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Eyedrum May Soon Call It Quits

Financial straits snare Atlanta's longest-running all-volunteer nonprofit arts space

ATLANTA — Facing a heavy rent burden and ever-increasing operating expenses, Eyedrum's board of directors held an emergency meeting Sunday, July 11, to consider the survival of the longtime art and music organization.

The options are few. They include a significant decrease in rent, bringing on other Atlanta-based arts organizations to sublet part of the 6,0000-square-foot space, a move to a smaller space, or an end to the award-winning venue altogether.

Having just celebrated 10 years in October 2008, the demise of Atlanta's longest-running alternative art and music space would be a huge loss to the Atlanta community. Eyedrum consistently has been a nurturing ground for creativity and progressive thinking in that time.

The Eyedrum music archive, the gallery's greatest asset next to the people involved, features more than 1,000 shows recorded live over the past 10 years. It is one of the few venues that features – built-out by members of the all-volunteer board – three visual art gallery spaces, and a performance space with a professional-quality sound system with multi-track recording capability.

Eyedrum secured a \$30,000 Warhol Foundation curatorial grant in 2006, and is a 10-year Best of Atlanta winner in both music and art categories (*Creative Loafing*).

These accomplishments were achieved all while operating debt-free – yet another point of achievement considering the nontraditional nature of the organization, and limited grant and sponsorship funding.

The board plans to attempt a negotiation with its landlord, Braden Fellman, later this week, and will reconvene no later than July 26 to discuss any developments on rent reduction, and to consider proposals from other arts organizations. Arts organizations and investors who are interested in partnering with Eyedrum should contact Vice Chairman Allen Welty Green at agmedia@mindspring.com.

Any donations received through Eyedrum's website (www.eyedrum.org) will be directed toward operating expenses. And while such donations are greatly appreciated, the urgency and severity of Eyedrum's financial burden cannot be overstated. Without a hefty reduction in overhead costs, a major move – physically or in terms of the organization's identity – is unavoidable.

Started in 1998, Eyedrum is a nonprofit organization developing an interdisciplinary approach to the arts by incorporating a wide range of contemporary art, music and new media in its gallery space. The gallery is operated entirely by volunteers, and supported through memberships and donations. It has been recognized internationally as well as locally by Atlanta's Office of Cultural Affairs and within the community at large for its advancement of innovation.