

Lo-Fi-Fnk performing at the Indigo



INDIGOING PLACES

THE NEW KID ON THE BLOCK IS GROWING UP

Story by Adrienne van der Valk • Photo by Todd Cooper

Justin Gibbs is the man who finally unset the patiently waiting tables that sat for years anticipating a revival of the Fields restaurant space. He is the man who brought pan-Asian chic to the downtown bar scene in the form of massive stone Buddhas standing serenely in the corners of his dimly lit brain child, the Indigo District. And almost four years after opening a business that has gone through many incarnations in its struggle to find its true identity, Gibbs is the man who will regularly bring independent music to all-ages audiences of up to 600 people starting in April.

"We're almost like this anti-club," Gibbs tells me when I ask him about the evolution of the almost 8000 sq. ft. space. "We're a club, but you typically associate a nightclub with drama. We're a club for regular people. We have a huge mix. Campus kids, Eugene locals, we cater to a diverse crowd. A rock 'n' roll kid isn't going to relate any better than a hip hop kid."

Gibbs acknowledges that the legacy of the Indigo District involves a rather schizophrenic past. When the bar first opened its heavy, wooden doors, the menu advertised a business lunch, gourmet coffee and bar food served long into the night, well after the liquor stopped flowing.

"The new direction has refined the scope of what we're trying to do," he explains. "When we first started, it was like 'It's a restaurant, it's a bar, it's a music venue, it's an Internet café.' We were going all day every day with just me managing. And as much as I loved being a restaurateur, it happened at the expense of doing music. That's my primary passion."

In the last year, the Indigo District has been keeping primarily evening hours, hosting music regularly, throwing raging dance parties and "doing a few things well," as Gibbs would say. After trying out so many types of business plans and suffering some low points, he and his staff are excited to settle into being "a music venue that serves food and drinks and does club nights."

"We had some growing pains in the last year. 2006 was an awkward point between being a new bar and an established bar. We had to adjust our vision."

This new vision will capitalize on what Gibbs refers to as the "cross-pollination between hip hop, rock and electronic" emerging in the independent music scene. He hopes that by bringing bands who blend the best of the best musically, the Indigo District will, by extension, provide the optimal nightlife experience for those committed to keeping the funk alive in Eugene.

"Eugene geographically is a great location," Gibbs says of his choice to exercise his entrepreneurial spirit in a city of such modest size. "It's off I-5, it's a college town, and basically being smaller, it is easier to do something like this. Every time I go abroad or go to cities like New York and go to the clubs there, I always come back feeling really secure about this space."

Watch the *Weekly* for more on the Indigo District's new, all-ages music venue, coming soon! ■

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