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Sizzling (midweek) nights

Jenn Smith

Thursday, Aug. 20 As it happens in the summertime, my weekends have become preoccupied with cookouts, road trips and late-**night** bonfires with friends. Last weekend was no exception, filled with two Hawaiian luau-themed birthday parties. So I've turned to weeknights in search of nightlife, and found that the offerings in the Berkshires are hardly disappointing.

Monday **night** may have been one of the most fun and most beautiful **nights** this summer.

Just before 6:30 p.m., as the hot sun just began to wane, I made my way to the rooftop of the Greystone Building at the corner of North Street and Maplewood Avenue. From the ground level, passers-by could see people near the roof's edge, and hear pop and funk tunes wafting from the party above.

This unusual celebration was the kick off of the Word X Word Festival, and included about 60 guests who were constantly coming and going. There was wine and cheese, sparkling water and finger sandwiches, fresh flowers and the most beautiful views of the city's roofs, steeptops and hills.

Party guests and performers mingled as DJ BFG managed to turn the southwest portion of the roof into an impromptu dance floor.

"This needs to happen more often," I heard more than a dozen guests say. I couldn't agree more, but realistically, it has its limitations.

Back on ground, I headed over to Barrington Stage Company's Stage 2, a partner of Word X Word for the opening **night** of spoken word and song.

A thrilled-to-bits Jim Benson, creator and collaborator for the festival welcomed more than 90 people to the sold-out show.

Headlining spoken word poet Taylor Mali opened the show and had the audience roaring with laughter with original pieces "Falling in Love is Like Owning a Dog" and "The the impotence of proofreading."

Folks also got a rise from singer/songwriter/guitarist David Dondero with his lithe lyrics of songs like "South of the South" and "Not Everybody Loves Your Doggy Like You Do."

Closing the show, return artists The Low Anthem played their haunting melodies and multi-instrumental music until about 11:30 p.m.

I left just before the latter played to catch part of a punk rock show at The Room at Rebel Sound Records on lower North Street.

Though there were about 15 people there at most, The Room still filled a Monday **night** with a Saturday **night** sound from five bands.

I caught The Ignorant, a Los Angeles-based outfit that blends old school punk with a little garage and some surf rock riffs.

Closing the \$7 show was The Poncherellos, the band of Rebel Sound owner Andy Poncherello. The grungy slacker punk mood was set with a smoke machine and hazy light reflecting off The Room's red walls. A contrast to Word X Word, this show was sweaty, smelly, yet true to the artform.

The best part about Monday **night**'s festivities was the people. They came out in all ages, from teenagers to the over-50 crowd. All seemed on their better behavior, whether it be helping a lady down the stairs from the rooftop or giving a guy a hand setting up an amp.

As far as other **midweek** music and happenings go, there are several venues to visit. Here, a sampling of some of the newer events:

n Last **night**, and continuing on Wednesdays from 10 p.m. to 1 a.m., DJ Jerrid spins electronica and house music for "Do it right Wednesday **Night**" at the Lenox Garage, a new hotspot on Franklin Street in Lenox (across from Prime Restaurant).

n Frescos, a new pizza place on West Housatonic Street in Pittsfield has started booking bands on Thursday **nights** and into the weekend.

n On East Housatonic Street in Dalton, Thursday karaoke can be found tonight at The Depot.

n Friends Grille in Pittsfield will host WUPE radio deejays and a rum tasting with Don Q tonight.

n Out in Lenox, Firefly goes acoustic every Thursday **night**, no cover.

n In another new venture, Berkshire Art Kitchen on Main Street in Great Barrington will host the original sounds of Trice Atchison and John Clarke beginning at 8 tonight.



So though the days are growing shorter, there is still plenty of sizzle to the Berkshire summer **nights**.

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