

They Might Be Giants

D&W Lounge takes the East End's sudden trendiness in working-class stride.

By Shea Serrano

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The East End's **D&W Lounge** (911 Milby) looks like it's an awful, tedious, dreadful spot for nightlife. It's an unattractive building on an unattractive road in a part of town that, despite whispers it's becoming the "new Heights," is still pretty unattractive. If Houston after

dark is *Twins*, say, and

downtown's **Hearsay Lounge** (218 Travis) is Arnold Schwarzenegger, then D&W is Danny DeVito. Like the diminutive actor, the bar gets by on familiarity and salt-of-the-earth charisma instead of looks.

The building itself is decades old, which explains its ramshackle, storefront-style appearance. It was a bar as far back as the 1940s; the current ownership team of the extremely affable Keith Weyel and his mother took over about two and a half years ago.

They changed the name from "D&D" and imported a treasure trove worth of scatterbrained decor — no kidding, inside you'll find a couple statues of famous Greeks, a variety of lamps, French provincial mirrors, a stuffed deer head, a framed Marilyn Monroe poster, a plastic horse affixed to the ceiling and more — but otherwise changed very little.

That's part of the reason D&W's longtime customers are still around.

"I've been coming here almost all my life," says retired train operator Johnnie Rosa, 72. "Over 50 years ago, it was an all-white bar. I didn't start hanging around until about 1972. Sometimes I come every day."

Rosa is part of D&W's old guard, as steadfast and likable a group of folks as you're going to find anywhere in Houston. Regardless of when you walk in, someone from this cohort of regulars will be there, whether for the \$1.50 beer on Monday, pool on Wednesdays, or karaoke on Saturdays.

Few situations in life are more unnerving than walking into a dark, unfamiliar room filled with old men and their old-men eyes boring a hole right through you. But as surly as they appear, they're almost all warm, welcoming and open to conversation.

But now a new guard has discovered the bar, and adopted it without running off the old guard.

Recently, the East End began its inevitable swing into vogue. The bungalows that characterize the

Larami Culbertson



A giant plastic horse looms over the regulars at D&W Lounge.

Where:

D&W Lounge

911 Milby

neighborhoods around the bar are now prime real estate, and young professionals have started to move in.

This new sect of late-nighters has begun sending the average age of D&W's clientele significantly downward. But the bar wasn't built with that group in mind, and their presence doesn't feel purposely trendy or ironic.

It can be tricky to successfully introduce two completely different nightlife species to each other. D&W appears to be doing just that, though, and Weyel can pinpoint the moment when he knew the merger was going to work out just fine.

"One night we had some gay people come in," he says, eyes widening. "After a while, there were about ten or 15 here. I was nervous. I didn't know how the neighborhood would handle it."

"But we were doing karaoke that night," Weyel goes on. "And it was like, nobody gave a fuck. They were cheering each other and buying each other drinks. That's when I thought, 'Yeah, this is gonna work.'"

It probably will. Haven't you seen *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia*? Danny DeVito is brilliant in it.