

Paul E. and Paul B., the new nightlife lords



Paul E. Wimmer (top) and Paul B. Magit: No shrinking violets.



Downbeat editor Jim Shaeffer, began booking the downstairs Jazz Medium, too.

The results so far have been mixed. Customers complain about the long waits caused by the elaborate set-ups needed when two rock bands are on the same bill, and such punk acts as the recent Jobriath booking have been real duds.

To his credit, however, Magit has cleaned up the place, decorated it in a forest of potted palms and rearranged the seating in the downstairs room. "And we get a wonderful young audience, too," Magit says. "Not one speck of trouble from them."

SO FAR, WITH only the income from the \$5 tickets going to him, he is losing money. But he soon expects to rent the Medium from Arts & Leisure on a lease that would gain him the revenue from liquor sales.

If that arrangement goes through, Magit will bring in his own management people, hire his own help and keep the place open seven nights a week—as he is doing next week—with more acts and varied fare such as movies and occasional theater.

He wants to expand the theater's capacity to about 500, perhaps by adding tables and chairs and opening up the balcony.

"I want to treat my acts and my customers right," he says. "I want what we used to call in the furniture business the 'be backs,' the people who say, 'I'll be back.'"

HE'LL CONTINUE to run his dress shops, make his buying trips to Europe, mingle with such old pals as pop illustrator Peter Max. Twice divorced, with a teen-age son and daughter by his first marriage, he spends most of his time on his businesses and, he says, loves it.

"I have very good feelings about Rush St. these days," he remarks, with his constantly languid smile. "I had the same feeling about New Town (a term he coined for the Mid-North area around Broadway, where one of his shops is located). There's a great future here."

Well, he may be right. In any event, there is a new group of people in charge of catering to the new customers of the old Rush St. entertainment axis, and in the months ahead, Paul B. Magit and Paul E. Wimmer will be the men who shape that nightlife scene.



richard christiansen

job of booking talent than they were."

Such an attitude hardly led to good relationships, and Wimmer, a blunt man who talks about "putting an ass on every seat" when business is good at his clubs, began trying to put together a group of investors to take over London House and Kelly's.

This summer, after much acrimony and one failed effort at raising the finances, he finally took over the two clubs and moved into the new offices of Paul Wimmer Inc. at 25 W. Chicago.

HE HAS HAD a varied career. His family fled Germany in 1937, when he was 4, moved to the United States from England when he was 15. He started out as a pre-med student at the University of Denver, then joined the Air Force. When he returned to school after four years, he switched to business administration and entered the restaurant business.

Though a newcomer to both Chicago and show biz, he's a hard worker who already talks about making his business "the largest influence on the Chicago dining scene in the next five years."

And he has definite plans for his operations. At London House, while expanding the menu "to make it a great restaurant," he expects to book 20 to 22 acts a year, with no performer appearing for more than three weeks at a time.

When the lease at the present 250-seat restaurant expires in two years, he expects to open a new, larger London House on the Near North Side. He says he's shopping for the right location even now.

Entertainment there will continue to be mostly music, but in addition to such regulars as Ramsey Lewis, Oscar Peterson and George Shearing, he'll be bringing in such different pop acts as the Association and the Nashville Brass.

At Kelly's, he'll constrict

the menu, "so we can do a better job with its smaller kitchen." Eventually he'd even like to get rid of "those damn plastic tablecloths" and replace them with linen, to add class to the place.

He has jumped into the booking business with both feet. He brought in bawdy comedienne Rusty (Knockers Up) Warren Aug. 19-Sept. 1, "because I knew the VFW was going to be in town during that period."

In addition to such traditional Kelly's acts as David Steinberg, Lily Tomlin and Joan Rivers, he has offers out to such performers as the rock band Blood, Sweat and Tears (already booked for Nov. 18-Dec. 1), the BeeGees, comedians Cheech and Chong, singers John Davidson, Cleo Laine and Bill Withers.

BY HIRING these larger and/or more expensive acts, he will have to compete with the fees offered by Las Vegas or the big concert arenas such as Mill Run Playhouse in Niles.

He has torn out the Kelly's bar area to increase seating capacity to about 325, and when he gets an act that he believes will justify the price, "I won't hesitate to charge extra." With Blood, Sweat and Tears, for example, the cover charge will go up to \$9 and \$10.

Wimmer believes he can manage this, because "I intend to give the customer full value, and if you do that, most people don't mind spending a buck."

Wimmer talks a lot about not cheating the customer and of creating a "family situation" among his employees. With his brother Fred now general manager of London House, Wimmer has reshuffled management at the two clubs, and he vows that there will be "not one sale of one damn table" by any head waiter.

For more customer value, he also plans to book better second acts at Kelly's and give these acts a showcase of their own, perhaps during an expanded cocktail period.

WIMMER, who loves a good pizza, has hopes of opening more restaurants and more snack bars in the city. And he looks longingly toward the suburbs, where he is sure a good supper club could do big business.

For the moment, however, he is too busy organizing the London House ("a great name

PAUL E. WIMMER is a refugee from Nazi Germany, former pre-med student, long-time hotel and restaurant manager, now president and chairman of Paul Wimmer Inc., which manages the London House and owns Mister Kelly's.

A hard-nosed operations man who is built on the lines of a night club bouncer, Wimmer says his credo is, "If you can't do the thing right, don't do it."

Paul B. Magit is a native Chicagoan, former furniture salesman, owner of three Paul B. fashion shops, a founding father of New Town and, as of June 24, proprietor of the PBM Concert Club in the Happy Medium. Curly-haired, wearing an open shirt and perpetual tan, he says that two of the great disappointments in his life are: "I can't communicate through playing a musical instrument, and I can't give words to a child."

Albee in their relatively recent plunge into show biz, and dissimilar in practically every other way, these two men are the new lords of Rush St. nightlife.

ONCE, back in the mid-'50s and '60s, there were the Marienthal brothers, Oscar and George.

Between them, Oscar, with his taste for talent, and George, with his flair for figures, developed the London House, 360 N. Michigan, into a top-flight restaurant also serving pop jazz, and made Mister Kelly's, 1028 N. Rush, into a mecca for rising entertainers such as Mort Sahl, Woody Allen, Bob Newhart, Joan Rivers and Barbara Streisand. In 1960, they also built the Happy Medium at 901 N. Rush, a place for smart, intimate revues.

But Oscar died suddenly in 1963, and George, before his path in 1972, had sold the brothers' business to the conglomerate Arts & Leisure Corp.

IN MARCH, 1972, while Arts & Leisure was running the old Marienthal operation, it hired Paul Wimmer as its "vice president of operations, restaurant and entertainment division."

For Wimmer, a 10-year veteran of the hotel and restaurant business with the Marriott Corp., it seemed like a good move. But, he says, he soon found out that all was not well with the management, and, "since I've never been a shrinking violet, I started making noise. I told them an orangutan could do a better