



Two patrons clutch after a brisk cigarette break outside of Uncle Elizabeth's, a small bar situated away from the raucous student bars closer to campus. The environment at Uncle Elizabeth's was close-knit, with many regulars frequently filling the small bar on weekends. Unlike many of the crowded bars on Kirkwood which mostly cater to students, townies and students alike congregated at this small bar blocks away from the center of town.

Whether going out for drinks or to simply socialize and chitchat, many Bloomington locals supported the city's two uncles. Uncle Fester's, a popular bar and venue, was a fan favorite.

Uncle Elizabeth's, a little known gay bar, supported a wider variety of clientele.

Good people, good drinks, good music. Uncle Fester's, check it out," was what Bloomington local Chris Cox had to say about the bar. Cox frequented Uncle Fester's with his group of friends. Cox claimed, "the music, the staff, and the overall atmosphere" turned he and his friends into Fester's regulars.

Being an extremely young bar, having opened its doors in October of 2000, it drew in lots of popular bands. Uncle Fester's was catalyst to many shows, from the groove based Addison Groove Project to the Pearl Jam cover band Evenflow to an open-mic night for striving musicians to display their talents. The bar had an upstairs with open floor in the middle so patrons could watch their favorite bands from above while avoiding the frenzy of the dance floor. Also connected to the bar was another bar, The Jungle Room, which was owned by Uncle Fester's but much smaller in size. The Jungle Room made up for its lack of size with its large selection of beers on tap.

Uncle Elizabeth's, still being a younger bar at 7 years old, was a lot harder to find, as many people did not even know of its existence. It was located off the strip at 9th and Morton in a converted double-wide trailer. Despite its welcoming nature to all points of view, it found its self lumped into a category as being "only for gays".

"I don't think Uncle Elizabeth's is just a place for 'gays or lesbians,'" said

junior Adam Szaronos. "I suppose there, you don't have to worry about a lot of the things that go on at all the regular college watering holes." Most bars, Uncle Fester's included, were known to get rowdy on weekends. "There are usually a lot of girls getting on, and it's usually a bunch of drunk guys who get way to close and then cause a scene trying to be smooth. They never realize that the girl is uncomfortable and bothered by their advances," says senior Cory Garman.

Uncle Elizabeth's was a tiny establishment, but it had a big heart. The scene in the bar was usually laid back. It seemed that unlike other places the people inside were still focused on enjoying themselves and not just going home with someone. The bar's arms were open to all visitors so long as they came with an open mind.

The two bars had so many differences but they also shared some similarities.

"While Uncle Fester's and Uncle Elizabeth's are both very separate climates, they both provide a good atmosphere for people in those climates. When I'm aching for live music and a loud party atmosphere, Uncle Fester's is the place to go. However, if I'm looking for a relaxing night with my friends and I want a place to listen to good music, and not have belligerent ass-holes groping me for my phone number, then I go to Uncle E's. It's that simple," said Kelzey Riggs from Indianapolis.

Both bars were essential to the multi-cultural essence of Bloomington. They both acted as entertainment for a Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and/or sometimes Sunday night excursion. Beyond that, each establishment reached out to its own crowd, created memories, and provided a place for all to feel embraced by their city. ♫

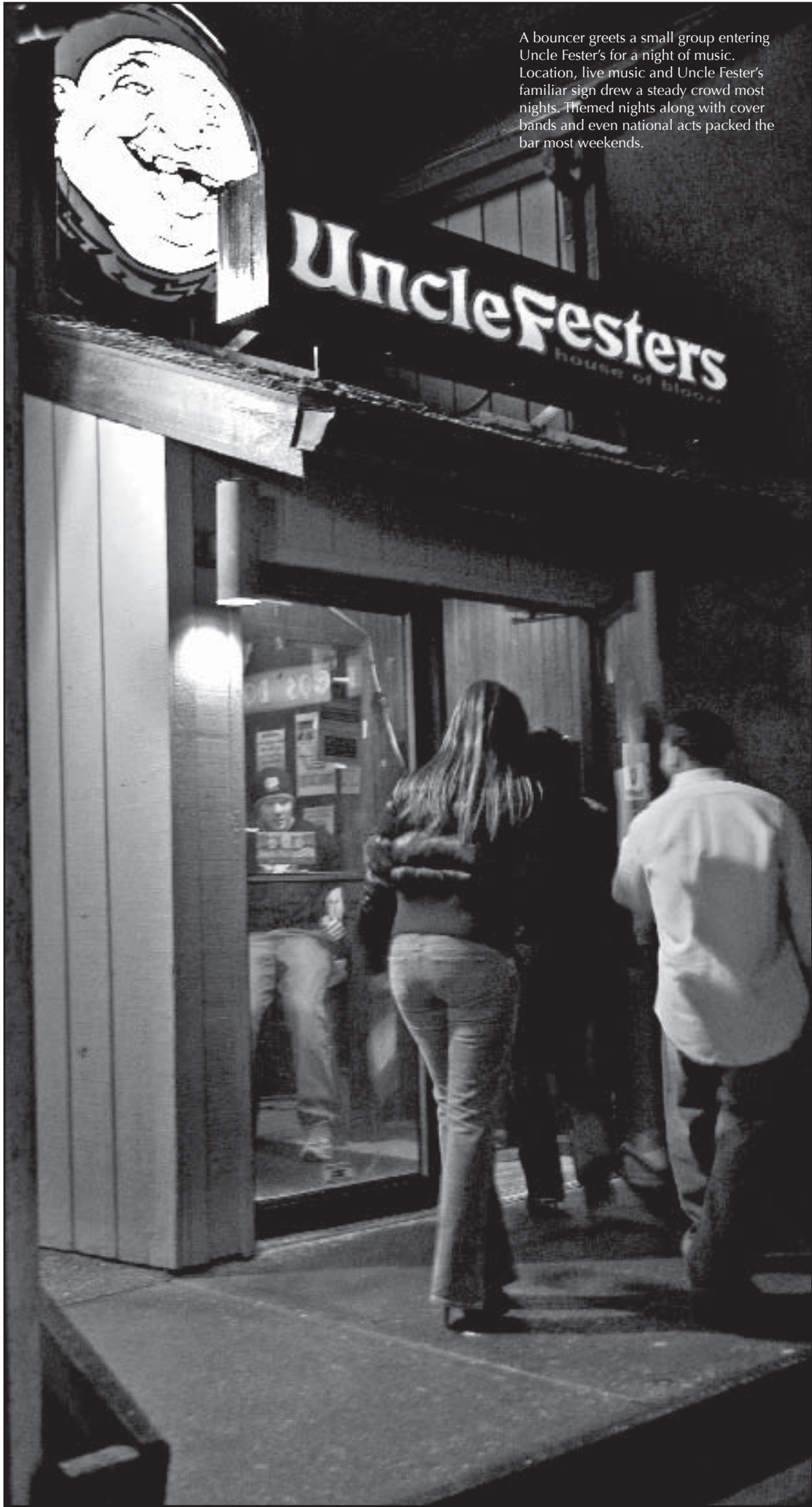
Uncle Elizabeth's and Uncle Fester's multi-cultural essence of Bloomington

say uncle

Story by Eric Carroll and Photographs by Jacob Kriese



Laughs abound in an atmosphere not unlike "Cheers" at Uncle Elizabeth's, where most patrons are known on a first name basis. Christmas lights, a solitary pool table and a jukebox warmed the small lounge. While the bar was often filled comfortably on the weekends, it was a world away from the sardine-packed quality of the student bars on Kirkwood.



A bouncer greets a small group entering Uncle Fester's for a night of music. Location, live music and Uncle Fester's familiar sign drew a steady crowd most nights. Themed nights along with cover bands and even national acts packed the bar most weekends.



Seniors Nina Onesti and Katie Crockett giggle and whisper as Josh Turner looks on. Uncle Fester's hosted 25 cent beers every Wednesday, with a DJ on hand to keep the dance floor packed.

An exasperated patron speezes herself away from the crowded upstairs bar at Uncle Fester's. A large dance floor on the bottom floor accounted for most of the space, with a narrow balcony, often filled with onlookers, went around the top.

