

THE LONG ISLAND SOUND

## What's next for Inter-Media Arts Center's founders?



Glenn Gamboa June 27, 2009

The closing of the Inter-Media Arts Centre (IMAC) Theater in Huntington is sad for Long Island music lovers and artists. But don't worry about the theater's founders, Michael Rothbard and Kathy Bodily. They're going to be just fine.

"We wanted to go out at the top of our game," Rothbard says of the closing that took many by surprise. "We wanted to reinvent ourselves and this is the time."

Rothbard says the start of relatively new IMAC-ish programming at a bumper crop of Long Island theaters - the YMCA Boulton Center in Bay Shore, the Patchogue Theater, the Westhampton Performing Arts Center, Landmark on Main Street in Port Washington - means that the acts that counted on the IMAC in its various incarnations over the past 26 years still can play in the area.

And he and Bodily already have a slate of new projects - including the launch of a multimedia cultural calendar for Long Island that will tie together venues, arts groups, hotels and cable companies to drum up bigger audiences for area events. "A wonderfully unique thing has ended," Rothbard says. "But out of the ashes, a phoenix may arise."

Huntington officials hope there will be a phoenix for the village, as well. Not only did IMAC help serve its residents' artistic needs, but it helped bring people to the downtown shopping district at night. "It's a tough blow," says Huntington Arts Council director Diana Cherryholmes, saying the council will celebrate IMAC's contributions to the community at Heckscher Park July 24. "It was such a great institution."

Cherryholmes says Huntington has created a task force to determine how it should react to IMAC's closing. "The town is very committed to the arts," she says. "And the arts have delivered a huge economic benefit. We don't want to see that opportunity leave."