

# Rock bands to help reopen The Chukker

By Mark Hughes Cobb  
Staff Writer

**A**lthough The Chukker was a cool hangout before it expanded, music brought it new fame in the '80s and '90s.

With its reopening tonight, the club hopes to recapture that rock 'n' roll lightning, pumping from a new sound system, bolstered by new lights on a new stage.

"The best part about it, though, is [the new owners] are not trying to come in and change things image-wise, or change the vibe of the place," said Rusty LuQuire, co-owner and booking agent of Southeastern Attractions.

LuQuire is working with bar co-owner Brooks Cloud to bring the music back.

"We're going to be a music venue three days of the week," Cloud said. "The rest of the time, we're a neighborhood pub."

Tonight's reopening show will feature ambient rock band Lunasect from Birmingham and modern garage rockers The Forty Fives from Atlanta.

Saturday will feature the return of hometown heroes The Penetrators, a surf-rock ensemble with James Bond style, and Atlanta's all-woman punk-pop band The Moto-Litas. The cover charge will be \$5 each night.

"We're honored to help celebrate the grand reopening of this Tuscaloosa landmark, especially given that it was the site of our first real gig," said Rip Thrillby, lead guitarist of The Penetrators.

"We've all been Chukker fans for even longer than we've had the band, though. Lots of great memories, and lots of, um, foggy ones, too. I think I may have bounced my first check as an undergrad there."

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## IF YOU GO

The Chukker, 2121 Sixth St. in downtown Tuscaloosa, reopens tonight at 7. Lunasect from Birmingham and The Forty Fives from Atlanta will perform. On Saturday night, The Penetrators and Atlanta's all-woman punk-pop band The Moto-Litas will perform. Cover charge is \$5 each night.

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This weekend's bands offer a pretty fair sample of the kind of sounds the club will offer, Cloud said. With most of the other bars in town offering either Grateful Dead/jam bands or pop cover bands, The Chukker will be a venue for original music.

"If you want to listen to alternative country, or punk, or surf, swing, indie rock, you really don't have anywhere to go," he said.

The club will book both local original bands and touring national and regional acts, all the way from country to hip-hop.

LuQuire is working on bringing names such as Richard Thompson (who played the club a few years back) and Sonic Youth, while also featuring well-known area groups such as The Woggles.

Upcoming weeks will feature alt-country band The Silos, Tuscaloosa rock bands Model Citizen and The American Way and Birmingham hip-hop band Jive Mob.

"There's an opportunity for a really great eclectic calendar," LuQuire said, "along the lines of what really put the Chukker on the map."

"The only criteria is that it be good," Cloud said.

Part of the groundwork has been to convince musicians and their managers that the club's old, malfunctioning sound system has been replaced.

"We have not had one single complaint, once they heard the specs on the new sound system," Cloud said.

The club also revamped the stage, carpeting it and raising it about a foot.

"It's improved, acoustically; I wouldn't say it's perfect," Cloud said. "The room is a harsh room. Unless we carpet the floors and put acoustic tile on the ceilings and walls, the only thing that's going to help the room is to put 200 people in it."

Word of the resurrection has gone out via flyers, media stories and ads. The Web site ([www.thechukker.com](http://www.thechukker.com)) is not yet operational, but will soon serve as an information hub for patrons and booking agents.

Renovation work is being done right down to the wire — and beyond.

"We're not going to have all the nails screwed down as tight as we like. There'll still be a couple of tiles hanging off, some painting to be done," Cloud said.

"But we'll be open."

If crowds match the buzz, the opening shows could be packed.

"If everybody who told me they're going to come comes, there'll be a line around the block," Cloud said.



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THE PENETRATORS

Surf-rock band The Penetrators, who played its first show at The Chukker, will help reopen the club Saturday. The band is shown here, circa 1994.