

Arts & Entertainment

Hi-tech bars bring change to night life

By Bill Allen
Senior Reporter

The last year or so brought several changes to the downtown bar scene. The Lucky Lady brought new trends to the star city, hurting business at P.O. Pears, 322 S. Ninth St., for a few months. A couple of downtown bars went to live music in an effort to pick up business.

All local bar managers interviewed say they are giving the customers what they want.

The Lucky Lady, in the Golds Galleria Building, opened seven months ago with pre-recorded videos, lip syncing, and a dress code. The owners were trying to create a party atmosphere, Tom Upah, Lucky Lady general manager, said.

The dress code encourages semi-formal clothing and discourages worn jeans or shoddy clothes, he said.

Upah said the dress code is intended to set a standard so all customers feel comfortable.

"A businessman getting off work dressed in a suit doesn't have to sit next to someone in cut-off jeans," he said.

P.O. Pears Manager Ben Brett calls the Lucky Lady a "high-tech bar."

"People are changing to go with the audience," he said. "The trend right now is high-tech," he said, adding that while he was in Phoenix recently many bars were like it.

A high-tech bar makes a town like Lincoln feel a little more *with* things, he said.

Brett said he doesn't think the Lucky Lady phenomena will last, despite the fact that its opening did hurt

P.O. Pears.

"You can't go head to head with a new opening like this," he said. "We dropped off for about three months but things are picking up."

He said it was the same way when Pears opened about four years ago. For a while Pears was the number one bar in Lincoln.

"The honeymoon might be over for the Lucky Lady," Brett said. "Everybody has seen it and the first impression is wearing off."

"There's only so many times that you can watch MTV at home and then go down to a bar and watch the same thing all night," he said.

Upah said he is uncomfortable with the "high-tech" label and thinks the Lucky Lady will be at the top for awhile.

"We don't use MTV," Upah said. "We do use pre-recorded videos."

He said the bar uses modern technology, such as the videos, to give the customers what they want.

However, Upah said, this modern technology is not the bar's only drawing card.

"We offer good congenial customer service," he said. "You can get a drink quickly anytime you want it."

"Our prices are right in line with the market," he said, "and we're also brighter than a lot of bars."

As far as the number of customers, Upah said, "I think we're level now. I can see normal seasonal changes but I think we're level."

During this time Stoooges, 826 P St., was having trouble with the State Liquor Control Board for its four-fers promotion, and (along with other bars)



Mark Davis/Daily Nebraskan

Steve Allen, bartender at PO Pears, turns up the music for an empty bar. Pears, like other downtown bars, is turning to live music and relying on the very popular "cheap drink" to hold crowds that traditionally were theirs.

the Human Rights Commission because of ladies' nights and wet T-shirt contests.

Stoooges closed, but on New Year's Eve The Fizz opened in the same spot, with the same owner, and with a new "high-tech" image, complete with a dress code.

However, owner Bob Eastwood said The Fizz is not an attempt to imitate The Lucky Lady.

He described The Lucky Lady as a "party scene" bar with "bright colors and nice fixtures."

"We're more a theatrical bar," he said, "meaning we use high technology, sounds, lights and videos all in one package. All of them are coordinated together."

Eastwood also said The Fizz shouldn't be compared to the former Stoooges, although some similarities exist.

"The majority of things here are new," he said. "A few are similar."

This place is much more modernistic than Stoooges," he said. "It's a higher class bar now."

Part of that higher class includes the dress code, which bans worn, faded and torn jeans and some other clothes, such as flannel shirts.

Some promotions have remained from the Stoooges days, including the wet T-shirt contest on Tuesday night. And since the State Liquor Control Board banned multiple drinks for the price of one, The Fizz has offered one-third priced drinks.

Eastwood said other promotions, such as \$1 pitchers and quarter draws or "whatever it takes to bring the cus-

tomers in," will be offered.

Going with another trend, two bars, P.O. Pears and Chesterfield, Bottomsley & Potts, 245 N. 13th, started using live band entertainment this year.

Brett said Pears made the move to pick up business and made a big step in that direction last weekend, when Charlie Burton performed.

The bar also is bringing back KFRX night, he said.

KFRX, a Lincoln rock station, provides a disc jockey who plays audience requests.

Pear's also serves food, as does Chesterfield's, and, Brett said, partly because of specials, the restaurant aspect of Pear's has picked up lately.

Chesterfield's manager Al Beer said his bar is more a dinner, date and couple-type bar.

Despite the advent of live music this year, Beer said, Chesterfield's will basically keep that image, mainly because the live music is in a separate room.

"It's like a completely separate entity, almost sound proof, from the rest of the bar," he said.

Beer said The Lucky Lady hasn't really affected Chesterfield's that much. Business is about average for this time of year, he said.

Beer said his bar doesn't cater to the same type of clientele as the Lucky Lady, as Chesterfield's is more dinner and couples-oriented, he said.

He said, however, that the raise in the drinking age has affected the bar.

Beer said he has noticed the effect of The Lucky Lady on the Lincoln bar scene, but "The Lucky Lady is a fad bar. When the fad wears off business at other bars will pick up."

The Zoo Bar (Lincoln's low tech bar,

according to a recent newspaper ad) has stayed away from any trends and continues with live music.

Larry Boehmer, manager of the bar, said this past fall the business was down, but he didn't attribute this to the opening of any new bars.

Live music all over the country was down," he said. "And our format is live music. We're a no-frills bar. We try to offer the best music at the lowest prices."

Despite the advent of new trends, Lincoln's bar scene remains basically unchanged.

The full impact of banning the multiple sale of drinks for one price has not been realized, and there may not be an impact as long as the State Liquor Board doesn't prohibit reduced prices for drinks.

Some bars, instead of offering two drinks for the price of one, are offering drinks at half price.

According to one bar owner this doesn't force the consumer to buy two drinks (or more) at once.

The State Legislature raised the drinking age to 21, but only a couple of bar managers commented on its impact, saying only that more time is needed to see if it will hurt business.

If you frequent the downtown bars you'll be seeing more live music, and occasionally a move to a more modern look, but as in the case of Chesterfield's and Pears, this is only in addition to what they already offered. The modern trend so far is restricted to The Lucky Lady and The Fizz.

HOT SPOTS

Television

● **The Atlanta Child Murders**, airs at 7 p.m. on CBS. The trial of Wayne Williams for killing two adult males on the list of nearly 30 victims is dramatized from court transcripts.

● The world of case workers from New York's Emergency Children's Service is revealed in **Child Savers**, airing on Frontline, at 9 p.m. on NETV Channel 12.

The Emergency Children's Service is a division of New York's Bureau of Child Welfare. Staff members are field workers who actually go into homes to confront violent parents and battered children.

● **Quackser Fortune Has A Cousin In The Bronx**, starring Gene Wilder and Marge Kidder airs at 11:15 p.m. on TBS, Channel 4. When his livelihood is taken away, an Irish manure merchant turns to other eccentric, but more palatable ways to make a living.

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