

# Liquifying the locals

By Zach Fridell

When Norm walked into Cheers, the bar on the old American TV show, everyone at the bar drinking would yell "Norm!" and greet him as he sat down.

That doesn't happen in exactly the same fashion at Liquid Lounge in Surin, but this friendly neighborhood bar – or "local", as Brits and Aussies would call it – gets as close to that welcoming, home-bar feeling as possible.

In place of Cheers' rustic wooden bar and lackluster service by Woody Harrelson, Liquid Lounge is a modern, trendy bar with artwork on the walls, low couches and chairs on the perimeter and a pool table with red felt in the back.

There's good reason for the intimate atmosphere as well: it's a bar for friends, made by friends. The idea began when 10 guys wanted to pitch in some money to have a bar in Surin that they could call their own. When word got out, the idea spread quickly and the number of shareholders jumped to 25 – with five more spaces available.

Twenty of those shareholders live in the area, the other five are based in Hong Kong. On any given night in Surin you're likely to see at least a few of them in the bar.

Owner Stewart Lees bought the shophouse in early 2005 and refitted it to provide two apartments and a penthouse living area at the top, with Liquid Lounge on the ground floor. Now, with manager Matthew Wesley, the club does brisk business, with several shareholders and friends in at a time to supplement the regular customers.

Music at Liquid Lounge is exactly how you would expect it to be given the name: relaxed. Cafe Del Mar and 30,000 more tracks grace the computer in the corner used as a DJ booth.

The drink menu is wide ranging and reasonably priced. Bottles of beer and shots sell for 100 baht each. Pints of Guinness are 250 baht.



There are a few bar signature drinks that are not to be missed, notably the Sambuca shots, served flaming with three coffee beans (traditionally signifying health, wealth and happiness), and the Jäger-bombs served by dropping a shot of Jägermeister and vodka into a glass of Red Bull.

A happy hour from 6 to 7 pm offers "buy one get one free" for all local beers, house wines and cocktails.

Food can also be ordered in from nearby restaurants, giving a

wide variety of choices for bar nosh; Sushi is popular, as is pizza and other Italian food.

The bar is also notable for what it's not. It is not a place with bar girls angling for a drink, nor is it an exclusive club.

It is, however, an excellent place to sit, drink, and if you go a few times, everybody knows your name.

*Liquid Lounge is on the Surin Beach road, next to Lemongrass House. Open daily from 4 pm to 1 am.*



BEYOND THE NORM: The Liquid Lounge (left) is run is laid-back, friendly way by Stewart and Matt (above) and is already a favorite with the ladies (below).




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