the night.

As we inch toward normalcy, The Cave is often on my mind; the notion of being able to return to my home away from home on a whim for a Topo Chico and a few rounds of pool feels like a promise too good to keep to myself. Our small scrappy local venues that have toughed out the worst this pandemic has served up are more important to our communities than ever before, and I'm convinced if you haven't yet found a home away from home in your own community, it's there. Waiting for you to discover it and love it in all its dive-y glory. — *Sarah Shook*

Sarah Shook & The Disarmers' third album, Nightroamer, was released Feb. 18 via Thirty Tigers.