

Nobody covers Snowmass like the Sun

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Let's get this party started

By Mike Canino
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The sleepy nights of the pre-renaissance Snowmass have given way to a more upbeat tempo.

No longer is Snowmass in the shadow that Aspen has cast upon it for years. After a \$1 billion or more investment, a new light is now shining on a village that shows promise of completing the skiing/snowboarding/après-ski experience.

The 2008/09 winter season has brought about one of the biggest facelifts that Snowmass has seen. New eateries, bars and retail shops have sprouted up all around the new Base Village.

A festive, though soggy, ribbon-cutting for the new base area commercial businesses was held Dec. 22. (Please see related story, *this page*.)

Sneaky's Tavern, the Office at the Cirque, Junk and Liquid Sky and The Sweet Life (serving adult drinks in addition to the diner-style food) have all come online in the revamped village. They join established night life outposts Mountain Dragon, Zane's, Nardi's, the Big Hoss and Brothers Grille, among others.

A new addition to the Snowmass Village Mall comes from the hands of Peter Nardi. The Hideaway, located adjacent to Nardi's self-named restaurant and across from Zane's, opened for business on Dec. 19. "Take the Wheel," a local favorite, has been

named the house band at the brand new club. As windows line the backdrop of the stage, the small intimate setting offers après skiers and night owls perhaps the best views in Snowmass.

The doors to The Hideaway opened at about 3:30 p.m. on Friday, as the music and drinks lured patrons well into the night. Even Santa Claus made an appearance.

"We're very excited about this place," said Nardi. "Myself and my great staff have been working very hard to make this happen."

Sneaky's Tavern is also up and running heading into the holiday week. This comfortable, classy joint has already begun to attract both regulars and first-timers by the bundles. Lounging couches, a cozy fireplace and a friendly staff have made the new Base Village establishment an instant hit.

"It's been absolutely great up to this point," said Sneaky's manager Matt Barber. "We're seeing a very good flow of people throughout the day and at night. Right now we're staying open until 9 p.m., but that could change depending on the amount of people traffic we see into the later hours."

Old standard

From the brand-spankin' new to the traditional watering holes, such as the Mountain Dragon, there's something and somewhere for everyone to call their favorite.

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Owner of the Mountain Dragon, long-time Villager and former Mayor Doug "Merc" Mercatoris said: "This is definitely one of the most popular late-night bars in Snowmass. It's a place where the tourists can come in and feel at home with the locals. I opened this bar in 1985 and to this day it is the only place in town with a real dart board," he added with a chuckle.

The Dragon also has two pool tables, a foosball table and great music.

"Snowmass is such a great community," said Mountain Dragon bartender Mo Mogollon. "The Dragon is like a second home for a lot of people around here. It's a great place to grab a drink with some friends, truly a place where everyone knows your name," he said.

Here it's not uncommon to fall into a conversation with a lone stranger at the bar, as his stories of "the early days of Snowmass" seem to add to the bar's historical vibe.

"I remember when there was no snowmelt in the mall. Hell, I remember when there wasn't really even a mall," one patron shouted from across the bar. "Ticket sales and lessons were run out of a 40-foot trailer just below (what is now the Dragon)."

That was about 35 years ago.

The doors to the Dragon are open seven days a week from 2 p.m. to 2 a.m. They will be holding a special New Year's party, no cover charge, and offering a free champagne toast at the stroke of midnight.

Good new days

The much anticipated Junk and Liquid Sky opened for business on Monday night at the Base Village grand opening party, as heaps of drink seekers and food lovers waited patiently outside to catch their first glimpse of the establishment.



Mike Canino/Snowmass Sun
Mountain Dragon bartender Mo Mogollon pours a fresh brew for a loyal patron. Existing businesses on the mall seem revitalized by the opening of some new bars in the base area.

Although Monday was considered a "soft-opening," Junk and Liquid Sky will be open for good on Christmas morning.

"A lot of people were just blown away on Monday night," said owner Scott DeGraff. "The amount of people who live in Snowmass who came up to me and said 'thank you' was just so gratifying. There were a lot of smiles throughout the place that night, and that's all we can ask for."

With their variety of menu options and bar line-up, one can be treated like a king with bottle service and lounging chairs, gourmet s'mores and heated patios.

Just like the good old times, The Office at the Cirque has kept much of the same flavor as the former Cirque. Located at the end of the mall, The Office is a quick pick for a cold brew and hot food. Owned by Jeffrey Klein, the fresh look of the old place includes a giant flat screen television for movie nights, a Nintendo Wii station and a state of the art DJ booth.

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