

Thursday, July 9, 1981

Western bars take over nightlife scene

By Ethel Simmons
staff writer

Flashy discos have given way to more homespun entertainment, and the country-western bar or restaurant is where the action is in metropolitan Detroit.

The Urban Cowboy Saloon in Westland has come full circle since the club first opened as Davey Crockett eight years ago. Owner John Saksak listed the changes, to the Outer Limits, Poison Apple, the New Trend and back to the western theme as the Urban Cowboy a year and a half ago.

A big rodeo the club sponsored as a benefit for the National Kidney Foundation was partly washed out by bad weather on a recent June weekend, but the Urban Cowboy will try again, with a benefit for the Cancer Foundation on Aug. 9.

The 12-hour jamboree is slated for 2 p.m. to 2 a.m. and will feature 10 bands and some outdoor activity with disc jockeys riding motorbikes instead of bucking broncos.

OWNER SAKSAK said the Urban Cowboy is "the only club in Detroit that doesn't have bouncers. We have no problems. It's a real homey atmosphere."

The club may be jammed with 800-1,000 customers on a good night. Its three areas include the main entertainment and dining room, a second room with big-screen TV and movies, and a third room with a mechanical bull to ride in an outdoor-like setting.

'Both women and men get on that (mechanical) bull. Women are the better riders sometimes.'

—Debra Klauka
manager of Troy's Circle P Ranch

Open from 7:30 p.m. to 2 a.m. seven nights a week, the Urban Cowboy offers Steve David and his band playing for dancing Tuesdays-Sundays and WCXI disc jockey Deano Day hosting a talent show 9:30-11 p.m. Wednesdays.

"A country bar is a little more flexible," said Saksak, contrasting entertainment styles. "All ages of customers can sit down and enjoy the music, which is not ear-shattering."

He said the Urban Cowboy's customers range "from 18- to 70-year-old people, all dancing the same stuff."

The club's decor features original Tiffany lamps and other antiques. Waitresses and barmen are in Western and 1890s attire. Beer, wine and liquor is available, no food. The Urban Cowboy is at 38419 Ford Road at Hix (phone 326-3500).

THE CIRCLE P Ranch in Troy was an Italian restaurant last year, but its same owners, Joe Sansonetti Jr. and Sr., have gone western, and serve up homemade chili and other Tex-Mex fare now.

Debra Klauka, the young redheaded manager, said, "Western bars are the thing. It used to be disco and jazz. It's a craze. It's different. I think that's why most people want country-western. It's 'Urban Cowboy' (the John Travolta movie hit)."

The club's two rooms can seat 600. There's the main dining area with bandstand and bar. The back room was converted from a banquet room to extra seating at long tables and a place to get tossed by a mechanical bull.

"People really love it," Manager Klauka said, when asked about the mechanical bull. "Both women and men get on that bull. Women are the better riders sometimes. It's not that much danger. You fall onto a mat if you fall off."

A LIVE BAND plays country music six nights a week, for three-week stints. Entertainment starts at 9 p.m. and goes till 1:30 a.m. Monday is Beer Night, when pitchers are \$3. Tuesday is Happy Hour all night long with reduced prices.

Wednesday is Cowgirl Night (after 9 p.m. two-for-one drinks, Ladies Night). Thursday is Baseball Night, with specials on beer for anyone in a baseball uniform.

Menu selections include a luncheon special, seven-ounce New York strip with Texas toast for \$2. A rib special, served 5-9 p.m., features a half-slab of ribs and fries for \$3.

Photo blowups of classic movie western heroes adorn the walls. Red-and-white checkered tablecloths brighten the main dining room. Hours are 11 a.m. to 2 a.m. Mondays-Saturdays. The Circle P Ranch is at 74 W. Maple at Livermore (phone 332-2122).

Sheehan, said, "We try to keep it real nice and clean."

J.R.'s is not named after the "Dallas" TV-show meanie, but the initials of Sheehan's wife, Stafford said.

The mechanical bull is penned in a corral topped by a mirrored ceiling. The spacious club carries the country theme throughout, with three bars, each called J.R.'s Watering Hole, and a Chuckwagon where you can pick up your own food. Waitresses also take orders at the table.

The Gong Show begins July 13 and runs every Monday, hosted by Wally Mann who has booked the entertainment for three judges to assess. Bob Burchett, WCXI disc jockey, conducts a talent show from the audience, during the night.

Wednesday nights the Rhinestone Cowgirls, a show group from Livonia, entertains. Thursday nights, Joni Lowe, WCXI astrologer, is on stage answering questions about signs of the zodiac.

Friday is Happy Hour 4-7 p.m. and Saturday is Fun Night, with a band playing for dancing starting at 9 p.m. Kansas City Southern opened Tuesday for a two-week stay.

"MACHO MUNCHIES" are a menu highlight, ranging from Nachos to Jalapenos (pickled chilis). Tex-Mex Pizza is \$1-41.25 a slice, and Dallas Burgers run from \$2.75 to \$3.25. Open Range Sandwiches and Texas Chili complete the eats.

The club houses 400 customers and is open from 8 p.m. to 2 a.m. Mondays-Saturdays, except 4 p.m. to 2 a.m. Fridays. There is a \$2 admission charge to J.R.'s on Fridays-Saturdays. T-shirts proclaiming J.R.'s Place are for sale inside.

J.R.'s Place is in the Sheldon Shopping Center, 33201 Plymouth Road at Farmington Road (phone 421-5460). Other places to go, to do your west-



ern thing, include A.W.'s Rodeo, 5835 Dixie Highway, Waterford (phone 623-9300) and Phoenix City, 27280 Woodward, Berkley (phone 542-9797). Restaurants getting in on the country

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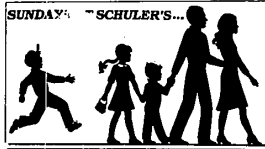
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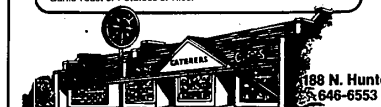
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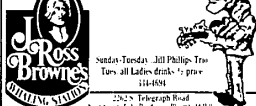
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