

AnTekes ready for final gig at Peabody's

Greg Mullin 10:56 a.m. EDT July 21, 2016



(Photo: submitted)

With the closing of popular Birmingham diner [Peabody's Restaurant](http://www.peatobys.com) [imminent](http://www.peatobys.com) ([/story/news/local/birmingham/2016/07/08/peatobys-restaurant-close-end-july/86867622/](http://www.peatobys.com)), one of its regular entertainment acts was asked to squeeze in one final gig.

Don Carney, lead guitarist of The AnTekes, said the band is crafting a special set list for its finale at the restaurant. He won't reveal the songs just yet, but hints that they'll rock hard — just not *too* hard.

"I'm going to work hard to make sure that the crowd doesn't carry off the furniture Friday night, so that they can operate normally for Saturday," Carney said. "We'll rock hard enough to get through the night, but we want to leave the place standing so that there's something there for Saturday night."

Since fall of 2007, the AnTekes — known for playing 50s, 60s and 70s rock — have performed 4-6 times a year at the Woodward Avenue restaurant.

They regularly played on Saturday nights, but the final show will be Friday, July 29, because the Girls Night Out duo was already scheduled for Saturday, July 30 — the restaurant's final night in business.

Bigger crowds

At first, AnTekes performed in the bar area. As the crowd size and number of band members increased, they relocated to the more spacious main dining room where the windows face Woodward.

"That's great because it allows the music from the band to be heard in the bar; it also allows people to go to bar to escape if they're so inclined," he said, laughing. "It also filters upstairs — so you could eat and listen, and people would come down after dining upstairs and sit around and enjoy the band as we moved into the later part of the evening."

Carney — who served as Birmingham mayor, mayor pro tem and city commissioner from 2001-2009 — said they originally started playing at 8 p.m. but eventually moved the first set up to 7 p.m.

"As time as progressed we expanded into a little bit of jazz that would be appropriate for early evening while people are eating — and then we would break into the rock and roll when people got to dessert," he said.

The AnTekes are a dance band, and Peabody's is known as an affordable upscale restaurant — not a nightclub.

"Peabody's, they don't discourage it, but other than a few dancers in the bar once in a while they really don't have dancing," Carney said. "But when we play, usually by the second set, we have dancing all night. It ranges from 5-6 people to many, many nights where the whole room has gotten into one of those chain dances where they wander around the room — it's just crazy; you can't believe it."

A few years ago, a customer danced on the table.

"So we told Peabody's they were going to have to put up a sign that said 'no dancing on tables.' And people can't believe this because Peabody's is generally an older crowd, but it changes when we're there because we draw contemporaries that like this kind of music. It's a whole different ballgame."

'Wonderful run'

Susan Peabody, who runs the family business with her two sisters, Nancy and Barbara, announced the closing date in a brief statement Friday. The sisters have been an integral part of the restaurant ever since their father Jim Peabody opened it in 1975.

The Alden Development Group purchased the restaurant at 34965 Woodward, with plans to redevelop the site as a five-story mixed-use building. The proposed \$30 million project will include two floors of residential, plus office and retail space and two floors of underground parking.

But for many people, the memories of good food and good tunes will linger.

"Peabody's was great," Carney said. "It was local. It's been a great venue for so many different people. Reasonably priced, easy to access, good food, just a great atmosphere," Carney said. "The bar is a wonderful place to stop and meet friends and have lunch or a nightcap. I don't know how we're ever going to replace that in Birmingham; it's a sad thing."

Carney said the relationship was great for both band and restaurant.

"This opened up a window for us and a window for them, it's painful for both of us to say goodbye. It's been a wonderful run, it's just very sad to see an institution passing," Carney said.

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