

HALL OF FAME



FERNE CAULKER



The irresistible force of African-influenced dance, Caulker created a nationally unique dance company that has endured, training countless dancers and musicians while entertaining Milwaukeeans for decades. Caulker has time and again proved the ability of art to change lives and promote cultural understanding.

SPRECHER



Opened in 1985, Sprecher was brewing small-batch, artisanal beer long before “micro-breweries” became all the rage. The brewery has done us proud by winning numerous prestigious awards and has perhaps done a few of us in from time to time with a mighty fine selection of craft brews. A worthy scion to our brewing heritage.

MARK BELLING



Long before Sykes, there was Belling, the original right wing talk radio guy. He’s cranky and can sink into demagoguery, but he’s philosophically consistent, even if it means attacking a Republican. And he has insights on the news. Love him or hate him, Belling still gets high ratings, and he’s become as much a part of Milwaukee as I-94, which generates most of his listeners.

KOPP'S CUSTARD



The drive-in that's worth blowing your diet for, the “flavor of the day” sign an exuberant symbol of carbohydrate drunkenness. A common Milwaukee memory: nights spent sitting in the Kopp's parking lot, bathed in moonlight and butter pecan. Kopp's has the chameleon's ability to be modern and classic, not bad for a 56-year-old business with outposts on three sides of town.

SANFORD "SANDY" D'AMATO



Co-owner of the eponymously named East Side restaurant (plus French siblings Coquette Café and Harlequin Bakery), the James Beard award winner has honed Milwaukee's palate for good food - slow, seasonal food that's less about quantity than quality, more about substance than style, though there's plenty of style. Our closest thing to a celebrity chef (with none of the *enfant terrible* attitude), D'Amato isn't just in a class by himself. He is class.

ATOMIC RECORDS



Always on top of the underground, Atomic Records has been Milwaukee's window into what is really going on in music for 21 years. While Web sites like iTunes, Myspace and Pitchfork have moved in on some of the East Side record store's niche, this store remains the undisputed vortex of independent music, hosting amazing in-store performances, helping bring unlikely touring acts to town, supporting local music and, of course, filling its racks with the best of the fringe.

BOB REITMAN



Poet, underground newspaper founder, Dylan junkie, Reitman once deconstructed “Abbey Road” on-air to prove why “Paul is dead.” Though best known for this long stint at WTKI-FM, Reitman's four-decade FM career has been an anagram of call letters. Yet he's done more than entertain. He has advocated and educated. When new talent emerged, Reitman hyped it. When diagnosed with prostate cancer, Reitman went public to build awareness. He retires in December as King of the Airwaves.

ALTERRA



Embracing our industrial past yet symbolizing the changing city, Alterra created a brand that is a forward-looking celebration of the city's rich history. The company opened its first store in 1994 as chain coffee shops began spreading across the country and has flourished against the odds, with a phenomenal product and an impeccable sense of style.

VIOLENT FEMMES



It's a little weird seeing gentrified middle-agers singing first-person about adolescent sexual frustration to a sea of teens who weren't even born when the songs were written in the early '80s. But the Femmes' music has transcended generational borders, and the band's impact continues to influence the branches of rock music's family tree, as evidenced by the crowd of It musicians lining the stage when the Milwaukee band rocked Chicago's Lollapalooza music festival last summer.

EL REY



Milwaukee's cultural borscht gained a little Latin spice when El Rey opened in 1978. Take a trip to 35th and Burnham on any given Saturday, and you'll swear you've been transported to a vibrant mercado in Mexico City. Street vendors, music, a bustling café, aisles of exotic and enticing ingredients and products - it's all here. As much a cultural center as a product line and chain of grocery stores, El Rey has made Milwaukee a richer, tastier place to live.