

Jungle brings big-city club feel to downtown Eugene

Since its remodel, The Jungle has spiced up Eugene's night life

BY NATASHA CHILINGERIAN
SENIOR PULSE REPORTER

From the looks of its graffiti-like, spray painted sign, The Jungle seemed a little sketchy from the outside. But when I stepped in, it was all business. Amid darkness and black lighting, security guards scanned guests one by one with a metal detecting wand. Where was I, in the airport?

In the club's central area, a bar separated a lounge and dance floor, complete with dirty-dance-encouraging poles and cages. Enjoyable hip-hop sounds filled the room and the place was definitely jungled out — adornments included a waterfall, netting and fake greenery. Up a flight of hidden stairs was the VIP lounge: a private, but still loud area with candlelit tables.

The Jungle, known as The Annex before it acquired its liquor license in January, is one of the only spots in Eugene that resembles a real nightclub. Owner Doug Renner said the nightclub feel is exactly what he was going for during The Jungle's re-creation.

"We were trying to create a club atmosphere," he said. "Most clubs in Eugene are like an empty room with a stereo in it. We wanted a place that was like something you would find in a big city."

Jungle employee Carlos Acosta said The Annex died down a few months before its transformation into The Jungle, so when they were allowed to serve alcohol, employees decided to give the club a total theme makeover. Ever since, it's been filled with partiers, especially



NICOLE BARKER | PHOTOGRAPHER

The Jungle's inside atmosphere imitates Oregon's naturally lush environment.

on Friday nights.

"We all sat down one day and someone just said, 'The Jungle,' and we were like, 'Whatever,'" Acosta said. "It's a cool theme because Oregon's really green. For dancing, it's really only here and Tsunami's."

"We haven't had any fights since we've had the wands ... People come in and realize we're professional."

CARLOS ACOSTA | Employee, The Jungle

The Jungle is big on theme nights and promoters. The club has hosted beach party nights, pajama parties and Bacardi nights. During the 2004 Eugene Celebration, Jungle employees fenced off the parking lot and set up picnic tables, tents and an outdoor bar. On Oct. 30 they will host a Halloween costume party.

"We had a hot body contest in June, and there was a lot of nudity from the females," Jungle employee Summer Richardson said. "Last

weekend we had a Mardi Gras night, and the person with the most beads won a trip to Mardi Gras (in New Orleans)."

The Jungle hosts three to four nationally touring acts per month; on Oct. 28 it will host blues group Norton Buffalo. When bands aren't performing, the club still pumps out good music thanks to its award-winning DJ, DJ George.

Acosta said The Jungle's increased security began about one month ago to help guests feel safer.

"We haven't had any fights since we've had the wands," he said. "People come in and realize we're professional."

The Jungle achieves its goal of representing a professional dance club with big-city feel. Of course, the clientele won't transform into New York sophisticates and you won't find any professional dancers on stage or decked-out bathrooms. But The Jungle provides hip-shaking music, hard-core dancing and, without leaving town, a nightclub atmosphere that makes the grade.

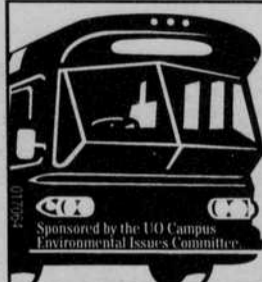
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HOW THE JUNGLE BECAME WILD

Until November 2003, The Jungle was a popular underage venue known as The Annex. After the club received a liquor license, the owners decided to do a complete overhaul in order to remake the club into a primarily 21 and over venue. Changing the decor and the name, the club was

remade as The Jungle.

Since then the club has hosted a number of events, including musical performances from acts as diverse as Blue Oyster Cult to Bo Diddley. Upcoming performances include Ministry and KMFD. The Jungle is located at 23 W. 6th Ave.



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