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**Chuck Bennett: Society**

## Music Hall parties in the '20s



When guests arrived to Music Hall's Cars and Stars party on Friday, they were transported back in time as the downtown Detroit center for performing arts became the Cotton Club for the evening, complete with flappers, gangsters and the music of the era. The location, once part of Detroit's Paradise Valley, was alive and well.

Outside the venue, young children hawked vintage-looking newspapers that were actually the evening's program. A 1920s Ford Model T Absopure Delivery Truck was parked in front.

VIP ticket holders were treated to an action-packed evening with tap dancers, singers, musicians, and the Cab Calloway Orchestra. The entertainment was extraordinary with great musicians (Alvin Waddles and Ralphe Armstrong) and great dancers (including a bevy of local tappers).

Music Hall president, Vince Paul, dressed in tails and top hat, was the emcee, quoting F. Scott Fitzgerald all night. WDMV news anchor Rhonda Walker and celebrated fashion photographer Boswell judged the guests on the best period costume (which was the requested attire on the invitation). At least half the guests wore costumes instead of traditional gowns and tuxedos. The winner, Elizabeth Head of Ann Arbor, coordinated getting her hair cut into the bob of the era with donating the discarded hair to the charity, Locks of Love.

Edmund T. Ahee Jewelry Co. created a one-of-a-kind white gold, diamond and ruby logo pin for auction that Maggie Allesee won. Robert DuMouchelle of DuMouchelle Art Galleries ran the auction, which took place during dinner.

General admission guests partied at a "speakeasy" inside the Music Hall's Jazz Café on the lower level. Drinks were served in coffee mugs, as they did back in the day to hide the hooch. The place ended up getting "raided," which was Music Hall's way of moving the supporter patrons from their speakeasy party up to the mezzanine for the show.

The Cab Calloway Orchestra with C. Calloway Brooks, grandson of Cab, was the entertainment, with an outstanding performance from David Greene as Louis Armstrong. And the fun just kept coming. Party coordinator, Music Hall's Laura Raisch, led a team of dancers and kids from the mezzanine, leading the supporter level patrons down onto the main floor for the encore "This Joint is Jumpin'" from the Broadway musical "Ain't Misbehavin.'" All 300 guests danced all over the stage and main floor platform.

Chuck Bennett is a Metro Detroit freelance writer who covers fashion and society. Follow him on Facebook.

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Channel 4 News anchor Rhonda Walker, Boswell Hardwick of Oak Park and Laura Raisch of Royal Oak (Photo by Ricardo Thomas / The Detroit News)




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