
Super Clubs

Singapore's nightlife is growing in a big way. Literally.

You name it, we will have it - soon: Superclubs, ultra-luxe lounges and rooftop bars on the city's tallest buildings.

And these days, size matters.

This year alone, five oversized lifestyle venues, each ranging from 1,486 to 12,400 sq m, are opening.

They are the Tanjong Beach Club in Sentosa; the 282 lifestyle venue in One Raffles Place; Marina Bay Sands' SkyPark and its crystal pavilion which will house American superclubs Avalon and Pan-aea; and St James Power Station's new enclave at its HarbourFront location. These venues will add a total of 18,809 sq m of new clubbing and F&B space, the size of three football fields.

Not bad for a small party town with a population of five million and for a city that already has 1,200-plus entertainment outlets.

Clubbers may have cause to celebrate but industry observers say the city's nightlife is expanding 'too quickly' in what is already an overcrowded scene. They estimate that the clubbing demographic takes up only about 5 per cent, or 250,000 people, of Singapore's population.

Mr Lincoln Cheng, 61, who runs the two-decade-old Zouk, says: 'The scene has been saturated for more than a year. We draw up to 4,500 people on a good night, but the average spending per person has dipped between 5 and 10 per cent. People tend to head to other places before coming to Zouk. The majority of regular partygoers are very much the same people.'

Over the years, mega clubs such as Ministry of Sound, which was located at The Cannery complex in Clarke Quay, have come, struggled to survive, and gone.

It is evident from the list of multi-purpose usage and multiple demographic targets for the new generation of mega-clubs that operators are aware of one of the biggest challenges for large spaces: How to fill the space on slower week nights.

These days, entertainment complexes have evolved into lifestyle venues comprising several dining, lounge and bar facilities with a slew of activities thrown in, so as to appeal to as many patrons as possible.



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It is also common practice, even for smaller nightspots, to revamp every two to three years to keep things fresh.

The 31/2-year-old St James, for example, has just given a facelift to its Movida Latin club and Gallery Bar, which will open at the end of the month. In September, a Bar Street Alfresco will be added.

The rapid expansion in recent years is partly due to the opening of the integrated resorts (IRs) in Sentosa and Marina Bay, which between them will offer more than five new nightspots and F&B outlets.

Fun on the beach, dining on the roof

With the IRs, Singapore aims to lure 17 million visitors and earn an annual tourism revenue of \$30 billion by 2015.

Listed nightlife firm St James Holdings recently withdrew plans to open a dance club in Resorts World Sentosa. It will instead add a 1,858 sq m attraction to entertainment complex St James Power Station in HarbourFront by the third quarter this year. The concept will offer a wide variety of cuisines, beers and entertainment, which will also appeal to tourists, says St James' chief executive officer Dennis Foo.

As the competition heats up, operators are thinking of out-of-the-box ways to draw the crowd.

The \$3-million Tanjong Beach Club, for example, is more than just a beach bar in Sentosa, says Mr Wee Teng Wen, 30, director of The Lo & Behold Group, which will launch the venue on May 29. In Sentosa alone, there are 12 beach bars and restaurants. In late 2008, Lo & Behold, which also runs Loof bar in Odeon Towers, won the bid on Tanjong Beach Club's 2,787 sq m space, where the former KM8 bar was located.

Mr Wee tells Life!: 'The idea was to create an all-day recreational venue at Singapore's best beach. It is modelled like a 1950s beach resort that will offer all-day dining from breakfast and brunch to lunch and dinner.'

The venue is currently the only F&B outlet on Tanjong Beach and also the biggest beach restaurant in Sentosa with 200 seats.

Back in town, two rooftop venues will soon open, taking the number of skyscraper hangouts around town to at least 12. You can do more than sip cocktails under the stars at these new outlets.



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The 282 lifestyle venue at One Raffles Place, which takes up 1,486 sq m over four floors, will include CityGolf sports-themed bar on the 61st floor, a fine-dining restaurant on the 62nd floor and a rooftop bar on the 63rd and 64th floors.

The venue, which will open later this month, will be managed by local restaurant and bar operator Synergyinthesky.

Located across from 282 is Marina Bay Sands' sprawling 12,400 sq m SkyPark, which is about the size of two football fields. It opens next month.

The rooftop garden bridges three hotel towers on the 57th floor and it is home to the upscale Sky On 57 restaurant by local celebrity chef Justin Quek; a restaurant bar; the Marina Bay Club; a 150m pool; and a public observation deck.

By the end of the year, Pangaea and Avalon will wow partygoers at the resort's crystal pavilion, a glass-and-steel structure that sits on the waters of Marina Bay.

Avalon's operator Steve Adelman says in a telephone interview: 'Avalon is more than just a dance club. At 1,486 sq m, it is a multi-purpose venue with a full concert stage set-up to accommodate touring acts.'

Despite new competition coming online, Zouk is not threatened.

Mr Cheng says: 'Zouk is a strong brand that took years to build. In the last 20 years, we have out-lived many clubs and foreign brands.'

Pangaea's founder Michael Ault admits no one would expect a New York club to be 'dropped' into a multi-cultural city like Singapore, and thrive.

Mr Ault, who is in his 40s, is a household name in New York's nightlife scene with more than 25 years of experience.

He adds: 'Singaporeans have seen top deejays, dancing girls, celebrities and more. All clubs have the same basic components. Much of delivery is in the selection of staff, management and constant training.'

'Visitors should expect an ultra-lounge that cares a great deal about its members and customers, putting the party and service first.'

