

Wicker Park's Empire has dive-bar feel, but no grunge



SUSANNA'S NIGHT OUT

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First there was Elm Street Liquors, and then Victory Liquors opened in September. Now the lounge triumvirate is complete with the grand opening of Empire Liquors Friday night.

The third in a series of dive-bar-themed lounges, the Wicker Park bar at 1566 N. Milwaukee attracted about 600 people to the grand opening. It was hosted by Matt Eisler, partner in all of the outposts.

Hoping to attract both starving artists and yuppies, the bar offers drinks ranging from \$3 cans of Pabst Blue Ribbon to \$150 shots of cognac.

"It's got a cool vibe, but it's not too grungy like a lot of the [Wicker Park] area is," says guest Denny Mehegan.

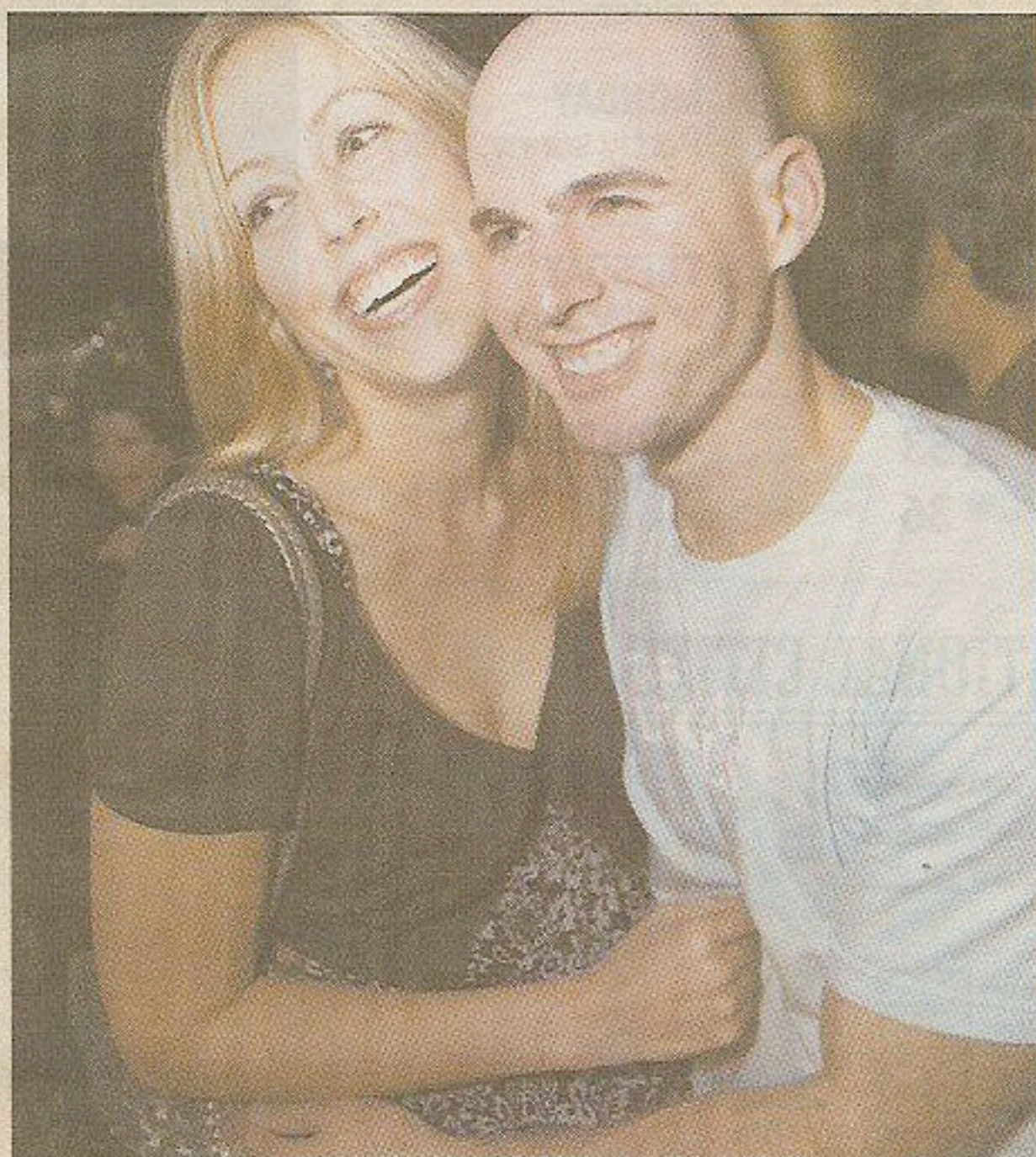
It's also one of the only places in the area that spins hip-hop music, although some house, rock and reggae are mixed in for good measure.

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It's hard not to notice **Jon Imerman**. Dressed in an Imerman Angels T-shirt emblazoned with wings, he's got a shiny, shaved head and practically squeals with enthusiasm whenever he talks about cancer.

Diagnosed at 26 with Stage III testicular cancer, Imerman is now 31 and a survivor. Six months ago, he quit his full-time consulting job to devote his time to pairing cancer survivors with the newly diagnosed. Today, about 200 volunteer "angels" offer one-on-one support through his charity.

IMERMAN ANGELS PARTY



FLYING HIGH: Michelle Molise and Imerman Angels founder Jon Imerman.



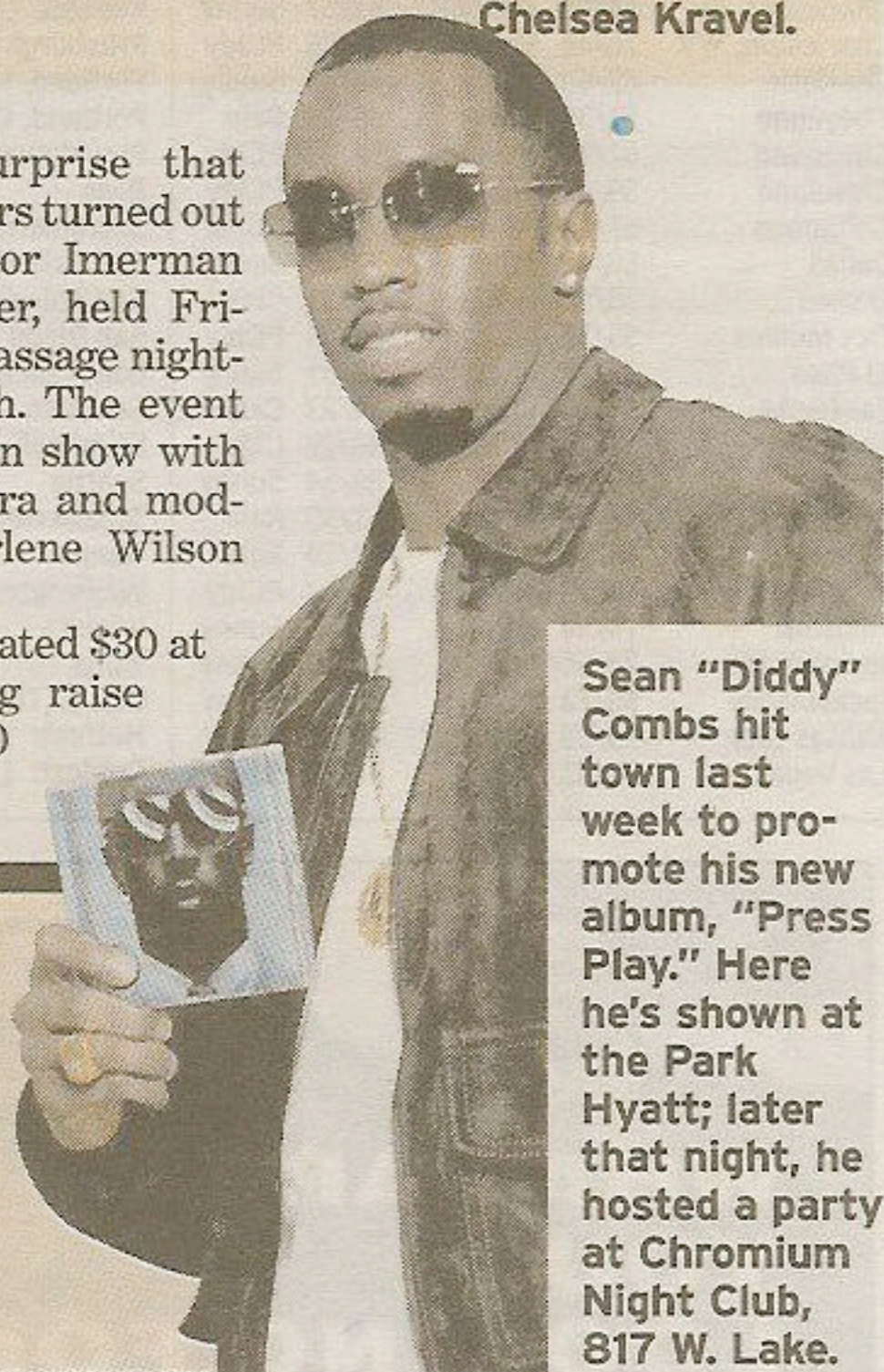
CHEEK TO CHEEK: Earl Williams and Pallavi Vedam.



HELLO, ANGELS: Elizabeth Aguirre (left) and Chelsea Kravel.

So it's no surprise that nearly 500 hipsters turned out for the first major Imerman Angels fund-raiser, held Friday night at Le Passage nightclub, 937 N. Rush. The event featured a fashion show with clothes from Akira and models from the Arlene Wilson agency.

Partygoers donated \$30 at the door, helping raise more than \$13,000 for the charity.



Sean "Diddy" Combs hit town last week to promote his new album, "Press Play." Here he's shown at the Park Hyatt; later that night, he hosted a party at Chromium Night Club, 817 W. Lake.

PARTY WATCHING

Friday night, party with Penthouse Pets, including **Melissa Jacobs**, **Brea Lynn** and **Nevaeh**, and the Lincoln Park Young Professionals at "Rock Hard." Hard Rock Hotel, 230 N. Michigan. 6-9 p.m. \$40-\$50. www.ticketweb.com. (312) 642-5097.