

ELLE

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House of Blues

Hollywood's hottest new club has Angelenos painting the town red

Part Mississippi mansion, part maharaja's palace, Hard Rock Cafe founder Isaac Tigrett has hip Angelenos flocking to his new Sunset Strip club, the House of Blues. Since it opened last May, the three-storey, 30,000-sq-ft venue, co-owned by Dan Aykroyd and Jim Belushi, has hosted birthday bashes for Juliette Lewis, *90210*'s Tori Spelling and saxophonist Kenny G.

Monday-night jam sessions are the hottest ticket, when impromptu appearances by Prince or Springsteen send the throngs into a frenzy. Matthew Modine, Kurt Russell and Goldie Hawn prefer the rousing Sunday Gospel Brunch (\$24, omelettes and hush puppies included). Even without the high-calibre talent roster, it's easy to understand the excitement. To bring a surreal edge of authenticity to its exterior, Tigrett had the tin siding removed from an ancient distillery in Clarksdale, Mississippi, a few hundred yards from the 'crossroads' where, legend has it, Robert Johnson made a pact with the devil



in exchange for talent, thus giving birth to the blues. The 70-foot-long bar in the second-floor dining room – every square centimetre bejewelled by artist Jon Bok with dime-store knick-knacks – is mounted on hydraulics and parts to reveal a dance floor and stage below. Customers can enjoy Southern-inspired dishes such as fried catfish and barbecued pork, or empty their wallets at the Take It Easy Baby Blues accessories shop. Tigrett already has Houses of Blues in Boston and New Orleans, and vows soon to expand his empire to London. JAMES RYAN