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## Review: Troll Pub Under the Bridge

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Written by Marty Rosen Special to the Courier-Journal

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For Louisvillians of a certain age, the 100 block of West Washington Street has a boozy, smoke-filled, musical mystique unlike any other part of the city. It was the place where a generation of club owners from the '60s through the '80s (notably Eddie and David Donaldson, though there were plenty of others) created dark, grungy taverns where folks started gathering at midnight and bitterly resented the last call that came at 4 a.m. It was a place where on any given night you could hear several excellent local bands, and the touring acts included people such as Muddy Waters, Joe Pass, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Lonnie Mack, and — reaching way back — luminaries including Coleman Hawkins.

That block of Washington Street is the back door of the corresponding block of West Main Street, of course. And the grand facades on the Main Street side are reminders of the fact that in

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Build-your-own burger is a savory feature at the pub. / Pam Spaulding/The Courier-Journal

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The 19th-century block was home to warehouses filled with liquid gold — Kentucky bourbon. More recently, Main Street has been a battleground between developers and preservationists who view city's architectural legacy as more valuable than, say, another parking lot.

While the preservationists have been fighting for the Main Street side, a group of local investors and developers has also been giving some love to Washington Street — and the newly opened Troll Pub beneath the Bridge, a subterranean haven beneath the Whiskey Row Lofts, certainly ranks among the most appealing downtown renovations in recent years.

Once grungy space has been transformed into a gleaming warren of red brick walls, modern art, a fine bar, plenty of table seating and lovely little urban courtyard. (Oh, and there are plenty of TV monitors as well, all tuned to sports of one kind or another.)

Situated just to the side of the Clark Bridge, a few steps from the KFC Yum! Center, the

Troll Pub will certainly become a preferred dining and drinking destination for game- and concert-bound folks, but on off nights, anyone who wants a drink and some ambitious pub grub in a great environment will love the place — and based on recent visits, general manager Ben Barker's team of cordial servers is quick enough to get most people out the door and on to their destination in time for the tip or the opening act.

The menu includes the usual bar-style apps, like a house-made, queso-like variation on beer cheese, for instance, served with a warm, soft pretzel (\$6.95), hand-breaded chicken tenders (\$6.95), and chicken wings at various heat levels and in portion sizes priced from \$5.45-\$13.95.

The kitchen, headed up by chef Chip Lawrence, a Sullivan grad whose resume includes stints at Avalon and Wild Eggs, has gastropub ambitions, and they certainly achieve more than the average pub. Yes, there are pizzas (10- and 14-inchers, at prices from \$10.95-\$18.95). And yes, there are burgers, including a commendable "build-your-own-burger" program that offers Angus/bison/veggie options on Kaiser, brioche or pretzel rolls, with a generous assortment of toppings (\$7.95-\$8.95). And you can tuck into a very nice bowl of chili con carne (sans spaghetti, \$2.95/\$4.95) or a grilled brat with sauerkraut and spicy mustard (\$7.95).

**Contact freelance restaurant critic Marty Rosen at [cjdining@gmail.com](mailto:cjdining@gmail.com).**



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