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Club Scene

Concert scene again lives large at Wo Fat

By [Derek Paiva](#)
Advertiser Staff Writer

Everybody loves Kristien.

At least at downtown Honolulu's self-proclaimed "oldest restaurant in Hawai'i" Wo Fat, where local promoter Kristien Amer has been staging live music parties for the larger part of the last decade.

The wait help often buzzes by our table overlooking the afternoon din of Hotel Street to ask if Amer wants something to eat or drink. Restaurant manager Renny Kuo, whom she affectionately calls "the Schneider of Wo Fat" (referencing a certain jack-of-all-trades building manager in the '70s sitcom "One Day At A Time") happily escorts us to the Chinese restaurant's now-shuttered third-floor ballroom.

In return, the ever-ebullient Amer sings the praises of the staff's hard work and continued efforts at keeping the struggling downtown landmark open. After being shuttered for a good chunk of the 1990s, the restaurant reopened last year to very little fanfare save for Amer's return to the venue in January for near-monthly live band concerts.

Set for tonight, her latest Wo Fat all-local band fest, dubbed Look Fun Gemini (in honor of Amer and her friends' June birthdays and a Wo Fat menu item) features ska punks Go Jimmy Go, hip-hop/reggae band Wrecking Crew, acid jazzers Quadraphonix and punk rockers Extra Stout.



Pennsylvania punk/skater band Camp Kill Yourself was the main attraction at Wo Fat at an April blowout. Tonight's whiplash features local bands at the landmark Chinese restaurant.

Richard Walker

Look Fun Gemini

Featuring Go Jimmy Go, Quadraphonix, Wrecking Crew, Extra Stout

9 p.m.-2 a.m. today Wo Fat restaurant, second floor, 115 North King St.

\$8

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"There's some weird energy that happens here that I really can't explain," says the almost 30-year-old Amer, gushing about the century-old building and restaurant while effortlessly spouting historical tidbits of its vaunted Honolulu history. "(The restaurant) still needs help. And it's in the only eclectic and interesting neighborhood in Hawai'i anyway."

A free-lance graphic artist and Web site designer, Amer couldn't resist the temptation to stage more of her notoriously raucous Wo Fat concerts after returning in October 2000 to find her fave restaurant/concert venue (which had closed in 1994) again open for business. Amer, who began self-promoting monthly live punk and ska dance concerts in Wo Fat's ballroom in 1993 before she moved to Los Angeles in 1997, now kicks out the tables and chairs and stages her shows in the establishment's larger second-floor restaurant dining space.

"It's like a giant loft," says Amer, scanning the sunlit restaurant while attempting to describe its kitschy after-hours aura for the uninitiated. "I sometimes turn most of these chandeliers on, but we get a lot of light from the street at night. The stage over there is lit up with different colored lights. I outline the dragon paintings with white lights. Everyone wants these booths lined up around the windows because you can see everything that's going on on the streets."

The restaurant's six late-lunch customers seemingly get up all at once from their various tables as Amer rhapsodizes about someday turning the entire building into a nonprofit arts foundation.

"I'd love to buy this building one day," she says, smiling. "I really would. I mean, if I ever had enough money."

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