

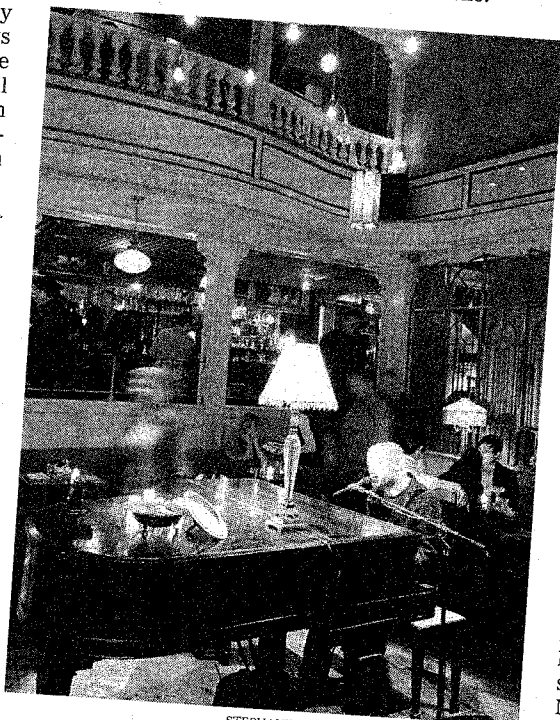
In Hollywood, Lace and Velvet Along With Bukowski and Liszt

By SAMANTHA BONAR

INCONGRUOUSLY planted next to a Borders Books and Music on Vine Street, an easily missed neon sign optimistically announces Ivan Kane's Café Wa s. (It originally read "Café Always Open," but only the red W, A and S still lighted up when Ivan Kane, the owner, unearthed it from a "neon graveyard" in Las Vegas.)

Stepping over Angela Lansbury's Walk of Fame star into the steel-and-concrete former Schwab's is somewhat akin to falling down the rabbit hole, if it was in New Orleans Square in Disneyland. The French-bistro-style café's interior is a bohemian burst of vintage forest-green wallpaper, artfully torn, featuring a pair of strolling Parisian poodles; fringed silk lampshades; old gilded mirrors; thick velvet curtains over black lace sheers; sooty wrought-iron railings; black lacquer tables, and red velvet booths. A painting of the composer Franz Liszt is placed on its side over the doorway leading to the

(Charles) Bukowski Lounge, its walls haphazardly papered with pages from his novels. A staircase leads nowhere, and balconies are alight with candles. One might call the look shabby-chic bordello.



CIRCLING A rotating piano at Café Wa s.

STEPHANIE DIANI FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Mr. Kane also created the Forty Deuce burlesque nightclubs in Hollywood and Las Vegas, and the clubs Kane and Deep in Los Angeles, which are all now closed. In a nod to the economy, his new club offers "flask service" in place of the once-popular bottle service, serving hard liquor bottles in brown paper bags.

The center of the space, which opened in Hollywood in September, is dominated by a slowly revolving 1924 Mason & Hamlin grand piano. The live music makes it seem like a "cool, New York-y jazz club" said Amy Rocha, 29, a public relations executive dining on crab

cakes and beet salad with three girlfriends. "It's more of an adult Hollywood club."

But the ivory-tickling displeased a pair from San Diego sitting in the mezzanine bar sipping absinthe cocktails. "It reminds me of Nordstrom's or a cruise ship," said one of them, Susan Sutton, 45, a registered nurse. The two planned to abandon the joint after finishing their drinks. This would have been impossible on a cruise ship.

When the pianist takes a break, a not-too-imaginative classic rock and jazz selection — Dylan, the Grateful Dead, the Stones, the Animals, John Coltrane, Leonard Cohen, Radiohead — plays over the sound system.

"When I heard they had soufflé, I was very excited to come," said Rosie Pondeva, 21, a journalism student at California State University, Northridge. "It's a nice, relaxing atmosphere."

The food may take a little too much of a Frenchified turn for those grossed out by frog-leg drumsticks and spongy fried brains.

Hemingway famously called Paris a moveable feast, but who knew it could pop up down the street from Smoothie King and Game Stop?

Café Wa s

1521 North Vine Street, Los Angeles; (323) 466-5400

SIGHTINGS Dave Navarro, Kirsten Dunst, Dennis Hopper, Heather Graham, Steven Soderbergh, Paula Abdul, Shia LaBeouf, Laurence Fishburne.

HOURS Nightly 6 p.m. to 2 a.m., full menu until closing; lunch, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday to Friday; brunch, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Reservations suggested but not required.

DRESS CODE Boho chic.

PIANIST'S PICKS "Creep" by Radiohead, "Space Oddity" by David Bowie, "Wonderwall" by Oasis, "Heart of Saturday Night" by Tom Waits, "Somebody Told Me" by the Killers.

SIGNATURE DRINK Fleur du Mal — vodka, St-Germain, fresh lime juice, simple syrup and rosé Champagne with a lemon twist.