

THE HUNT FOR GREEN OCTOBER

Where are U of T students supposed to drink in the Annex now that the Green Room is closed?

JOE HOWELL drags **SEAN MACKAY** and **TOM CARDOSO** around town to find out.

Photos by *TOM CARDOSO*



DOWN AN ALLEYWAY AND THEN INTO ANOTHER, THERE EXISTED A BAR THAT WAS THE STUFF OF LEGEND.

Yes, it had mice. Yes, someone might puke in a corner and the staff would blithely ignore it. And yes, the ashtrays in the grotto would build up into cancerous little pyramids without anyone emptying them. A thousand times yes!

All the stories are true — go ahead and make up your own. Although if you've been at U of T for more than two months you probably don't have to. The thing was, though, none of these damning tales mattered. Like Owen Wilson's broken nose or the Tower of Pisa's drunken lean, these imperfections only added to the Green Room's charm.

And really, what did you expect? There were hardly any food or drink options on the menu that cost more than four dollars. The place was dimly yet cheerily lit with beer bottle candles and coloured lights, and there was always indie rock on the sound system, frequently a classic album playing in its entirety.

The walls were covered in eclectic art, the staff were great when not overwhelmed, and the meatheads and jocks that plague other Annex locations mostly stayed away. Truly, it was God's country — just without the whole cleanliness-being-next-to-godliness thing.

Unfortunately, The Man didn't find the Green Room's grunginess so endearing, and after repeated health violations the place was shut down. On September 22, an angry red DineSafe "CLOSED" notice shuttered our incorrigible little dive bar, perhaps for good, and The Varsity's motley collection of drunken journalists have been at a loss ever since.

Where are we supposed to go after production? Where will we celebrate victories and lament defeats? After a month of crying another tear into our beer at sanitary yet soulless pubs like The Pump, we decided to take action. We would find the new Green Room, or die of alcohol poisoning trying.

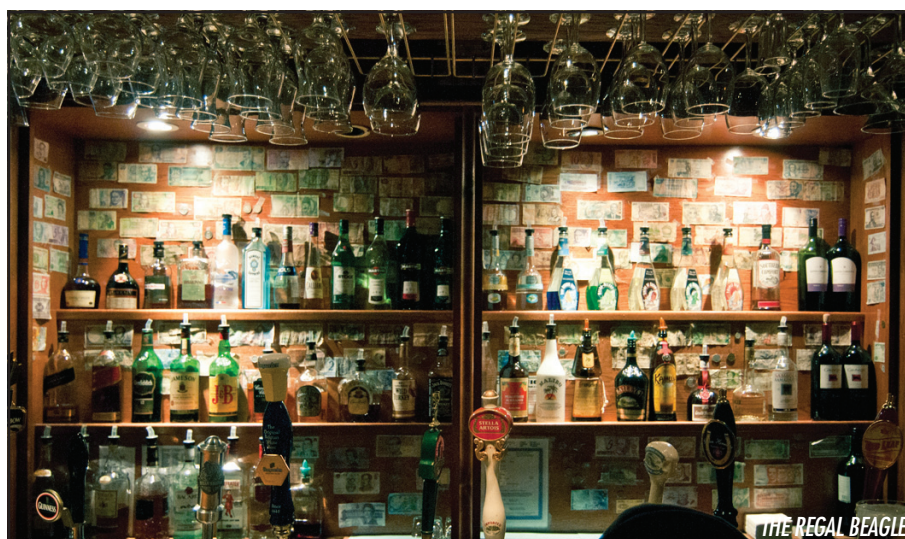
So on a dreary Tuesday night, in the middle of a "weather bomb" that was difficult not to turn into pathetic fallacy in the wake of Ford's mayoral win, I assembled a few of this paper's more notorious lushes: Sean, who's been known to enjoy a snifter of port at Christmas; Tom, who likes to shoot photos and drinks with silly names; and Andrew, the famous Ten-dollar Wine Snob, who bailed when he discovered the plonk-tasting I'd lured him out with was a ruse.

The three of us set out for Bloor Street. Our mission: visit as many Annex bars as humanly possible, and see if we couldn't find a watering hole that would fill the hole in our hearts left by the health inspector.

THE REGAL BEAGLE

The first stop on our tour was the flavourless Beagle. From the outset we could tell this pub, sparsely populated with as many TVs as lonely-looking dudes, wasn't for us. But since it's geographically closest to our corner of campus, we figured we'd give it a try.

Not to give this dog a bad name, but it suffers from a real identity crisis. We heard the Beatles, Bob Marley, and Lykke Li in the 15 or so minutes we spent there, and the drink list was stuffed with vile-sounding teenage concoctions like "Killer Kool-Aid" and the "Dirty Monkey," even though the clientele was mostly middle-aged. And the lights! It was so bright in there. We like places where people won't realize how homely we are. That being said, the bartender was extremely friendly.



SEAN MACKAY: This bar has potential but it lacks focus. They're going in too many directions at once and not doing a good job with any of them (friendly staff excluded). And what's going on with the music in this place? There's no harm in being eclectic, but this sounds like they've put someone's iPod on shuffle and didn't bother to filter out the missteps that are inevitable when you let a machine choose the songs.

TOM CARDOSO: This place has no personality. It's not trying to be anything, and because of that, it doesn't really cater to anyone in particular. I get a feeling that the only people that come here are accidental passers-by who aren't familiar with the area and don't know any better. I guess there's a reason I've only ever been here twice.

THE MADISON

Next up was the infamous super-bar, the Maddy. I once spent a summer boarding at a frat house, and the entire pan-Hellenic community would congregate here every Monday to discuss the origins of Greek democracy, debate foreign policy, and get their mack on. Having neglected to GTL before leaving the office, I was skeptical we'd fit in here, but Sean figured we could order Jägerbombs at one of the Maddy's nine bars, and blend right in.

SM: After a long day of work, I'm feeling a bit exhausted as we climb to the second floor of the Maddy. Luckily, inhaling half a can of Red Bull along with a shot of delicious Jägermeister gives you a great buzz. These frat dudes are on to something.

TC: As maligned as the Maddy might be, I actually don't mind it. Heck, I might even like it. It's nice and big, looks pretty clean, and the service is good. It's also mildly entertaining that you can sit on the patio for a while with a bunch of fratty 20-somethings, then go down to the basement and watch a bunch of drunk 50-year-olds play darts (it can get surprisingly competitive). Still, the fratty vibes I get from this place don't really float my boat.

JAMES JOYCE

This bar makes about as much sense as *Finnegans Wake*. At the front door, we're into the green lights and sign promising cheap drinks, but confused by the karaoke cover of Pearl Jam's break-up classic "Black" drifting into the streets. Inside, blue-collar pub types cohabit uneasily with twenty-somethings who look like they got lost on their way to Parkdale. TVs play