

ZAGAT SURVEY

2007

BEST OF NEW ORLEANS

- Restaurants
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- Hotels

Local Editors: Sharon Litwin, Mimi Read and Todd A. Price

Staff Editor: Karen Hudes

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ZAGAT SURVEY, LLC

4 Columbus Circle

New York, New York 10019

Tel: 212 977 6000

E-mail: neworleans@zagat.com

Web site: www.zagat.com

Boot, The

11 | 7 | 10 | \$4

1039 Broadway (Zimpel St.), 504-866-9008

"Underclassmen run rampant" at this Uptown magnet for "wild crowds" of Tulane students who need "somewhere to party besides the dorm room"; while most voters avoid this "kiddie zone", often nicknamed "Drinking 101", a few like to "watch the game" with rounds of "cheap beer" and "reminisce about those bygone college days."

Chickie Wah Wah **NEW**

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2828 Canal St. (S. White St.), 504-304-4714;

www.chickiewahwah.com

In a section of Mid-City that saw deep water after Katrina and little activity since, this new club is a beacon of blues, funk and rock 'n' roll that attracts local music luminaries as both headliners and unannounced guests; signs from defunct nightspots line the narrow room with a pool table, jukebox and a long bar.

COLUMNS HOTEL BAR

26 | 26 | 20 | \$7

Columns Hotel, 3811 St. Charles Ave. (bet. General Taylor & Peniston Sts.), 504-899-9308; www.thecolumns.com

Suited to "sunset cocktails with Scarlet O'Hara", this "beautiful Victorian hotel" in the Garden District evokes "a different era", as guests "sit on the front porch sipping mint juleps" mixed by "knowledgeable bartenders" and soak in the "St. Charles charm"; its equally impressive, "exquisite" interior hosts live jazz, Cajun and piano tunes, and "everyone eventually strolls through" - whether in "shorts or a ball gown."

Dragon's Den

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435 Esplanade Ave. (Frenchmen St.), 504-949-1750

Down a narrow alley and up a winding flight of stairs, this shadowy red lair, a destination for cutting-edge noise and offbeat acts in the Marigny, could be an opium den gone legit; performances on the small center stage range from belly dancing to off-kilter avant-garde klezmer, and there's a balcony to take a breather from the heady room.

Hi-ho Lounge

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2239 St. Claude Ave. (Marigny St.), 504-945-4446

A dive before Katrina, this Marigny club got a clean-up after the flood and now boasts polished wood beams across the high ceiling and shiny retro fixtures that light the room; the drinks served at the art deco bar remain cheap, and it's still a prime spot to catch up-and-coming rockers.

MID-CITY LANES ROCK 'N' BOWL

27 | 20 | 21 | \$7

4133 S. Carrollton Ave. (Tulane Ave.), 504-482-3133;

www.rocknbowl.com

Amid the "cacophony of the tenpins", Mid-City rollers "let down their hair and shake their booties" to "awesome" bands playing everything from blues to zydeco and R&B to rock, at this "one-of-a-kind" bowling alley and dance club; topped off with "greasy late-night food" and "cold brews", it makes "everyone's list for the week" - not necessarily for the '40s-era lanes that will "eat your good ball" but because it might be the "coolest bar in the world."

Saturn Bar

▽ 24 | 20 | 23 | \$6

3067 St. Claude Ave. (Clouet St.), 504-949-7532

"Like drinking in Fred Sanford's yard" with junk piled everywhere, this "eclectic" Bywater dive and "national treasure" in a "sketchy neighborhood" has "walls adorned with great neon and wild artwork"; the "one-of-a-kind owner", O'Neil Broyard, died shortly after Katrina, but his nephew "is keeping the dive alive" with some improvements - no more cat stink - and some losses - a modern Internet jukebox replaces the classic machine soaked by the flood.

Tommy's Wine Bar **NEW**

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752 Tchoupitoulas St. (Notre Dame St.), 504-525-4790

With its large dark room lit by gaslights and full of private nooks, this swanky new Warehouse District wine bar adds a touch of romantic sophistication to the neighborhood; a pianist plays nightly, and the bartenders at the elaborate hand-carved bar pour reds, whites and bubbly from the cellar's 120 vintages, as well as rare selections of whiskey, scotch and cognac.