



Night Moves

This month marks the 50th anniversary of Nighttown, the Cleveland Heights spot known for its fine dining, distinctive artwork and world-class jazz artists.

IN 1992, BRENDAN RING came to Cleveland from a New York City saloon where he poured drinks for the likes of Pete Hamill and Jimmy Breslin. Ring already had two job offers the afternoon he walked into Nighttown, where he met owner John Barr. "He made all the difference in my life," says Ring, a native of Kerry, Ireland, who bought the business from Barr in 2001.



» Brendan Ring bought Nighttown from its original owner John Barr in 2001.

Stevie Wonder came in on a Sunday night about 10:30. There were about 18 people left in the place. He was staying at the Ritz-Carlton and asked if there was a place where he could play the piano. They told him to go to Nighttown. A couple of goons came in with him and they were adamant about no one taking any photos. Well, we have a camera onstage at all times so

we taped him and got the audio from recording him on a Blackberry.

The people who were there called their friends and at the end of the night, we ended up with about 50 people. Stevie bought everybody Champagne. I was in New York and got a call that Stevie Wonder was here. I hung up immediately. I thought it was bullshit. Wouldn't you know I missed it?

— as told to Barry Goodrich



ROOMS WITH A VIEW

Thanks to original owner John Barr's keen eye, Nighttown has a 275-piece art collection that includes Carl Gaertner, Martin Louis Linsey and Viktor Schreckengost. Brendan Ring's favorite is prohibition-era poster *Father Dear Father Come Home With Me Now*. "That story has probably been repeated in this bar thousands of times," he says.

HOME COOKING

The Dublin Lawyer — fresh lobster sauteed in a cayenne butter and heavy cream sauce with scallions, mushrooms, wild rice pilaf and Jameson Irish whiskey — has been the most popular dish on the upscale pub's menu since the 1980s. "It was created in Ireland in the 1900s," says Ring. "The only people who could afford it at the time were lawyers."



1965: John Barr buys the Silhouette Lounge for \$23,000.

1968: Barr purchases the adjoining Cedar Hill Cafe.

1973: Nighttown adds on the space formerly occupied by Sam's Beauty Parlor.

1978: Barr buys Heights Travel to further expand.

1992: Barr hires native Irishman Brendan Ring as a bartender.

1999: Jazz pianist and composer Ahmad Jamal performs.

2001: Ring buys Nighttown from Barr. "It was better than buying Microsoft for him," jokes Ring.

2002: Ring adds an outdoor patio. "Boy did that make a difference," he says. "It sent us into a completely different stratosphere."

2003: Count Basie Orchestra plays for the first time.

2004: Nighttown is named one of the best jazz clubs in the world by *DownBeat Magazine*.

2007: Ring wins the Cleveland Arts Prize.

2008: Civil rights activist, cancer survivor and comedian Dick Gregory performs.

2013: British sophisti-pop group Swing Out Sister plays.

2015: Nighttown marks its anniversary with concerts on Feb. 5 and 13.