



Inauthenticity Is the Real Deal

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Is there such a thing as an authentic bar? A bar totally devoid of pretense? Because, after all, the best bars (**The Chat Room, 7th Haven, Sarah's Place**) are just really good simulacrum of awesome rec rooms.

I got to thinking about bar authenticity the other day after walking into **Buffalo Joe's**, a relatively new sports bar in the space formerly occupied by the dearly departed **Moni's Italian Kitchen** in **Saginaw**. Buffalo Joe's is a single cavernous room with a full bar, lots of TVs (broadcasting all of the PPV UFC fights on Saturday nights), some video games, an internet jukebox, a couple of pool tables, free Wi-Fi service, and a full bar menu (chicken wings, burgers, nachos). All of the servers are women, and all of them wear tight bottoms and tight tops. On the night of my visit, the crowd was mostly male, and one of the waitresses had cued up a steady stream of modern cock-rock.

Clearly, Buffalo Joe's is going for a man-cave vibe, a clever gamble — that part of Saginaw is devoid of places for fans of obnoxious music, cheap beer (specials daily), and scantily clad chick servers. (Well, there are a lot of actual man-caves in the area, carved out of people's garages, but that's a whole 'nother story.) The nearest nonresidential man-caves are **Overtime Bar & Grill** on North Beach Street in Fort Worth, where the waitresses wear **skimpy referee uniforms**, and **Dublin Square** near the intersection of I-35 and Western Center Boulevard, where the waitresses wear **skimpy schoolgirl outfits**.



I'll be rooting for Buffalo Joe's. For one thing, it's not a chain. So there's that. For another, it's as authentic — or inauthentic — as any of my favorite places, even though it's not my kind of place. I have nothing against attractive women in barely there clothing. I also have nothing against cheap beer. Most importantly, I have nothing against hard-rock music. I played guitar in several hair-metal bands when I was a kid, and when songs by **Stella Rose, Blood of the Sun, and The Dangits** pop up on my iPod, I rarely skip them. But do I want to listen to hard song after brutally loud hard song at a bar, especially after a long day's work? Absolutely not. But, hey, you say, you could have easily got off your ass, walked over to the jukebox, and played **Steely Dan, Art Blakey**, or whatever other kind of girly pablum you listen to. True, and while I enjoy enlightening the unwashed with my superior taste in music, I'm also an empath. I can detect the slightest amount of human suffering a mile away. And many humans at Buffalo Joe's would have been suffering were Donald Fagan to proclaim the joys of Josie's return home or Art Blakey to spend "A Night in Tunisia."

Will I go back? Probably. The bar is close to my house, the service was excellent, and the beer was cheap. I'll just wear earplugs.

Flip's — the one in **Fort Worth**, not Grapevine — has no pretensions at becoming anything other than a nice place to hang out and dine on top-quality food. The spacious bar/restaurant, as I've been assured by a knowledgeable source, does not want to become a **live music venue**. However, if you've been there recently, you might have seen and heard a singer-songwriter or two. Flip's has begun hosting solo acoustic acts weekly on the spacious patio. Though the vibe of **CrossCountry Tuesdays** seems geared toward **Texas Music** — **Steve Helms, Bobby Duncan, and Rich O'Toole** are past performers — blue-eyed soul shaker **Josh Weathers** has made a couple of appearances. His show last Tuesday was packed. A nice touch: The live music is piped throughout the huge restaurant. The best part? Flip's strongly encourages the performers to focus on their original songs. Performers also are allowed to push their merch.

For a vibe that's about as free of pretense as possible — and thus worthy of admiration/fear — there's **El Sinaloa Sports Bar** on **Hemphill Street** on the **South Side**. Trusty sidekick **Eric Griffey** and I pit-stopped there recently on a brief bar crawl through the South Side's underbelly. At first, Sinaloa seemed a little — how you say? — stabby. There's just something about a place with no windows right next door to a convenience store whose windows are covered in iron bars that's a little off-putting. But after a couple of beers, we warmed up to the joint. The bartender was pleasant, and the other customers there completely ignored us. Emboldened and feeling multi-culti, Gringo Griffey and I even considered a trip to a nearby **East Berry Street** joint that is reportedly *very* stabby — a friend of mine who's an assistant district attorney said that he's prosecuted a lot of stabbing cases stemming from the place (which shall remain nameless for obvious reasons). But common sense prevailed, and Griffey and I ended up going to nearby **BJ's Place**, where we were accosted not by knife-wielding patrons but something arguably a lot worse: more cock-rock music. — **Anthony Mariani**

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