

SundayStyles

BOITE

Perfect Party Mix

BY PAULINE O'CONNOR

NEW ORLEANS

In its post-Katrina state, this city is frequently likened to Blanche Dubois from "A Streetcar Named Desire": two once-proud beauties ruined by brutal force and over-reliance on the kindness of strangers. But in truth, New Orleans's spirit is far more resilient than that of Tennessee Williams's cracked belle, and the nightclub Republic is a case in point.

In the warehouse district, a block from the city's convention center, the club opened its doors a few months after the hurricane.

"Everybody said we were insane to risk it," said Robert LeBlanc, 29, one of Republic's three owners. "I was intimidated, but people were incredibly helpful. The landlady charged us nominal rent the first year. Other bars and restaurants in the neighborhood would send their customers over and gave us tons of advice."

The club changes format regularly. Some nights there is live music, typically indie rock bands like Bright Eyes; OK Go; and Clap Your Hands Say Yeah. On other nights there are fashion shows or fund-raisers. And Thursday through Saturday, it's a dance club.

At midnight on a recent Saturday, the two-story club was full, with a line outside about 20-deep. Inside, Jeff Rizzo roamed the dance floor, snapping photos for NolaOut.com, his night-life Web site.

"I've been coming here three or four times a month since it opened," he said. "The girls here are glamorous, a little more image-oriented than at other places in town."

Several women celebrating a bach-

Republic

828 South Peters Street, New Orleans;

(504) 528-8282

GETTING IN Thursdays and Saturdays, come before 11 p.m.; cover charge from \$5 to \$10.

DRESS CODE No shorts or flip-flops. For women, tank tops and miniskirts or jeans; for men, dress shirts and jeans.

D.J. PICKS UNK's "Walk It Out"; Timbaland's "The Way I Are"; Eve's "Tambourine."

SIGHTINGS Sheryl Crow, Charles Barkley.

SIGNATURE DRINK Republic Lemonade (Kerol One Citroen, Chambord, fresh lime juice, splash of 7-Up), \$8.

elorette party pranced by. The bachelorette, a dead ringer for the "Laguna Beach" actress Kristin Cavallari, wore a tiara.

From the mezzanine, Tony Cortello, a 29-year-old restaurant manager, checked out the mob undulating to Nelly Furtado's "Maneater."

"I love this place because it's very down to earth and the crowd is really mixed," he said. "It's rare that you see people in their 20s, 30s and 40s, black people, white people, Asians, Latinos, all partying in the same club."

While the club's lower level has a raw, industrial feel, the upper level is more formal, with V.I.P. sections and reserved tables.

Despite the presence of velvet ropes, a chummy vibe prevailed, even when a pair of interlopers crashed a private party. The duo slipped past the ropes and plopped down on a black leather couch. A brunette woman with a ponytail swiftly pounced.

"Um, this area is reserved for Steve's birthday party," she said. "Are you friends of Steve?"

The intruders confessed that they were not and sheepishly got up to leave. The woman relented.

"Well, are you all from out of town?" she asked. They were. "Aw, it's cool," she said. "You can stay."



Cheryl Gerber for The New York Times

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