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Wednesday, April 1, 2009

BEST HANGOUTS

by City Pulse

coffee shop

GONE WIRED CAFE

Runners-up: Espresso Royale, East Lansing and Mama Bear's Caf

By this point, Gone Wired is as much of a community center, nonprofit boardroom, study lounge, rendezvous point and art gallery as it is a "coffee shop." Here at City Pulse HQ, it's our office away from the office. Featuring comfy booths (refurbished from the set of "Pulp Fiction," great tunes (Miles, Coltrane and The Beatles get regular rotation) and a hospitable atmosphere for anyone on Lansing's fringe (you mainstream types are welcome, too, of course), it's easy to see why voters picked this locally owned haven as their favorite coffee shop. 2021 E. Michigan Ave., Lansing. (517) 853-0550.

dance/club scene

GREEN DOOR

Runners-up: The Small Planet and Spiral Dance Bar

While we only usually see a few middle-aged women dragging their reluctant friends to the dance floor, those women apparently know how to run an effective campaign. While the sound system typically jams the same iPod playlist until the live music starts around 9 p.m., once it's going, you're likely to hear the swinging rhythm and blues and roots sounds of Steppin' In It, The DeWaynes and Charley Horse, perfect for doing that side-to-side shuffle with jazz hands. 2005 E. Michigan Ave., Lansing. (517) 482-6376.

gay/lesbian bar

SPIRAL DANCE BAR

Runner-up: The Chrome Cat

Sure, the options might be slim in mid-Michigan, but that doesn't mean Spiral wouldn't still be the hottest spot for Lansing's gay community. Friendly staff, reasonably priced drinks, hot club hits, male dancers (and occasionally female dancers) and a Sunday night drag show add up to an Old Town institution going strong for 10-plus years. 1247 Center St., Lansing. (517) 371-3221.

happy hour

HOULIHAN'S

Runners-up: The Green Door and The Peanut Barrel

Ah, happy hour. That magic time in the afternoon/evening when the drinks are cheap right when you need them to be. While other bars hang up the half-off specials around 7 p.m., Houlihan's rolls it back out from 9 p.m. until close, offering patrons half-price draught beer, house cocktails and house wine. And as general manager Andy Schubert says, "When we're talking a \$1.50, a Miller Lite is awfully good." Inside Lansing Mall, 5732 W. Saginaw Highway, Lansing. (517) 323-3550.

karaoke

CRUNCHY'S

Runners-up: Irish Pub and Sammy's

With three straight nights of Karaoke chaos (Thursday-Saturday), Crunchy's offers ample opportunity for you to prove you really should've been on "American Idol," or just make a total ass of yourself. With tons of beer on tap (some of which can be ordered by the bucket), there's plenty of liquid courage to help you make the leap into the spotlight. 254 W. Grand River Ave., East Lansing. (517) 351-2506.

open mic night

DAGWOOD'S

Runners-up: The Green Door and Magdalena's Tea House

Hosted by Lansing's much loved rootsy crooner Jen Sygit, this Tuesday night talent showcase is a great opportunity to see up-and-coming performers and old favorites in a cozy environment or show off your latest songs. Original material preferred, sign up to play by 7 p.m. 2803 E. Kalamazoo St., Lansing. (517) 374-0390.

movie theater

NCG Cinema

Runners up: Celebration Cinema, Lansing Mall Cinema

Comfortable stadium seating, 18 screens and IMAX make NCG Eastwood Lansing's go-to for flicks. In Eastwood Towne Center, 2500 Showtime Drive, Lansing. (517) 316-9100.

place to be seen

The Small Planet

Runners up: Common Ground, Old Town

After an eight-year hiatus, East Lansing's Small Planet was resurrected last spring, evolving from a crunchy, vegetarian restaurant/90s alt-rock haven into a spacious sports bar/nightclub/live music venue/pool hall/restaurant. While not necessarily the kind of place people line up around the block in striped shirts, little dresses and hootchie boots to get in, you can bet you'll see some City Pulse staffers itching to enter when seminal indie-outfit Dinosaur Jr. rolls through next week. 16800 Chandler Road, East Lansing. (517) 351-6230.

pub/tavern

THE IRISH PUB

Runners-up: Stober's and Peanut Barrel

This west side haunt's got just about anything you could want in a pub: cheap(ish) drinks, pool tables, darts, giant TVs, pinball, friendly waitstaff and plenty of room, all supplemented by weekly rounds of DJ Trivia and a rockin' karaoke night. You know a place is fun when you see the same people on Monday, Thursday and Saturday night. (Not that we're ever there that often.) 1910 W. Saginaw Highway, Lansing. (517) 482-3916.

place to meet singles

THE GREEN DOOR

Runners-up: Local shows and out and about

Good thinking, voters. You don't want to know what your potential life partner looks like when he/she's dressed to kill at some swanky club, you want to know what he or she is like drinking a beer in a blues bar. Plus, when the band gets cooking and it's so loud you can't hear a word anyone says, you can use the line, "No, I said you look fat in those pants." if

