



Robert Fensler and Perry Drake, co-owners of The Edge, show the "birthday drink," a white concoction called a "Cheesy Discharge."

Julia Mikolajcik/DN

Entrepreneurs living on The Edge

bar

REVIEW

By Chris Burchard
Staff Reporter

To avoid bars that blast the same banal top 40 music all night long, get off the mainstream and head to the Edge.

Lincoln's newest bar, The Edge, is located in the basement level of 227 N. 9th St., filling the space vacated by the Spinoza Italian restaurant. Just look for the neon razor blade above the front door.

Not a place for a chronic claustrophobic, The Edge has low ceilings and dim lighting, which almost give it a European pub feel. Almost. This club is definitely different, with louder, harsher music and a huge toxic-radiation symbol behind the bar.

There's another difference — the relative youth of the owners and managers. Robert Fensler III, president of Cutting Edge Inc. (parent company of The Edge) and manager of the bar, is 23. Perry Drake, The Edge's assistant manager and a pre-veterinarian student at UNL, is 26. The head bartender, Clay Nielson, a UNL actuarial science major, comes in as the

youngest of the five employees at 21. His brother Shane, a UNL biology major and head of security, is 24.

The only employee who is even 30-something is Steve Schulz, the bar's music and entertainment director. He's 34.

While these guys may be lacking in years, they seem to know what they're doing, especially when it comes to their reasons for opening the bar.

"There was a need for a good alternative dance bar and another place where people could go and see alternative bands," Schulz said.

The Edge has something different to offer Lincoln, Edge associates say. Something the city lacks.

"We have an all-alternative dance club compared to, say, the Underground or the Precinct, which are pretty much top-40 dance clubs," Schulz said.

The Edge has had healthy business since its opening last month, Drake said, partly due to the popularity of the alternative music it plays.

Dance-floor music features a variety of heavy, industrial- and techno-beat music, from bands as mild as New Order and Depeche Mode to ones as hard as Nine Inch Nails, The Revolting Cocks and

Ministry.

"I really try to mix it up," said Schulz, who is in charge of running the disc-jockey booth. "I try to do something a little bit different every night."

With more than 600 compact discs to choose from at any given time, diversity shouldn't be a problem, Schulz said.

In addition to playing alternative music on the dance floor and at the bar, The Edge crew said it was planning to stage alternative bands as well.

"We're going to focus on new bands that are all original," Drake said. "We're going to stay away from cover bands."

They're also thinking of putting on some all-ages shows, too, but have yet to work out the legal details.

They've already started fishing for alternative bands and have had some catches, Schulz said.

Kill Whitey, of Lawrence, Kan., will perform at The Edge in the middle of this month. Schulz said the group sounds like a high-energy version of Soundgarden with a female singer.

E.J. Quit, a St. Louis band Schulz calls "a cross between Miracle Legion and The Replacements," will play in May.

The Edge also is looking for local bands who want to play, Schulz said, and already has been contacted by a number of interested groups. Lincoln's Deus Ex Machina will play this weekend.

Despite the differences, The Edge shares some things in common with most bars, like a pool room and limited munchies, including popcorn, peanuts, chips and Tombstone pizza.

The Edge offers daily drink specials, and a house-specialty drink called the "Toxic Waste" is on the way.

Other activities planned for The Edge include Sunday Alternative Video Night and showings of alternative movies and animated features.

Local artists are encouraged to bring their works to The Edge for possible display.

And there are other activities in the works: fashion shows, local dance performances and plays, especially ones developed and performed by UNL students, Schulz said.

"I think we're going to do well," Drake said. "Everybody likes the place."

Fensler added, "I think we're doing good now. I just hope it'll keep getting better."

Saxophonist returns with experience, fame

concert
PREVIEW

By Dionne Searcey
Senior Editor

Johnny Reno was back in town Tuesday night, singing out to a crowd at P.O. Pears as if the concert was five years ago at the Drumstick.

Reno and the four members of his band played to about 100 fans at P.O. Pears, 322 S. 9th St. The band stopped in Lincoln during a six-week tour that took them to Chicago and Minneapolis, among other places.

Reno's smooth moves and saxo-

Johnny Reno's concert mixes new, old tunes

phone playing provoked fans to dance to the Texas-style R&B tunes from his latest album, "Third Degree."

"Here's a couple from the old Drumstick days," he said as he started in on tunes from his oldest album, "Born to Blow."

Reno's no stranger to Lincoln. The 39-year-old Fort Worth, Texas, native played often at the Drumstick in 1986-87, he said.

"I've been coming up here for quite

a while actually. Great place. It's always had a good music scene, especially in the mid 80s. The Drumstick brought a lot of bands," he said.

The Drumstick, which closed several years ago, was the best place for Reno to play, he said.

"I'm telling you it was a legendary place. All the bands that I know would go, 'Are you playing Lincoln? Oh, man, the Drumstick, what a great place.'"

Now Lincoln doesn't have a club that's as well-known, he said. This makes it tough for less popular bands to get noticed, Reno said.

"In order to have a good music scene you've got to have a good place where bands can play and learn how to play," he said. But Reno didn't need the Drumstick to boost his popularity this year. He has been busy playing with Chris Isaak. "It's a good show with Chris. Musically, it's a lot of fun. It's good music."

Anthology offers insight into women's challenges



The Writer on Her Work
Volume II: New Essays in New Territory
Janet Sternburg, Editor
W.W. Norton & Company

By Mark Baldrige
Senior Reporter

"The Writer on Her Work" originally was published in 1980 and edited by Janet Sternburg. At the time, no other anthology existed on the origins and struggles specifically of women writers.

Sternburg said in her introduction to that volume that she began to work on it because she "needed to read it."

It turned out to be something a lot of women needed to read. In those days, the struggle for a "room of one's own" was being hard-fought as more and more women found they had something to say.

Literature was more exclusively male-dominated in those days and the essays reflected on how difficult it was for a woman writer to be taken seriously.

Today, merely a decade later, the struggle of women writers has shifted to another front.

Several of the writers whose works are collected in "The Writer on Her Work Volume II: New Essays in New Territory" express surprise that a writer's gender is even taken into consideration anymore.

It's true that the days are over when a critic would be ignorant enough to write off a work because it was made by a woman.

And it seems the struggle to be a writer is more evenly distributed among men and women; that is to say, it is almost impossibly difficult for everyone.

The writers in this collection seem to have shifted awareness from the fight for legitimacy in the world of letters to the more fundamental matter of why they feel compelled to write at all.

Virtually all the authors claim to feel this compulsion. They believe they have something to say, or something they must say, regardless.

The essays collected here come from a broad variety of writers, and an equally broad spectrum of viewpoint and opinion.

Included in the collection are such writers as Margaret Atwood, author of "The Handmaid's Tale" and Luisa

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