

New night life: trying out the techno-bars

BY ED BOWERS

THREE techno-bars have sprouted in the most technologically unappealing area in America, the San Francisco Tenderloin and Sixth Street. This scene is happening because young people need to get together to meet; not only are they lonely, there also is a biological imperative.

Of course I understand that smart people make money off of need. I do not judge this. It is simply a fact.

Probably the last place I would ever go in my life, before I ascend to heaven or hell, would be to a techno-bar because I hate the music. It's called "house music," and should stay there.

But that's only perception. It's not a fact. For all I know this marching-band, bass-based, repetitive jive, resulting in a numbing effect that inspires nothing, is as profound and valuable to the future of life as an amoeba.

The music in these clubs just sounds so square that it makes me scared that my parents are taking over the world. It is the John Philip Sousa music I listened to on my record player in 1955, or the jungle music in Tarzan movies that white people thought black people danced to.

All these clubs are supposedly based on music that is supposedly music. But underlying these simple-minded rhythms is a speed-infused rage that's sad and scary.

So now that I have done the music review of these clubs, I'll attack the ambience. Oh, did I say attack? I must control myself.

The truth is that the inside of these establishments is gorgeous, 19th century decadence at its best, and each club is an individual with its own personality. Conformity is the essence of evil, so subtle individuality is their saving grace.

PLAY-BAR: 101 Sixth St.

The first time I came here was with Veronica. We were drinking martinis at a table when I looked toward the bar. A scantily dressed woman was sitting on a stool with her pants so low that I could see inside her body.

Club Six permit suspended for noise

BY JOHN GOINS

THE survival of Club Six, one of the city's trendiest dance clubs, took a turn for the worse June 5 with the Entertainment Commission's unanimous vote to suspend owner Angel Cruz's entertainment permit because of continuing complaints from nearby residents about ear-splitting noise and heavy vibrations generated by the club's powerful speakers at night.

The suspension will be held in abeyance for 120 days so Cruz can operate and doesn't go belly-up while he attempts to rectify his problem. It also means that the bartenders, DJs, security guards and janitors who work for him will remain employed, and the bands, artists and music promoters who consider him a rare patron will get work.

Cruz is an early player and a major one in the central city's late-night club scene that also includes the Play-Bar and Anu on Sixth Street and the 187 Eddy Club and the Crash Club on Mason Street, and Etiquette on Market, weekend magnets for hundreds of young people from around the city and the Bay Area.

Cruz has hired sound engineer Charles Salter to solve his humongous problem: booming speakers shake the old brick building at 60 Sixth St. where the club, and the Lawrence Hotel above it, are housed.

The suspension came with a caveat: any sound violation during the 120-day grace period will tack on another 60-day suspension. And after that 90 days, ending with Cruz's permit permanently revoked upon further violations, Entertainment Commissioner Terrance Alan said in a phone interview.

Alan, who owns the building on Jones Street between Turk and Eddy where adult Club Vixen operates, said Salter is a first-rate sound engineer, and the improvements will be expensive.

"It's one of the most expensive things a club

"Is this my imagination or is that girl wearing her pants so low that I am being sucked into a black hole?" I asked Veronica.

"No, that is not your imagination," she replied. That's when I got the idea to do this article.

Techno-bars are dance bars, black holes notwithstanding. They are variations on a theme. By example, both bar maids at the Play-Bar were named Elizabeth, but one spelled it with an "s". Go figure.

The dance floor at the Play-Bar can be a lot of fun for people who want space to dance because while we were there it was empty.

Strobe lights give the floor a '60s effect. A double helix radiates on the ceiling and there's a pole on the stage that want-to-be lap dancers can practice on. The lighted painting on the wall over the dance floor appeared to be a depiction of a god rising out of hundreds of ice pipes that unfortunately I have seen people I care about use to turn themselves into demons.

There sure were a lot of sexy women in this bar. Most of them wore high heels. I have flat feet and my main job is walking around a condominium counting burned-out light bulbs, so I can sympathize with the efforts they're making to be attractive while enduring massive amounts of pain.

The Play-Bar is a pleasant, friendly place for people in their 20s and 30s to get together. Soon there will be a dance floor in the basement and the bar will be renovated and given a different name. Life is change. Simply being here is not enough.

Aaron Lacs is one of the owners, as well as the bartender I talked to when I visited this establishment. He's a good bartender and a nice guy with an existentially meaningful life.

I got a laid-back, friendly feeling from this place.

owner can do," Alan said. And in Cruz's case it could be tricky, he said. "There are no blueprints for that old building and the sound system wasn't scientifically installed."

The closure of a popular business on Sixth Street where people from different communities can earn a living, be creative and enjoy themselves is no small thing. Alan said he was concerned about the club's employees and the lost income. "The real social cost is that the employees suffer. And the club brings a mix of folks to the neighborhood."

And what of the club's relationship to the people who live in the neighborhood, particularly those who can't sleep at night?

"I think Paul Hogarth wrote a good article characterizing their angst," Alan said, referring to the managing editor of Beyond Chron.com, who is also a legal counselor and organizer for the Tenderloin Housing Clinic, which produces Beyond Chron, the daily online opinion and features publication.

"Sixth Street residents ... organized around the basic need to get some sleep," Hogarth wrote, it had nothing to do with trying to rain on the night life parade in San Francisco.

Alan said the commission heard testimony from about 100 people at the June 5 hearing, most of them asking that Club Six remain open. "The Entertainment Commission doesn't have any villains," he said. "Overall, the city does benefit from night life." The Extra previously quoted Cruz saying he had already invested well over \$100,000 in sound improvements and \$1 million in the club. He declined to comment further on the cost of improvements, or say what he is paying Salter.

Cruz said he was disappointed in the commission's ruling. "I saw a total of seven residents at the hearing," Cruz said. "I saw only two people from the Lawrence there." When asked what impact his club has had on Sixth Street, Cruz said, "The facts speak for themselves. I've done a lot of good there. Look at my track record. I bring revenue to this city. But anything worthwhile is not easy." ■



PHOTO BY ED BOWERS

At Play-Bar: Veronica is flanked by Elizabeth (left) and Elisabeth.

A black street person dressed in a red vest was sitting at a table by himself, obviously lonely, and they didn't kick him out.

A-plus.

ANU: 45 Sixth St.

I took a beautiful woman with me and we ended up here. People treat you differently when you are with a beautiful woman. The only thing that does it better is money.

Her name is Veronica Josephine Faraday, and I interviewed her for The Extra a long time ago when she existed under a different name. We both live in the Tenderloin. Neither one of us comes here just to visit techno-bars. We are citizens. This fishbowl is where we breathe, and probably where we will die.

Veronica was wearing a tuxedo suit and looked androgynous, very "Cabaret" and appropriate to the environment, or so we thought. But this scene is extremely old-fashioned. This new generation is the '50s, ignoring the wars, loving their solidified concepts, and just wanting to be happy though terminally miserable.

I was buzzing around like a bee, absorbing the nectar of ambience, while Veronica was sitting on a chair minding her own business. At least that's what I thought. When I reconnoitered with her later she had a story to tell.

"This Beck-looking, art school child started caressing my hair! So I stood up and said sternly, 'Do I know you?'"

"Then he held out his hand. I did not shake his hand! And then he said, 'I like your lines and bone structure.'"

"And I said, 'You like my lines and bone structure? Then pay me!'"

The little man who patted Veronica on the head got a wake-up call.

The Anu has art on the wall. Some of it depicts ancient scenes of people listening to real music like when Miles Davis played the Black Hawk without the aid of techno.

There was lots of dancing at the Anu. There is nothing wrong with any bar that encourages dancing. The Anu is full of the desire to dance.

Nothing is entertaining about the oblivion dancing on Sixth Street, but the Anu tries.

Not to encourage people to drink, but I highly recommend the house-made, fruit-infused vodka sold at this dance bar, which makes a great martini at the reasonable price of five dollars. A vodka cranberry made with swill costs three dollars in most bars around here.

ETIQUETTE: 1108 Market St.

There's a tendency for young people now to want to go way back to the 19th century; they're scared of the future and feel violated by the freshly laid-to-rest past. Recently, I spent two years in Texas, and the young hipsters there loved 19th century poetry.

Much of the décor in these techno-bars is elegant black vinyl, cold as the ice heads and crack

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