

THE RADAR NIGHTLIFE

BY SARAH GLEIM



DIVE IN: The sushi bar at Luckie Food Lounge sits just feet away from the massive saltwater aquarium.

NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK

The demolition of Buckhead Village has paved the way for a slew of hot new bars and clubs in the ATL.

Lets go ahead and get this out of the way up front: We felt a little lump swell up in our throats at the thought of Buckhead Village being bulldozed. After all, there was a time when it was *the* place to go for a night out on the town. Tongue and Groove, Café Tu Tu Tango, Lulu's Bait Shack—they will all stand the test of time (in our foggy memories, at least). But the demise of Buckhead's bar scene is actually a good thing: We're getting some fab new shopping and it's paved the way for cooler clubs and restaurants—like these three—in Midtown, downtown and even OTP!

LUCKIE LADY Unless you consider a romp through Centennial Olympic Park after dark or a visit to The World of Coca-Cola a hip night out, the scene downtown leaves a little to be desired. But things are beginning to improve, and leading the way is Luckie Food Lounge. The brainchild of Mike Boles (he was behind the success of Compound before selling it in 2006), Luckie opened in June next door to the Aquarium. But don't let the name fool you; it's definitely more than just a restaurant even though there's enough seating for 350 in the dining room. It's divided into an elaborate sushi bar, complete with a 28-foot-long saltwater aquarium backlit with neon lights, an open kitchen flanked by plush leather seating, plus a DJ booth and a stage for live

music. The sleek cocktail bar with stainless steel and fiber optics takes center stage and has an impressive menu of beer, wine, sake, specialty drinks and martinis. Seven miles of LED lighting throughout constantly change colors and wall-mounted plasma TVs flash everything from music videos to giant blobs of color. The space is also suprisingly open (i.e., there's room to dance if the urge strikes!), and a winding staircase will eventually lead to the rooftop patio that will be accessible only to private members. As if that's not enough, Luckie also has an adjacent "shop" dubbed Charm that sells everything from homemade gelato and pastries to magazines and Advil, plus what one of our editors considers the coolest bathroom he's ever seen. 375 Luckie Street, 404.525.5825 or www.luckiefoodlounge.com.

ENCORE! ENCORE! From Peachtree Street you'd never know that some of the city's best nightclubs have been housed in a building behind the elegant Wimbish House, the Southern mansion now home to The Atlanta Woman's Club. In the '90s, the "it" club was Petrus, after that it was Club Eleven50 and now, fresh from a \$2.5 million renovation, the 1920s space has been reborn again as Opera. Co-owner Terry Barbu led the extensive overhaul that actually restored the CONTINUED...



SPIN CYCLE: DJ Ruckus gets the crowd going at Opera.

...CONTINUED building to its original roots as an opera house. New VIP booths upstairs look like authentic opera boxes and the classy décor—think rich hardwood floors, new chandeliers and luxe carpets—is a far cry from its previous club look. But the new layout downstairs gets mixed reviews: The bars are more strategically placed in corners, which gives the space a more intimate vibe, but it also makes the dance floor feel smaller. Regardless, the space is again a hotspot for dancing to the sounds of faves like DJ Ruckus and Kevin Dispain. *1150B Peachtree St., 404.874.0428 or www.operaatlanta.com.*

PLUSH PALACE Until now, the idea of a defunct, but once-powerhouse, nightclub reviving itself in a location OTP was inconceivable. But the owners of the original Velvet Room have re-opened the former nightlife spot in its new location, a shopping center off of Chamblee Tucker Road. The unusual locale hasn't kept partygoers away by any means. Since opening earlier this year, the club's been packing them in with the help of big-name radio DJs like V103's Ryan Cameron, and Q100's live radio broadcast, Saturday Night Q. The space itself includes a high-tech sound system, 60 plasma screens TVs, crystal chandeliers and private VIP cabanas. *3358 Chamblee Tucker Road, 404.874.4460 or www.velvetatl.com.*



Upstairs at Via

VIVA BUCKHEAD!

Despite how things might look, not every bar and lounge is being demolished in Buckhead—there are actually a few new ones going up. And one of the hottest places to make Pharr Road its permanent address is the two-story Via Food Bar, which opened in August in the Eclipse building. Owners Rick Seaman and John Frasier spent more than \$1 million on the interior buildout—a contemporary design that features a color palette of bright whites and dark blues accented by oversized lights and chrome fixtures. The main focal point is the sleek bar and custom wood-burning oven where



Element's margarita



Geisha Girl at Fune

BOTTOM'S UP

When it comes to fancy drinks, Atlanta's bartenders aren't afraid to mix it up. Here are three of our favorites around:

MAKE MINE A MARGARITA The frozen margarita at Element is one of the best we've ever had. They use liquid nitrogen (not ice) to flash-freeze this concoction so it's ultra smooth and literally melts in your mouth. *1051 West Peachtree St., 404.745.3001 or www.elementmidtown.com.*

FLIRTINI Even the drinks are funky at Fune in Midtown, especially the Geisha Girl. The spicy blend of vanilla vodka and sake with lime and cranberry juices tastes every bit as bold as it looks. *860 Peachtree St., 404.541.9322 or www.funesushibar.com.*



The TROIS Cocktail

EGG BEATERS If you order the TROIS Cocktail from the Bar at TROIS, don't be surprised to see the bartender crack open an egg! They use the whites to emulsify the blend of green tea and mint infused

Tanqueray, lemon juice and simple syrup. *1180 Peachtree St., 404.815.3337 or www.trois3.com.*

executive chef Andrew Sheridan dishes up apps and entrées conceived with help from Atlanta chef Shaun Doty, who consulted on the menu. Regular house DJs spin live music nightly (Wednesdays it's '80s; Thursday through Saturdays feature progressive/house music) and after 11 p.m., the staff clears away the first floor tables to create a jazz lounge-like environment. So far, it's working. Via is attracting a sophisticated, hip crowd, and large-scale events (like a 2007 Halloween bash) are already on the books. *262 Pharr Road, 404.214.5404 or www.viarestaurant.net.* **A**

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