



ALL JAZZED UP

A GUIDE TO THE BEST JOINTS AROUND SAN DIEGO

Still reeling from that steel-toed kick to the skull last week at Cane's? Or being dragged to the Johnny Mathis gig at Humphrey's three months ago? Fear not, we're here to tweak your hip quotient with an elaborate update of San Diego's most fashionable, out-of-the-way jazz *bijoux* — chic enough to make you feel hip and happenin', yet secluded enough to make you appear as shrewd as the jazz connoisseur you wish you were.

And talk about secluded: The Onyx Room tops the list as a stylish little hangout that runs underground the sidewalks of downtown Fifth Avenue, and it may be the closest thing to an authentic, no-nonsense jazz joint as you're going to get. Architecture that fuses hi-def digital imagery and modern surrealism adds a nice touch to the Dave Brubeck and Miles Davis that's covered religiously. The only thing missing is the big velvet curtain from David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* or a beret-decked hipster reciting Allen Ginsberg's "Howl." Local trumpet prodigy Gilbert Castellanos, who jammed with none other than Dizzy Gillespie, is a regular both here and at another obscured, though perhaps more frequented, gem, Excelsior in La Jolla.

Excelsior mixes the minimalism of Belgian/Japanese/French interiors with a candlelit patio and plenty of room for drinking, dancing or just taking in the salt-tinged air of La Jolla Cove. Check out the extensive list of Belgian beers, listen to sultry jazz singer Ayanna Hobson purr out her cover of Peggy Lee's "Fever," and order the ahi tuna. We don't know what they're putting in it, but it's habit-forming.

For all you more hardcore aficionados, Dizzy's is a spacious, semi-orderly club that offers no food and no alcohol, just continuous jazz performed every night by a variety of the very best in local/international acts. Founder Chuck Perrin, a musician himself, renovated the once-vacant warehouse to combat downtown's diminishing jazz scene a few years ago and hasn't looked back since. "[Dizzy's is] a collective for artists, musicians, films and theater people," Perrin says, and the man stands by his word. On any given night you might catch violin virtuoso Skye Steele — who appears well on his way to becoming the next Jean-Luc Ponty — or local Duke Mikhan Zlatkovitch.

Part of a 16th-century English tavern transplanted to America for flapper-era Hollywood screen siren Marion Davies, The Red Fox Inn makes for a charismatic addition to the list, with its dimly lit nooks and Elizabethan *milieu*. Weekends are usually your best bet, with scores of young and old downing martinis and stumbling on stage to flounder through the Frank Sinatra/Dean Martin covers. The music runs from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. every night, except Sunday, which shuts down an hour earlier, with the aforementioned weekend debauchery starting around 7 p.m.

Other local spots to get your jazz fix include Blue Lotus in Mission Hills, the legendary Croce's downtown — a must for live jazz in San Diego — and Jimmy Love's, also downtown.

FIND YOUR GROOVE ...

ONYX ROOM 852 Fifth Avenue, Downtown 619.235.6699

EXCELSIOR 1025 Prospect Street, La Jolla 858.454.8092

DIZZY'S 344 Seventh Avenue, Downtown 858.270.7467

THE RED FOX INN 2223 El Cajon Blvd., El Cajon 619.297.1313

BLUE LOTUS 741 W. Washington Street, Mission Hills 619.260.0033

CROCE'S 802 Fifth Avenue, Downtown 619.233.4355

JIMMY LOVE'S 672 Fifth Avenue, Downtown 619.595.0123