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Aerosmith's old apartment building in Allston is first site of Boston Music Trail

Posted by Matt Rocheleau November 9, 2012 12:21 PM

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(Globe staff photo / Bill Greene)

Tom Hamilton and Steven Tyler and their mates from Aerosmith play a show outside 1325 Commonwealth Ave. in Allston, where they use to live.

By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

Steve Nelson said that when he bumped into Aerosmith bassist Tom Hamilton in Boston five years ago, they had a conversation that ultimately led Hamilton and his bandmates to secretly plan the [free concert Monday](#) that drew an estimated 30,000 people to watch the rockers perform outside their old apartment building in Allston.

Nelson runs the [Music Museum of New England](#), a volunteer-run nonprofit that, so far, exists only on-line, but is about have its name preserved on a plaque that was dedicated at Monday's concert and will soon be hung on the apartment building at 1325 Commonwealth Ave. The plaque will mark the first site of the Boston Music Trail that Nelson and others are working to create.

In 2007, Nelson was at a music expo helping to man a small tabletop exhibit providing information about his newly launched local music museum organization.

“When who comes walking down the aisle but Tom Hamilton.” Nelson recalled

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He showed Hamilton a photo of a marker that had been hung earlier that year on a building in the South End that used to house the Boston Tea Party rock club. Nelson, who managed the club for a couple of years in the late 1960s, had worked with the Bostonian Society to hang that plaque, which spawned the idea to start the music museum venture.

Nelson said that the Aerosmith bassist then told him: “Well, we ought to put a marker on the place in Boston where we first got together.”

Nelson agreed to take him up on the offer. He envisioned a smaller-scale ceremony than what took place Monday.

“We originally planned for a marker and to maybe get the band there for photo op,” he said.

But then the band’s management took over, including actively planning the event for about two years, keeping most details within close quarters, he said. “They ran with it and turned it into a huge thing.”

“It turned out to be this mega event, which was kind of cool. But more than we had ever expected,” he said. “Aerosmith and the city ran that event. We were kind of the catalyst at the beginning, but it just became something huge. We were really just along for the ride.”

He literally rode along Monday in one of seven Duck Boats that brought the band, media and guests from the TD Garden in the North End to Aerosmith’s old apartment in Allston. The entourage of amphibious vehicles was ushered through midday Boston traffic by 10 police motorcycles.

The band played atop the back of a wall-less tractor trailer, shutting down six lanes of traffic and MBTA service on the B line for hours. Members of the New England Patriots, including quarterback Tom Brady and owner Robert Kraft, introduced the musicians as fans stood on their tip-toes in the street, hung out windows, clutched fire escapes and peered from rooftops to catch a glimpse.

“The band seemed really relaxed. They were having a good time and I think it really meant a lot to them, personally,” Nelson said. “They were just digging the energy of the crowd, waving to people hanging out the windows – it was really

a fun scene.”

The Music Museum of New England has received grant funding from the Music Drives Us Foundation to install six plaques outside local buildings that have particular historical significance in the world of music.

The locations will start the formation of the Boston Music Trail.

The hope is that, once more locations are marked and once the museum finishes revamping its website, “People will be able to go around and see where these places were and log onto our website, presumably from their smartphones while their walking, and see what happened here, listen to music clips, look at photos, etcetera, etcetera,” Nelson said.

And, Nelson said he hopes that the momentum from Monday’s celebration will propel the music trail to grow quickly and plans to seek additional funding so the trail can extend beyond the six stops they have money for so far.

Nelson said the next plaque is slated to be hung outside the House of Blues behind Fenway Park.

That commercial strip along Landsdowne Street has been home to numerous other music venues and clubs over the past four and a half decades, including: Axis, Avalon, Spit and Metro. He said a ceremony there is still being planned and will likely not be held until the spring, at the earliest.

But, he said future plaque unveilings might not be as grand as the Aerosmith show.

“We set the bar really high.” he said. There’s no way we could match that again. Unless something changes in the next few years, that will probably be the biggest event we have.”

Nelson declined to say what other locations in Boston are being eyed for plaques.

“They’re not all clubs or apartments,” he said. “Some may be radio station locations, for example.”

And, the museum’s focus includes all music genres.

“It’s certainly not just rock n roll,” said Nelson. “We want to cover jazz, blues, folk, classic. Boston is such a diverse city when it comes to music.”

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