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Thursday, July 9, 2009

Feel like a Hollywood star at Corner Bar

Melody Baetens / The Detroit News

If there's one word that immediately comes to mind when visiting the Corner Bar in Birmingham it's "sophisticated." This is due to the intricate lighting, celebrity-style service and sumptuous décor.

The Corner Bar, located in the Townsend Hotel, is so classy that liquor normally found on the top shelf of some bars is on the bottom shelf here. Fine Scotch and cognac -- including the very refined Louis XIII cognac -- holds court at the top.

"I like the Corner Bar because it's usually very intimate," says patron Dawn Yeaton of Birmingham. "Also, Dean makes great martinis."

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Award-winning bartender Dean Burnett (who has all the grace and expertise of a barkeep you'd expect to find in an old Hollywood movie) has been working with the Townsend for 20 years and has been at the Corner Bar since it opened seven years ago.

"It's in a great town, and a great clientele," he says of the Corner Bar, which was recently named "Best Corner Bar" by Hour Magazine. "There's nothing like this in the area."

During the week, the Corner Bar mostly offers after-work or late-night drinks for hotel guests and neighbors. On the weekends, when the Corner Bar takes on more of a nightclub vibe, men and women pile in to meet new people or impress their current date.

The bar only holds about 50 or so people, but for special events it can join

up with the Townsend's ballroom and have room for hundreds of guests. There also is a patio along the sidewalk that is open until midnight during nice weather.

The Corner Bar specializes in martinis and fancy cocktails. A favorite is Rain, made with Kettle One vodka, Chambord and pineapple juice. A classic two-olive martini is another good choice.

"We make the best original mojitos, using real sugar cane," says Corner general manager Jad Habayeb. "Also, a lot of fruity drinks like the Pineapple Smash, which is selling like crazy. We muddle the drinks right in front of the customer and a lot of people come to the Corner just to have the drinks we serve."

The Corner Bar also offers champagne, wine, coffee, beer (three taps) and bottle service.

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