

40 Scollard Street, Toronto

Beginning in 1960, 40 Scollard St. was home to a series of at least three coffee houses: The Clef Club, The Cave and finally Le Chat Noir Café. Parts of the information you see here for the Clef Club and The Cave were assembled by Mike Daley from news sources and interviews.

Updated: March 14, 2021

The Clef Club

The Clef Club opened in May 1960, owned and operated by Peter Ellis, a 21-year-old former factory worker. Ellis saw the appeal of his club as an alternative from the commercial mass media. He told Star writer Sid Adilman per below "the spontaneous atmosphere in the clubs is 10 times better than the stilted one in night clubs or television."

1960

May 20-22	The Pioneers (Friday) Winston and Mary Jane (Saturday) and Modern Jazz (Sunday)	Star May 21 st p.32. The Clef Club in an advertisement, calls itself a "Folk and Jazz Centre" offering music Friday to Sunday at 9:30 pm
Aug 20	Sid Adilman in an article " <i>Folk-Song-Till-Dawn Clubs Booming 3500 Are Members</i> " provides a good description of the club and music, comparing it to the Village Corner Club	Star Aug 20 th p.24 Adilman states: " <i>Unlike the (Village Corner), the Clef, open Wednesdays to Saturdays since May has ample parking space, a subterranean club room holding 100 people at a time.</i> "

Oct 1	In a list of after hours clubs	Star Oct 1 st p.22 <i>the "Clef Folk Song Clubb"</i> 10-5 am is referenced
Nov 11	Ted Schafer in a column <i>"Schafer Says: Folknicks Arise"</i>	The Varsity. November 11, 1960, p.7. The atmosphere was that of "a bohemianly decorated mine shaft.
	Stuart Henderson in his book (2011) <i>"Making the Scene - Yorkville and Hip Toronto in the 1960's"</i>	Quoting from page 48: " (he names various other Yorkville clubs) ... and the Clef Club (an underground Yorkville Ave haunt boasting the stage on which a young Sylvia Fricker [later Tyson] played her first Toronto gig), was comprised of just the kinds of artsy young people that had blown open the San Francisco-area scene some years ago."

1961

Little or nothing is reported of the Clef in the dailies this year. A deeper dive into other sources at the Toronto Public Library, including the City Directories and the scanned pages of the Telegram, after COVID-19 leaves town, should reveal more.

The Cave

The Cave was among the shortest lived of the after hours coffee (and small food) clubs, barely 10 months, though oddly the best reported in the press. It was opened on Dec 9, 1961 by James and Hedy Bohm and left no trace in the dailies after September 1962. Competing for patrons without a liquor licence was not easy, as other clubs in these lists well knew. Competing with the other established after hours jazz clubs like House of Hambourg, Cellar and the First Floor Club for both patrons and musicians, would have added to the challenge. Like the First Floor Club dancing was accepted if not encouraged.

1961

Dec 9-10	Don Carrington's Quartet	Star Dec 9 th p.28 advertisement: Opening Night, The Cave Dancing to Jazz with Don Carrington's Quartet Open Fri and Sat 9 pm-3am, Thurs. and Sun. "to 1am" 40 Scollard St. 925-3777
Dec 22-24	No musicians identified specifically	Star Dec 22 nd p.13 A similar ad appears, dropping the musicians names and the Thursday performance. Sunday 6 pm to 1 am. New Years Eve is promoted
Dec 29-31	No musicians identified specifically	Star Dec 30 th P.17 Again a similar ad promoting "A Big New Year's Party" with dancing.

1962

Feb 2-4	No musicians identified specifically, though includes "acts"	Star Feb 3 rd p.28 noted in Dave Caplan's "Man About Jazz" the same days but now Sunday's 9-1 am
Jul 27-28	Charlie Mountford Trio	Star Jul 28 th p.20 "Toronto This Week" column
Aug 10-11	Charlie Mountford Trio and Dave Higgins	Star Aug 11 th p.23 an ad "Jazz at the Cave" Friday and Saturday only

Aug 17-18	Charlie Mountford Trio and Dave Higgins	Star Aug 18 th p.20 "Toronto This Week" column and a P.18 advert
Aug 30-Sep 1	Charlie Mountford Trio and Dave Higgins	Star Sep 1 st p.24 in the "Toronto This Week" column
Sep 8-9	The Jazz Five	Star Sep 8 th p.23 In Dave Caplan's column: "... the new management of The Cave Club at 40 Scollard has decided on a "two for the price of one" policy (\$1.00) tonight and Sunday to introduce 'jazz'niks' to the newly renovated cellar club will spotlight The Jazz Five."
Sep 14-15	The Jazz Five	Star Sep 15 th p.24 "Toronto This Week" column
Sep 21-22	The Jazz Four	Star Sep 22 nd p.24 "Toronto This Week" column
	"Jazz Combo" with Act	Star Sep 29 th p.24 "from 10pm" The Cave does not appear in any daily after this entry

Café Parisana

It appears that between the close of The Cave in September or October 1962 and the opening of Le Chat Noir Café later that year, a café called the Parisana operated on the site. It didn't appear to fare much better.

In two classified ads in the Globe and Mail January 3 (p.30) and 9 (p.37), 1964 the former Parisana business site is being offered for lease as a "profitable business location". We'll see.

Le Chat Noir Café

Le Chat Noir Café is a greater enigma. It started as a jazz club but morphed to host dancing by the fall of '65. I remember it as the former. It closed in early June, 1967.

1964

Nov 20-21	The Black Eagle Jazz Band	Tely Nov 21 st What's Going On Column: "... every Fri and Sat night 9 pm-3 am
Nov 27-28	The Black Eagle Jazz Band	Tely Nov 28 th What's Going On Column
Dec 4-5	The Black Eagle Jazz Band	Tely Dec 5 th p.26 What's Going On Column

1965

Sep 8-12	Various unnamed bands	Tely Sep 9 th After Four Section p.10 "Dancing Wed. to Sun. 8 pm to 2 am. "Top bands Wed. Evgs"
Sep 15-19, 22-26, 29-Oct 3, Oct 6-10, 13-17, 20-24	Various unnamed bands	Tely Sep 16 th , 23 rd , 30 th , Oct 7 th , 14 th , 21 st now in the After Four Section, classified under "Coffee Houses"

1967

May 26-27	The James Stafford Set	Tely May 25 th After Four classifieds
Jun 16-17	The Scarboro Mystics	Tely Jun 15 th After Four classifieds - with the venue now known as Pandora's Box (formerly Le Chat Noir Café): <i>"dance to the R&B sounds of the 7 piece Scarboro Mystics"</i>

Data collection

As smaller, less well-known clubs, at least to the press, those performing in these clubs are difficult to identify; advertising and reporting were sparse compared to other clubs. As shown, what was available was drawn from the three daily newspapers, by accessing the microfilmed archives of the Telegram and the digital archives of the Toronto Star. No records were found for these clubs in the Globe and Mail. Where I take words directly from a listing I use “quotation marks” and often italics to distinguish them from other text. Where I cite an article I reference the reporter, if identified.