

RODNEY MAYO

M meet Rodney Mayo, founder of the Sub-Culture Group, which owns and operates several clubs and restaurants in Downtown West Palm Beach including Camelot, Hullabaloo, LongBoards, Respectable Street and Subculture Coffee.

After graduating from Palm Beach Day Academy in 1980, Rodney attended college in California. While there, he developed an affinity for indie music. "When I came back home, I couldn't find that music anywhere – nobody knew about it," said Rodney. Determined to open an indie-music nightclub in Downtown West Palm Beach, Rodney found an old, abandoned Salvation Army building on Clematis Street – one that was condemned. Rodney fully renovated the building before reopening it as Respectable Street in 1987.

Nearly 30 years later, Respectable Street is still standing, and Rodney is planning to open even more Downtown West Palm Beach venues in the future.

"I have always been motivated by music," said Rodney, who lists Joy Division, The Horrors, Crocodiles and Arcade Fire as some of his favorite bands. "Most of my locations are named after Joy Division songs or are Factory Records related."

Here, Rodney reflects on historical buildings, partying on Clematis Street, and succeeding in his hometown:

How I've seen downtown grow:

"When I first came here, Burdines was still downtown and the area was thriving. Then it turned into a popular design-trade market. Once CityPlace opened, businesses relocated and/or closed, leaving several buildings vacant. I've been a business owner on Clematis Street for 29 years, so I've seen the downtown boom/bust cycle about four or five times."

What makes downtown unique:

"I like that many of the buildings downtown have historical character."



MOTIVATED BY MUSIC: It was music – specifically indie-rock – that inspired Rodney Mayo to open nightclubs in his hometown 30 years ago, and it still drives him today. Here, Rodney hangs out at Hullabaloo with two of his idols, Sid Vicious (left) from The Sex Pistols and Ian Curtis from Joy Division.

PHOTO BY JIM BERIAU

THE DOWNTOWNERS

West Palm Beach business owners dish about why they're downtown – and why you should be, too!

When I love downtown the most:

"Personally, I like the dead of summer – there aren't as many people here and it goes back to being a quiet, sleepy, seaside town. That's not necessarily great for business though. As a business owner, I've always liked Christmas time and the couple weeks leading up to New Year's Eve. It's very festive."

Where I play downtown:

"I usually play the Yo-Yo on Fridays and Saturdays. I start out at Hullabaloo

and also spend a lot of time at the coffee shop – Subculture. I really enjoy hanging out there. Then I meander down to Camelot and usually end up back at Respectable Street. I pretty much hover around the 500 block."

Why I want to be downtown:

"For starters, it's my hometown. It's where I live and grew up. Secondly, when I started out, we were lacking a lot of business concepts downtown, so I saw a great opportunity to introduce

things that I enjoyed and that I thought the community would like as well. I still feel that way, so it has always been a good fit for me."

Why you should visit downtown:

"There's not many places that have a downtown that is on the water. Just being able to stroll along Flagler Drive is pretty special. Then there's the wide selection of clubs, restaurants and retail – there's an eclectic mix of things to do downtown."
– Keith Merritt

SUB-CULTURE GROUP

Rodney Mayo, owner | Sub-culture.org

CAMELOT

114 S. Narcissus Ave., 561.318.7675

HULLABALOO

517 N. Clematis St., 561.833.1033

LONGBOARDS

519 Clematis St., 561.833.4660

RESPECTABLE STREET

518 N. Clematis St., 561.832.9999

SUBCULTURE COFFEE

509 N. Clematis St., 561.318.5142

CHECK OUT:

For more information on DowntownWPB and the West Palm Beach Arts & Entertainment District, visit downtownwpb.com

CHECK BACK:

For the next profile in THE DOWNTOWNERS series, coming July 14.