

A Slice of Old North Portland

Jewelía's II is a throwback to the Cotton Club

BY JAKE THOMAS

THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

In the late 1970s the Cotton Club, located on North Vancouver Avenue, was one of the premier nightclubs in the region. It featured local musical acts, and bands on tour regularly stopped there. It was the place to see and be seen.

Times have changed since then as local neighborhoods have been shaken by urban renewal and gentrification.

But a new bar located in Gresham seeks to tap into the same social current that once surrounded the Cotton Club.

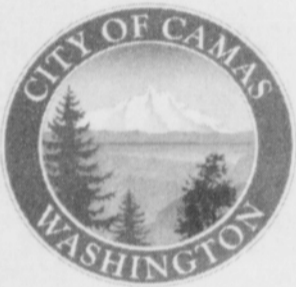
Jewelía's II VIP Lounge, tucked away in the College Square Shopping Mall at 2812 N.E. Hogan Dr., may seem far from north Portland, but its owners hope it will be an extension of a lapsed social hub once cherished by residents nearly a generation ago.

Michelle Campbell, who owns the current incarnation of the bar along with her mother, Jewelía Funchess, said that her parents bought the Cotton Club in 1976 and renamed it Jewelía's, after her mother.

The bar continued on the same path as the Cotton Club, said Campbell.

"It was live, all the time," she said, remembering back to the days when members of the Portland Trail Blazers

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PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Jewelía Funchess (left) and her daughter, Michelle Campbell work to make their Jewelía's II VIP Lounge a premier social club. The restaurant and bar is located in the College Square Shopping Mall of Gresham.



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stopped in, in addition blues great BB King, and Sly and the Family Stone.

"I think it was the fact that it was the Cotton Club before then; I think that helped us out a lot," she said.

But Jewelía's folded just after two years, when Campbell's parents split. But owning another bar remained a dream for Campbell and her mother.

She worked as an office manager and executive coordinator while managing her own talent agency on the side.

The floors are black and white tile. The bar is made out of black marble that stands out starkly against the white walls. Plants are stationed sporadically throughout the spacious interior.

But last year, Campbell and her mother decided to give the bar another go and signed a lease for the spot in Gresham.

They struggled to get the building up to code, but eventually opened their doors in the last month.

"I never thought it would happen," said Campbell.

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