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Liberty Lunch thrives as laid-back

Liberty Lunch, 405 W. Second St., is a live music club you'll appreciate if in 1968 you were wandering around using the expression "I'm hep" to distraction. It just screams of supernaturated hippie.

Check out the massive 160-foot mural in the beer garden area, for instance. It was done by Austin artist Doug Jacques, and it is, said Charlie Tesar, 30, the owner of the place, "his rendition of paradise."

Among the items to be seen in the mural work are a lion lying down with a lamb and playing with a red, white and blue beach ball, many colorful and bright green palm trees, a huge coconut from which a waterfall is flowing, a swimming hole, a hippie in the swimming hole holding a baby in the air, a volcano spewing maraschino cherries, and a large lizard with a big maraschino cherry balanced on its long, extended tongue.

One likes to know what these pieces of art mean, so I asked the artist. Jacques said he got the idea for the coconut when he was in a grocery store and saw a similar illustration of a coconut on a can of Coco Lopez Real Cream of Coconut.

"SUDDENLY IT BECAME sym-



Mellow lives on at Liberty Lunch, 405 W. Second St. In front of the famous mural are assistant manager Jeanette Ward, manager-partner Mark Pratz and owner-partner Charles J. Tesar.



John Kelso's bar trail

dress code. Come as you are, so long as you're not naked. Sheila Tesar, Charlie's wife, says that at one point management was considering putting up a sign that said, "No shirt, no shoes, best service." I doubt if management would even notice if you appeared at the door in pajamas.

And speaking of mellow, word has it that the same punk band painted the words "This place is so mellow it's comatose" on the stage during a performance.

THE MAIN THING at Liberty Lunch, however, isn't the oh wowness of it but the live music, which is varied and certainly unique for an Austin club in this day and age. I'm surprised they don't have a poster up with the international no sign and a drawing of a punk rocker behind it.

Among the Liberty Lunch performers of past and present are Ricky Nelson, Doc Watson, Beto Y Los Fairlanes, Extreme Heat, Butch Hancock, the Lotions, Townes Van Zandt, Marcia Ball, Poco and Bobby Bridger. You've got everything from country to reggae.

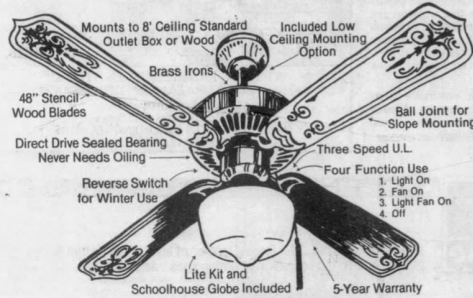
The reason? The people who run the club are adamant about staying away from anything that sounds canned or trite. "There used to be an audience for musicianship," said Mark Pratz, 31, the managing partner who's in charge of booking the bands. "But the attitude has become if it's not on the radio, or if you haven't heard it before, or it's not on

bolitic to me of nature, nature's bounty," he told me. And of the lizard with the cherry? Jacques said that by the time he began working on that part of the mural, "I was a little slap-happy."

Dig it. This place is so laid back that last year Iron Butterfly, those dinosaurs of psychedelic music and "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida" fame, played here and drew a crowd. Or as Tesar put it, "You should have seen those old hippies come out."

As you can imagine, there's no

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