

WHEN IS A NASTY DIVE A GOOD THING?

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Nasty's definitely qualifies as a neighborhood dive in the best sense of the word. It's dim; it's dark; you wouldn't want to eat anything that dropped on the floor (three-second rule doesn't apply here); the bartenders are friendly; the patrons know each other; the jukebox contains everything from the very "in" (and fabulous) Death Cab for Cutie to perfect-for-singalongs Guns N' Roses. Contrary to some dives' procedures, there's also lots of good beer — Fireman's #4, Live Oak HefeWeizen, etc. You can still get cheap beer such as Miller High Life ("The Champagne of Beers"), and daily specials make them even cheaper. Or you can try fruity margaritas (made, for the record, with a modicum of Everclear, in addition to the usual liquor).

Nasty's is most famous for its body-to-body (booty-to-booty?) Monday hip-hop nights. I went once or twice my first year in grad school but quickly reaffirmed that I am the whitest, most rhythmless of white girl dancers and haven't made it back since. My very dance-capable friend Anderson — who's particularly good at hip-hop moves — says the night is still going strong (though he prefers clubs with more room to move). On quieter nights (say, Tuesdays), there's plenty of room to play pool or shoot metal-tipped darts (for dartboard use only). A small stage hosts the occasional band/open mike as well as DJs. And there's a very nice beer garden — wooden decking, wooden tables, lots of fresh air.

After my friend Amy's playoff kickball game on a Thursday night, she and I, along with some friends, trundled off to Nasty's to meet my brother Chris and some of his rugby buddies.

In addition to being a hip-hop haven and dive, Nasty's is also home to the rugby crew. Owner Jack Bloom played rugby with the Austin Huns for 20-odd years, and there's an entire case of trophies and gear along one wall, and tons of team photos. Chris used to play with the Huns and hung out at Nasty's regularly when he lived in town. Though Chris is seven years younger than I am, he gets plenty protective of me. The handful of times I joined him there after one of his games, he'd shoo me out of the bar after a single drink, lest his buddies try to get a rise out of him by making comments about his sister. (And, quite frankly, lest his sister witness his merrymaking with his buddies.) But that Thursday night, I got to hang around for a couple of beers. And was invited to stay for more. But, I'll admit it, I was tired. So I told his friends to keep him out of trouble ("Yes, Mrs. Muldoon," one responded respectfully and without a trace of irony, as if I were Chris' mother) and proceeded directly to bed.

I'd say that I whimpered home after a couple of beers because I'm getting old. But I know that's not true. It was because I had to work early the next morning, because after a long, evil lapse, I'm back in the pool and desperately trying to work up to 10 miles a week and my body hurts. I know it's not that I'm getting old, because a couple weeks ago, Whiskey Susan was in town, and we ratcheted it up — enough that we both drunk-

dialed my boyfriend John. And the next morning, when he and his father showed up at 8 a.m. to start building a deck in my back yard, I was clean, showered, with hammer in hand, determined that his father not think I was a layabout/party girl/work-ethic-less hangover of a woman. Sadly, John had clued him in to my rough night. His father just smiled and winked a little: "I was in the Navy," he said, and started unloading his tools.
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