

Nighclubs battle for student customers

by Jaime Bramer
Battalion Reporter

College Station nightclubs that cater to Texas A&M students are at war. To win the battle, they must survive in an isolated market place and beat the competition through strategic advertising. The goal of all their promotional ads is, naturally, to lure patrons away from their competitors.

In past years, local bars have used some bizarre gimmicks to get customers — naughty night contests, best tan contests, male strippers, and air kissing. Unfortunately, these types of promotion didn't attract enough customers, and consequently, many of the student-supported clubs failed. Three local nightclubs — Park Avenue, Roxy, and Electric Cowboy — have undergone

many changes in recent years to stay alive. The managers of the three all believe that succeeding in the college market is very complex.

Success depends on more than promotional gimmicks, contests, and give-aways. Individuality and image also play a key role.

Park Avenue Manager John DeSpain says the reason the previous club, Lipstick, failed is because it was a fad, and punk music was fading.

"Students get tired of gimmicks," he says. "Their tastes in music change quickly." Lipstick had a short life of only seven months and now has been reborn as Park Avenue. DeSpain says that so far they're doing well.

"We've cut naughty night-type schemes," he says. "They don't fit the mood of Park Avenue. We think of it as one of College Station's nicer clubs where you don't need a megaphone to order a drink."

He also takes the fire code seriously. "We believe in treating our customers like people, not cattle," he says.

DeSpain says that nightclub promotion is a guessing game.

"I gear most of the promotion at the weekend," he says, "with 60-70 percent (of ads) running Friday and Saturday on local radio stations."

Football games, concerts, and exams affect the advertising



"When you serve good drinks, you don't have to give them away," — Mark Alfieri, co-manager of Zephyr.

used. All special promotions are released as late as possible so they can't be topped by another club.

A promotional brain-storm of DeSpain's was the "late night" concept. He says staying open until 4 a.m. on weekends has its advantages. Because liquor isn't sold after one, people have a place to sober up before driving home.

"The people trickle out slower now," DeSpain says, "resulting in less congestion in the parking lot and fewer accidents."

He says Park Avenue doesn't have any competition now — none of the other clubs have a comparable style.

However, the Roxy at Post Oak Mall is competing. Manager Steve Graham has picked up on Park Avenue's late night idea and now stays open until four. They also are using a legs contest on Wednesday nights. Other promotional gimmicks include ladies night, open bar, and happy hours.

Roxy does 75 percent of their advertising on radio and soon will be dropping the local station for Houston stations. Graham believes more students will hear their ads on the more popular Houston stations.

The Roxy has an image of its own — hi-tech rock 'n' roll. "We have a better sound system, more room, and have spent

more money on lights than some clubs spend on their whole set up," Graham says.

Graham also manages Electric Cowboy. The club is closed for remodeling now, and Graham is keeping the new club's identity a secret. He says the club closed, because after five years, a change was needed.

Promotional advertising is essential to the success of a club. However, the Zephyr Club is an exception.

Managed by two college students, Texas A&M seniors Mark Alfieri and Gregg Kronenberger, the bar has experienced enormous success. "We've just about replaced

the Dixie Chicken at the Tuesday night hang-out," Alfieri says.

Zephyr isn't doing any promotional advertising, says Alfieri in their image.

The two managers, Alfieri and Kronenberger, took over Zephyr Bar and Grill and turned it into a typical college bar.

"Zephyr is a gathering place," he says. "We don't advertise because we get crowds anyway. People come to socialize and see their friends." "We hire people from football, and baseball," Alfieri says. "Everyone has a job working at Zephyr."

Alfieri says the reputation of the employees and managers is recognized by other patrons.

"We're guys having fun," Alfieri of himself and Kronenberger. "Customers find it a pleasant having friends running the place."

He boasts that Zephyr has the best drinks and largest selection of liquor in town.

"When you serve good drinks, you don't have to give them away," he says.

The two recently expanded the patio to the bar and are planning to add live entertainment. According to Alfieri, the club is becoming well-known around the state, in Dallas, Austin, as the place to go to college Station.

"I think Zephyr will be here for a long time," he says.

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Overtime doesn't mean effectiveness in work

United Press International
NEW YORK — Extra hours put in by ambitious executives may be counterproductive to their careers, says Jean Grasso Fitzpatrick.

In an article in the October issue of Working Woman magazine, Fitzpatrick cites an IBM study of 2,443 managers that found no correlation between effectiveness ratings and the amount of time worked.

The researchers lauded quality time over quantity time, she said.

Many experts feel regular

overtime is almost a sure sign of runaway inefficiency, she says.

One source is quoted as saying if an employee works late regularly, "I suspect you've been kidding around at work." The source adds it's the employee who gets the job done.

What the author calls "control overtime" indicates the individual is not managing his or her workload or attempting to pressure superiors who believe in hours.

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