



## SCENE NIGHTCLUBBING ON THE BAYOU

Getting a little tired of New Orleans' bare-breasted girls, free-flowing liquor and honky-tonk rhythm and blues? (Hey — it could happen.) You can always take a break from Bourbon Street's beer and other, more *personal* liquid flooded gutters in the pleasant environment of the former Whitney bank, now the Ampersand club.

With plush velvet couches and candle-lit sitting rooms, including one built into the bank's giant walk-in vault, it's every bit the cosmopolitan nightclub you might expect in New York or Miami. "In the past, people didn't come to New Orleans for the club scene or to 'see and be seen,'" says the club's owner, Billy Blatty. "But with the addition of new clubs like Ampersand, New Orleans' reputation is growing."

Like a banker, Blatty knows the value of reinvestment. "Every dollar Ampersand has made has been put back into the club for upgrades," he says. Capital improvements have included adding fire-twirling go-go dancers, latex-clad masseuses and contortionists, all of whom perform amidst the club's two bars, giant dance floor and outdoor courtyard. "It's sophisticated with a dash of New Orleans naughtiness," says Blatty.

Maybe more than just a dash. The club is best known for its prominent display of a satin-sheeted king size bed. "I figured why not put a huge bed in the middle of a club and see what happens," says Blatty. And what did he expect? "Well, things have gotten kind of dicey," he says. "There have been girls in skirts. And boys underneath them."

Well, they do call New Orleans the Big Easy.

Sara Lieberman

