

COMMUNITY BUILDER

If Jim Stotz has his way, in the not-too-distant future a new enclave of gay businesses will soon take shape in downtown Austin, spreading out from a bar he established just a short time ago.

Stotz is the man behind Rusty Spurs, the country-themed newcomer to the Austin gay bar scene that opened in August of 2008. Located on E. Seventh Street, removed from the traditional gay center of the Warehouse District, some observers thought Rusty Spurs was a big risk. They didn't know Stotz.

"I felt there was no place that was geared toward the 30-plus crowd in Austin where men and women could mix and mingle together," Stotz explains. "I wanted to create a place where young and old could mix, where someone in their 70s could feel just as comfortable as a 21-year-old, where a straight couple is just as welcome as a gay couple."

In its first year, Rusty Spurs did more than \$1 million in business, according to Stotz – a tremendous figure for a new establishment of its size. The front end costs associated with opening a new place ate up a lot of that, but he says sales continue to increase each month. "The growth has been unbelievable since day one."

In March, Stotz took over the neighboring bar, Black and Tan, dramatically expanding Rusty Spurs with a three-clubs-in-one concept. The original bar remains country-themed, while Black and Tan has become a lounge-oriented space called Emerald City and the large rear patio shared by both is now Colors, an outdoor dance club.

Stotz had his first restaurant management job when he was just 17. Truth be told, hospitality is in his blood. When he was a boy his mother ran a restaurant and cantina outside San Diego. Eventually, she sold it and moved the family back to her childhood home, a farm in inland California. Stotz recalls a pastoral life on the farm, feeding the chickens and riding horseback to round-up cattle. "Certainly my country roots play into the theme of Rusty Spurs," he says.

Stotz started his career in restaurants in Orange County. He worked his way up the ladder and eventually got a job managing a restaurant at a local Marriott. He was with that company for years, becoming a trainer and in time he was tapped to open new hotels and restaurants

all over the world. With clubs, restaurants and hotels under his belt, Stotz says Rusty Spurs was his 29th opening.

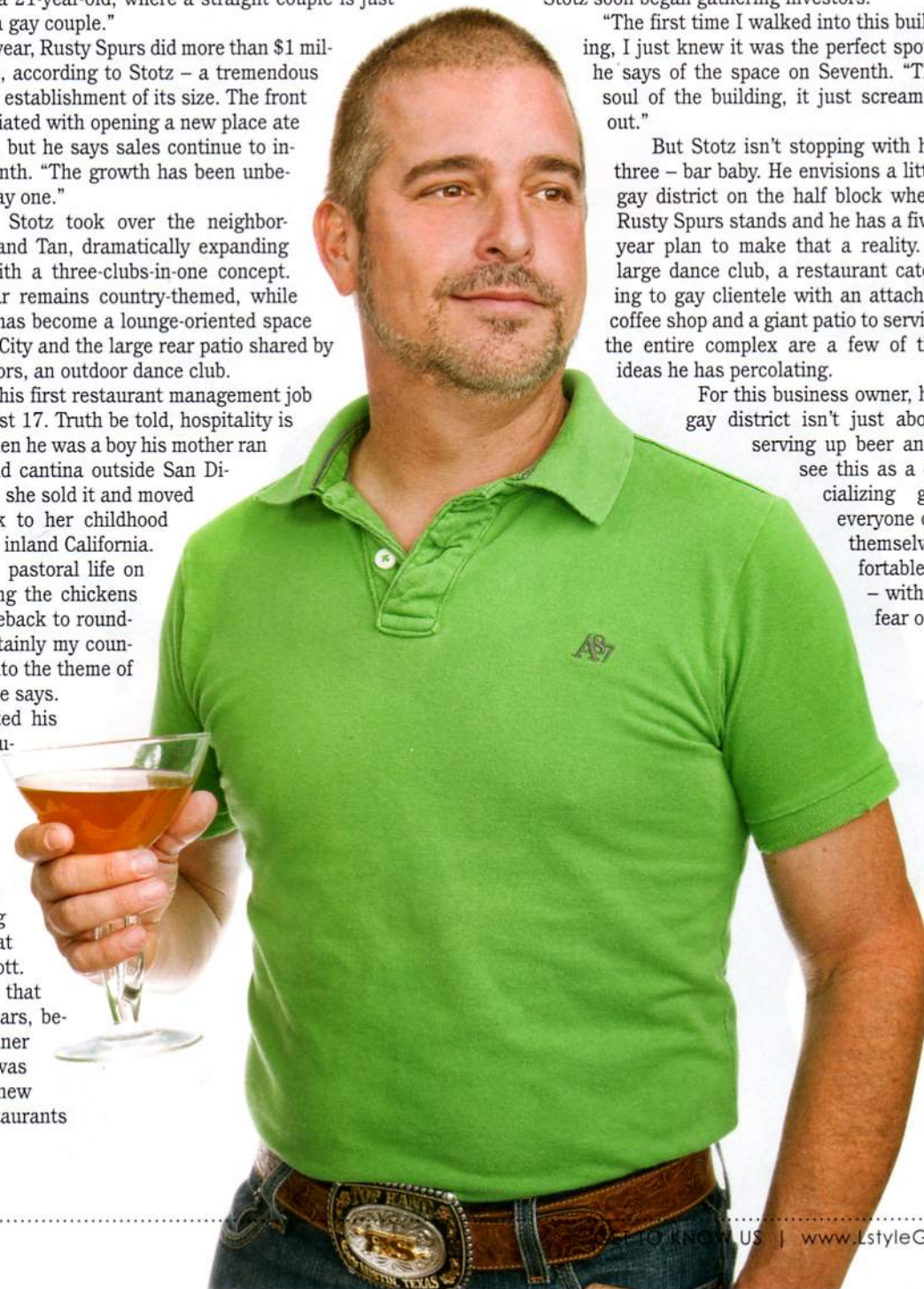
It all came naturally. "I would take over bars and restaurants that were going under and make them profitable again."

After Stotz moved to Austin a few years back, he slowly got to know the local gay bar scene. By then he had traded the hospitality business for computer technology, but with his background he couldn't help but think what he would do differently if he had the chance. Eventually, he got off the sidelines. Deciding Austin could use another alternative on the scene, Stotz soon began gathering investors.

"The first time I walked into this building, I just knew it was the perfect spot," he says of the space on Seventh. "The soul of the building, it just screamed out."

But Stotz isn't stopping with his three – bar baby. He envisions a little gay district on the half block where Rusty Spurs stands and he has a five-year plan to make that a reality. A large dance club, a restaurant catering to gay clientele with an attached coffee shop and a giant patio to service the entire complex are a few of the ideas he has percolating.

For this business owner, his gay district isn't just about serving up beer and cocktails. "I see this as a community socializing ground where everyone can come to be themselves in a comfortable environment – without attitude or fear or shame."



JIM STOTZ
OWNER, RUSTY SPURS