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MUSIC

Brew Pub lives up to its name

by Dean Visser

On Monday nights at J. Cole's Brew Pub on Willamette and 10th, you can stare down a mile-long row of exotic wood and brass taps while live basketballs fly overhead. On Tuesday through Saturday nights you can absorb anything from pop rock to jazz from a sampling of West Coast bands, and on Sundays there are free movies, pool and popcorn.

"The bottom line is sports, beer and rock 'n roll," says owner Jeff Cole, but his establishment is no typical football counter where patrons can choose between beef jerky and pickled eggs, or between Budweiser and Budweiser. Cole wants to fill in some missing pieces of Eugene night life with a patchwork of effects, a little something for everyone. There's the live music selected more on the basis of quality than genre, the 36 designer beers on draught and the spotless and sparse decor, but J. Cole's isn't above hosting "pig" basketball contests after Monday Night Football. Players shoot from anywhere in the building, including the balcony. Ladies' night is every Tuesday with male, exotic dancers.

J. Cole's greatest shrine to eclect-

icism, though, is the beer rack that takes up half the counter. Its 36 spigots comprise the greatest variety in the Northwest, as far as Jeff Cole knows. Customers can quaff the old stand-bys, classic German pilsners such as Dortmunder Union and Paulaner, or can wade through a rare draught Guinness Stout, that sacred staple of industrial Britain, black as a peat bog and bitter as divorce. Best of all, they can critique and enjoy the products of our western microbreweries, America's most welcome innovation yet for true beer lovers.

Like the great artistic breweries scattered around Europe, many of these operations are small and family-run; tastes range from exquisite to "interesting," but each has some wonderfully individualistic character instilled in its product. J. Cole's offers six or seven microbrewery beers that are next to impossible to find on tap anywhere else in town, including Full Sail and Oregon Trail ales. Also featured are names growing in popularity, such as Grant's line of ales and Seattle's Red Hook products, including the outstanding Ballard Bitter. Ballard Bitter is as strong and

sprightly as a clear fall day, and exemplifies the best qualities of microbreweries: the difference between it and a bottled beer is like the difference between a fresh Granny Smith and a can of applesauce.

J. Cole's works on getting the same kind of quality and variety in their live music. Manager Scrafford Orser, himself a member of Eugene's psychedelic band Hole in the Ocean, lines up local bands during the week and goes for bigger names on the weekends. Any kind of music is considered, with a general aim in the direction of the danceable. "We want to provide a good club atmosphere," Orser says, "an alternative to the teen places or discos."

A cathedral-high ceiling and balcony add further to the appealing contradictions in J. Cole's atmosphere. This space opening overhead makes for a subtle, interesting variation on the standard, closet-like feeling of the usual friendly and smoky neighborhood pub. It also makes J. Cole's a pleasant dining spot, and so does the food; there's breakfast, lunch and dinner, consisting mostly of the lighter American soups and sandwiches that go perfectly with a good beer. The free happy hour buffet includes hot appetizers.

Cole and Orser keep the mood at J. Cole's low-key, a setting in which anyone can relax and feel welcome. They are innovators of the laid-back good time people go to pubs to find, using twists like the regulation NBA breakaway basketball hoop to make things a little more interesting. Cole is considering starting his own brewery, with its works inside the club. Local laws will allow either the brewery or a hard liquor bar, but not both, so the J. Cole's people are looking for some public and customer input on the subject.

Sundance

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SUNDANCE SALE

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A shining star from a great vintage.

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