

# Making the most of Tuesday night out

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Tuesdays are my night. It's a strange night to go out, but in Manchester it's a ritual.

Tuesdays. Strange Brew Tavern. On Market Street. I'm not the only one who's figured it out, judging by the packed house every week.

And it's the eclectic mix of people that's so striking. Poor college students mix with beer snobs and radio personalities. Blowhards bellow about local politics and presidential candidates. A business man in a suit mixes with a girl with a mohawk and facial piercings. People searching for a one-night stand huddle around a table next to a Vietnam vet in a wheelchair who just wants to hear the blues. And all of these people share a common good mood.

In a city that struggles at times to find its artistic side, the Strange Brew on a Tuesday night is culturally significant. It's Manchester's painting. The colors are the characters perched on barstools, slinging draft beers, and bouncing the door. There's Jeff, my co-worker, who comes to let off a little steam. Jeff is one of those rare individuals who is a caricature of himself at times. Imagine a dark comedy version of Jimmy Durante and you have Jeff. He'll shout, "I own this town!" while trading barbs with his friends and beers with Dennis the bartender. There always seems to be a celebrity look-alike. Some nights you might catch a glimpse of David Crosby or Ernest

Hemingway. The Crosby-Hemingway clan seem to frequent the brew. It's my belief that as you grow older and your facial hair gets greyer, you have two choices for looks. David Crosby or Ernest Hemingway.

There's P.I. Mike who will capture you with his stories of undercover investigation and then argue with you for hours on end about politics. There's the inevitable first-timer who looks in bewilderment at the carnival before him. You can almost hear his mind wonder if this is the right place. There's the surly waitress, who refuses to serve my friends and me after a rather rude encounter with us months ago. And then there's Mitch, the owner. He usually makes his way down after 9 p.m. to survey the crowd and

shake hands with the regulars as they exit. Mitch looks like a menacing figure and there's something in his eyes that says he's serious. And he is. This is his roost and he's there to make sure the place is under control. Yet Mitch treats everyone equally and cracks a sly smile with those handshakes at the

door. He's a black belt, but he's gentle with those who've reached into their pocket even if all they're grabbing is \$2 for a draft brew.

Sometimes, I scan the room and wonder if I'm looking at something bigger than the sum of its parts. My friend Kevin, who is a rare combination of a teetotaler and comic, never misses Tuesday nights. He doesn't even drink, yet he wouldn't miss it. Maybe it's the free popcorn, maybe it's that blues music. Or maybe it's an event. Yeah, I think it's an event. I get the feeling that those moments are fleeting. There's a nervous back-riding tension that I feel when I'm there, like I have to make an appearance because it won't be there next week.

Did people in Haight-Ashbury have that feeling? Did they see the end coming or was that 'high and beautiful wave' never going to crest? And here they are, all those parts strung together on Tuesdays. Literally—a strange brew concocted of spilled beer, good friends, and better times.

That reminds me, it's Tuesday.



Adam McCune