



Jon Sall / Sun Times

You won't find any ferns growing at Lemming's. The Wicker Park is unpretentious and cozy.

# Everyday People

## Just Plain Folks Wash Up at Lemming's

By Jae-Ha Kim  
Staff Writer

Lemming's is the type of bar that gives neighborhood dives a good name. Unpretentious, reasonably priced and cozy (as far as bars go, anyhow), the Wicker Park night spot has been a favorite with locals for a while now, and with good reason.

"There's nothing fancy or artificial about the place," said Steve Arthur, waiting for his turn at pool. "I hate those fern bars or those really plastic places where all these kids wearing Gap clothes hang out. Those aren't bars. Those are poseur places."

Couldn't have said it better myself.

Lemming's is always dimly lit, which leads me to believe that it's best seen at night. The ambience is pretty low key.

"What is that?" I asked, regarding an unidentifiable abstract painting.

"I'm not sure," manager Steve Kopka said. "My girlfriend says it looks like monkeys touching themselves." (If that appeals to you, you'll be pleased to know that all the art is for sale.)

Before renovation, the almost three-year-old bar was smaller and a bit seedier. The kitchen used to be where the washrooms are now. And the small poolroom was added in the back, in an area that used to be someone's apartment. FYI: There's free pool until 7 p.m. After that, it's a buck a game.

One night, some friends and I were playing pool-well, they were playing, and I was trying to keep up. We ended up playing against a member of the local rock band the Howards. The other side won-big time.

"We get some celeb-type people," Kopka said. "The Howards come here all the time, Liz Phair's guitarist.... Most of the people who hang out in the 'hood will make their rounds and stop by for

a pint."

But the regulars don't come by to gawk at anyone. They're just there to hang.

"I've been coming here since the beginning," Jan Gonzalez said. "It was kinda gross before they remodeled, but I still liked it because it was really real and the people were all so nice and cool. I hate those places where everyone stands around waiting for other people to notice them. That's so gross. Here, everyone's just themselves, even though more artsy people are hanging out here now. Even they're not really obnoxious."