

French disco adventure leaves a lot to be desired



KAREN MARTINEK

When a native Alaskan offered to give me a tour of the local night clubs — the center of French nightlife — I had to accept. After having heard so much about the all-night dancing and partying until dawn of the French nightlife, I had to see what all the talk was about.

There are roughly five popular nightspots in Ale, but each has a season during which it is open. We toured two of the summer clubs, Le Club de Deaux and Le Cheyenne.

In France, there are "bars," but these are not to be confused with "line Boite de nuit" (nightclub). A bar here is simply a place to get a drink and talk, much like a cafe. They are quiet and relaxing places generally open from early in the morning to late at night. The Boite de nuit is like any American dance bar and it's in full swing from midnight until the sun begins to peak over the horizon.

Our first club, Le Club de Deaux, was a small scale, less extravagant model of C. J. Barrymore's. With two discotheques (dance floors), a restaurant, pool, tennis courts, and a miniature golf course, it was only lacking the batting cage. There were no hunky bouncers at the door since the

drinking age here is 18 and the driving age of 18 does an efficient job of eliminating anyone under 18 from the nightlife. Thus, you don't need to show your ID at the door, something I always make a point to have now since I was turned away at C. J. Barrymore's because I had forgotten it. Instead, you only pay your 60 francs (\$12) for entrance, which includes your first drink. Fortunately, my ticket included my first drink because after that, French nightlife failed to impress me.

The two discotheques of Le Club de Deaux, El Tabasco and Le Pharoah, although different in atmosphere, were much the same. El Tabasco was outfitted on a Spanish theme obviously with Mexican hats, cacti and other south-of-the-border paraphernalia cluttering the walls. It could double as a Chi-Chi's during the daytime. An obnoxious strobe light ran continuously, keeping time to the latest dance and house music which for the time I was there, was almost entirely American made. The large dance floor was rather empty as most people were content to sit on the couches surrounding it and watch those who were dancing.

Le Pharoah was more modern. Its black and silver mirrored walls were crowded by an older mix of people. The lack of the strobe light and the selections of older music made Le Pharoah seem more appealing since it was very crowded. Exiting Le Pharoah led to the pool, tennis courts and mini golf course. All of which were not in use. At this point, I sug-

gested a second round of drinks to my tour guide, but he said that would run another 60 francs whether we chose beer, whiskey, fruit juice or Coke.

Instead, we switched nightclubs. Le Cheyenne was exactly as its sounds. Everything was based on an American Indian theme — not necessarily the Cheyenne Indians. A variety of western decorations covered the wood paneling, including Native American pictures, tomahawks, cowboy hats, and even a Confederate flag. The mix of music, a variety of Spanish, French, American and the pool tables kept my tour guide and me at the Cheyenne until sunrise. Then I began to notice people stretched out, asleep, on the couches surrounding the dance floor. It's inconceivable to believe they were passed out, because that level of intoxication would cost a small fortune. I found it interesting that French nightlife was so exciting that some people could literally sleep through it.

At sunrise, we left the Cheyenne and decided, ironically, to go to the bar for some coffee. I'm still trying to understand what was so spectacularly different about French nightlife. But, granted Ale is not Paris, where I assume nightlife is a completely different story; short of the big screen television 'the fabulous 'boites' turned out to be nothing more than the bars at home.

Karen Martinek is a Southfield resident spending a year in southern France, where she works as a nanny.

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