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Clearview at 20

Take a funky, somewhat bleary look back at Club Clearview's first two decades.

ARTS DAY, 12E



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ARTSDAY

A funky history

In its 20-year history, Club Clearview has attracted everyone from punks to trendies to artists needing a venue. 12E

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ARTSDAY

Survivor: Deep Ellum

Twenty years later, Club Clearview remains a staple of the eclectic neighborhood. 12E

ARTS DAY

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12E



COMING SUNDAY

Swing, baby

Former teen idol Paul Anka gives modern rock songs a Sinatra-like spin — and it doesn't sound cheesy. Lead pop music critic Thor Christensen's review of *Rock Swings* in Arts Sunday.

HOT CORNER



Shocked follows own 'Star'

Releasing two CDs at once is back in vogue, thanks to recent double-whammies from Nelly and Bright Eyes. But Michelle Shocked (above) isn't one to follow trends: This week, she released *three* CDs on the same day.

Got No Strings is the most intriguing — a Western swing album made up of Disney-related tunes such as "Spoonful of Sugar" and "When You Wish Upon a Star."

Mexican Standoff is, in the Texas singer's own words, "Half-Latin, half-blues, like a line drawn in the sand."

And *Don't Ask Don't Tell* is an eclectic roots-rock chronicle of her divorce from writer Bart Bull. Just don't compare it to Bob Dylan's "breakup album," *Blood on the Tracks*.

"I'm not a Dylan fan. I'm sorry, I'm just not," Ms. Shocked recently told the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. "I think he took a lot of speed and wrote a lot of nonsense. And because people were so frightened, so confused by the times that were changing, they elevated his Dada into meaning, and he's been riding on the coattails of their interpretation ever since."

Thor Christensen

HOT BITE



Rack of lamb

French connection

Le Rendezvous (★★★½) In North Dallas has all the French classics, from sweet-breads to escargot.

Mixed results: Sautéed duck breast was tender and just peppery enough to set off its strong, tart cherry-flavored sauce. But unremarkable bouillabaisse wasn't helped by grainy rouille spread on toasts that went mushy too fast.

Old country: Tucked behind a small garden with outdoor tables, and laid out inside like a gently crumbling chateau, the restaurant is both romantic and comfortable. Owner Tim Georgeff (who also owns GF Prime a few doors down) plays piano at the restaurant on weekends.

Price: \$\$\$ (entrees \$19.95 to \$32.95)
Details: 5934 Royal Lane (west of Preston); 214-739-6206.

Full review: GuideLive.com
Anne Bothwell

HOT TIPS

■ "Palace & Mosque: Islamic Art From the Victoria & Albert Museum," 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Kimbell Art Museum

■ Cool Thursdays featuring Voodoo Blue, 7 p.m., Dallas Arboretum

■ *Ana en el Trópico*, 7:30, Latino Cultural Center

For more events, go online to GuideLive.com

TV RATINGS

Summer's surprise TV hit, *Dancing With the Stars*, tops the weekly ratings. 5E



JIM MAHONEY/Staff Photographer

Some Club Clearview owners past and present (from left): Steve Clohessy, Jeff Swaney, Paul Yeoham, Jeffrey Yarbrough, Paul Nugent, Mike Swinford, Mark Whitford, Doug Simmons and Sam Paulos.

Through the years, blearily

Club Clearview's 20 years of existence encompass a lot of funky history

By LAUREN SMILEY
Staff Writer

Tailoring the history of Deep Ellum's Club Clearview for a family newspaper may be like making a Disney special on Studio 54. But this month marks the club's 20th anniversary — not old enough to drink, but a survivor in a scene at the whims of the partying set — so it's worth a try.

Jeff Swaney, then a 20-something party boy, started the club in an abandoned warehouse. Back then, Deep Ellum was better known for boarded-up buildings than a nightlife circus. But ever since, the club has pushed to remain hip, attracting everyone from punks to trendies to artists needing a venue for their stage acts.

"We were very countercultural," says Mr. Swaney, now a Deep Ellum-based real estate developer. "Dallas in the '80s was like BMWs, concrete and go fast. We would constantly reinvent and present something fresh and funky."

From the warehouse, Clearview moved down the street, then gradually expanded, adding an ever-changing array of concept mini-clubs such as the Art Bar & Cafe and the new Blind Lemon Poker Room and Casino.

The club is now in its second location and fourth management era. The nine current owners, who also own the Curtain Club across the street, bought the place in 2003.

"It's a staple of the neighborhood, and we didn't want to see it shut down," says co-owner Doug Simmons, who adds that recent neighborhood crime problems have driven away customers.

But the club still fights to lure a new generation of customers with additions like the new poker room and Texas hold 'em poker tournaments. Although the go-go dancers have retired and the famous Day-Glo black-light room is painted over, switching things up isn't just about business; it's Clearview's legacy.

DETAILS: The Flametrick Subs, Shadow Reichenstein and Trend Kill Clinic celebrate Club Clearview's 20th anniversary at 10 p.m. Saturday, 2806 Elm St. \$3 cover. Rooftop party 8 p.m. www.clubclearview.com

Early days

In 1985, fresh out of Michigan State University and travels abroad, Mr. Swaney quit his day job as an engineering marketer and joined a margarita machine rental guy, Steve Clohessy, now owner of a local car dealership, to throw roving underground parties with friends in Deep Ellum and West End warehouses. Later that year, they took over the abandoned Clearview Louver Windows Manufacturing factory, at 2625 Elm. The warehouse had a cool neon sign, air conditioning and working toilets, luxuries for these strictly keg-beer and wine-cooler parties. But, with no permits or alcohol license, the parties were often busted by the police.

Caught in the act

Almost immediately, trippy graffiti of mysterious faces started showing up on the walls at the parties. Bouncers finally caught local plant nursery worker and artist Clay Austin in action. He had been tagging when no one was looking, then seeping back into the party crowd. Instead of busting Mr. Austin, Mr. Swaney hired him as the club's artistic director. He painted Day-Glo designs on the club walls to be illuminated by black light. Mr. Austin moved into the club's second floor and expanded his job description to painting go-go dancers, enlisting homeless people to sit around a fake bonfire in an artistic hobo camp and picking up bands and artists at their hotels. He now runs a local interior wall treatment company.

Baptist invasion

All was well at Club Clearview in the fall of 1986 — the fake liquor license was hung on the wall, the party droned on till 6 a.m. on weekends, lots of kinky acts took place in the old factory's showers. The club hosted *Women's Wear Daily* fashion shows and magazine release parties for the staffs of *Details* and *Spin*, at which the godfather of hip-hop, Afrika Bambaataa, played. Then, the Baptist Foundation of Texas acquired the building and decided it had no interest in leasing to a den of alcohol-swilling debauchers. Mr. Swaney requested time to find a new

location, but the foundation took him to court to boot him immediately. Although he lost, the appeals process bought Mr. Swaney time to move into the present location at 2806 Elm St. Mr. Swaney's revenge: He hired a crane to take the trademark Clearview sign with him.

Naked antics

The Red Hot Chili Peppers played the club in 1988 ... naked. Halfway through the set, they donned their trademark socks, but bassist Flea stayed naked the entire set. Jack Irons sent one drumstick after another ricocheting off the drum into the crowd, which took blows to chests and faces without major injury. Later, the staff collected more than 110 drumsticks, including one wedged into the clipboard drop ceiling 20 feet above the stage.

Clothed antics

The Beat Farmers didn't make music history, but the late lead singer Conroy Dick Montana made Clearview's. At a late '80s concert, the lumbering singer dressed in a black duster, ran through the bar with a giant inflatable phallus and jumped up on the bar, guzzled down a whiskey and kept singing. He then led the 500-member crowd down the street in a conga line, inflatable toy in tow.

Built to rock

In 1990, former Clearview talent buyer Lisa Oldham booked Green Day for a weeknight show in the band's pre-*Dookie* days. Thinking it'd have trouble getting a crowd, the club opened the show to all ages. Days before the concert, 150 teens in Mohawks and combat boots were camping out on the sidewalk in front of Clearview to buy tickets. Ms. Oldham says Green Day was happy to receive \$300 for the show. And when she let them stay at her house for the night, the band built her two bookshelves for payment.

Support the arts

In 1991, 16 Deep Ellum artists got \$100 worth of house paint and an 18-by-25-foot piece of Clearview's brick exterior to paint a tribute to the

neighborhood in a mural contest. The result was part-Andy Warhol knock-off, part-pointillism done by a toilet plunger, part-graffiti. Local judges awarded the prize to Clay Austin. About a third of the surface has since been painted over by a neighboring landlord.

Passing trends

■ In 1992, the club debuted an \$80,000 installation of "Cyberium." A nod to the West Coast rave movement, the virtual reality machine set video projections and lighting effects to techno-rave music. Patrons donned a helmet and gripped a space ball to steer through a virtual landscape while sipping Smart Drinks, nutrient-laced non-alcoholic cocktails mixed in test tubes. They strapped into two gynecologic "orbitrons" to experience weightlessness. Trying to stay ahead of the pack (and not wanting to be left with a dinosaur), the owners sold the virtual reality machine six months later.

■ As Deep Ellum business bustled in the '90s, Mr. Swaney and his new partner, former *Women's Wear Daily* advertising executive Jeffrey Yarbrough, hosted the Miss Galaxy Contest at Clearview. Held every other year, the pageant paired 12 local hair salons with 12 nightclubs. Each group entered a model bedecked with celestial-height hair and out-of-this-world costumes.

Judges included Dallas Stars hockey players, former Dallas Mayor Ron Kirk and then-Art Bar patron and occasional bartender Thomas Hayden Church, recently a star in the movie *Sideways*. In 2000, owners realized that one contestant wasn't wearing anything underneath a full-body airbrush job. The model was judged on the spot, whisked into a robe, and later declared the winner.

Freaks in the house

Clearview became the host once again when the Brothers Grim Sideshow rolled into the parking lot last August. Apparently, the Dallas fire department wasn't won over by Chuy the Wolf Man of Mexico's face fur or Serpentina's whip cracking. They declared the whole ordeal a fire hazard and required that a fire department employee be hired full-time to supervise for \$5,000 a month, so the circus folk bailed a month early. Any freak sightings on the premises since are purely coincidental, the subjects unpaired.

E-mail lsmliley@dallasnews.com