



THEODORA RAVAGO/Herald News

Proprietor Bobby Cook stands outside the Clash Bar on Harding Avenue in Clifton.

Clash

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place from going the way of those venues of Cook's youth, it's wise to preserve the space and not let any messes fester.

Preservation has kept Cook the punk rocker he became some three decades ago. Quite literally. He has astonishingly smooth features for a 45-year-old.

He is tall and thin and his face is gaunt, angular and sturdy. His hair, sharply cut, is bleached and gently frizzed with mousse. He wears his pants impossibly tight. Decorative zippers trace the width of his strangulated thighs. Two studded belts wrap his waist, while another circles his wrist. A thick wedding band surrounds his ring finger.

Long before he got married and settled down in Clifton ("Clifton had the best property taxes that were affordable," he explained), Cook dreamt of running a record shop. He spent a decade in New York's punk music stores and gained a working knowledge of the business.

Then in 1991, he opened Let It

Rock. "Three hundred square feet, but it was all I needed," Cook said. He stocked only punk, ska and hardcore. "No top-40 or major labels," he said. Unless, of course, it was the Ramones, something that no self-respecting music merchant should be without.

For a time, business proved steady, the work pleasurable. "The money sucks. I didn't care," he said.

He gained a reputation for his deep and wide selection of underground music. He also became reputed for his aloof, curmudgeonly presence by the counter.

Then things started to change. Days grew tedious and began to wear on him. Customers grew sparse. Downloading culture had taken hold, and the expectation that people should pay for the music they listened to began to dissolve.

Cook grew jaded with the business. He realized his record store was going, well, the way of the record. In late 2005, he decided to sell everything. The following January, the store was closed.

"It hurt me a lot because I built a killer record collection off that store," said Ted Shiko, a 33-year-old from Hamburg who now

works the door at the Clash Bar.

It's too soon to tell the future of the Clash Bar. So far, it has been hit and miss, Cook said, but there are signs it is growing. Every weekend, half a dozen or more local bands play the Clash Bar's stage. And like the band Theodore Grimm, a Nutley group that arrived at the bar in a decorated short school bus that was rechristened a "Cool Bus," these groups draw a crowd whose fresh faces look just old enough to finally step up to a bar and legally order a drink.

"It's a lot nicer than I thought it would be," said one patron, John Valencia, a 24-year-old audio engineer from Lodi, who had come to the Clash Bar for the first time. Asked if he had ever shopped at Let It Rock, Valencia nodded no, most of his music comes from online. But he added, "I'm working to make it a point to buy more music."

So it goes. Bobby Cook's new business depends on the drinking habits of the generation whose shopping habits drove his last venture into the ground.

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28 Weeks: More gore, zombies

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raise them."

The big, all-encompassing message of "28 Weeks" is that human nature — compassion, empathy, a mother's urge to save a child — is fatal. If there's a modern-day metaphor here for the West and the Middle East, here's a movie that comes out on the side of genocide. Sympathy is weakness. Empathy — for children, innocent civilians, parents and your own offspring — will get you killed.

Because the kids, the poster-pretty Mackintosh Muggleton (his real name?) and Imogen Poots (ditto), are trouble from the moment they're brought back into "The Green Zone," a resettlement camp in London guarded by U.S. troops. The kids show up, get a version of how Mom died from Dad and promptly sneak out of the Green Zone to collect stuff from their old house — and find Mom still living.

Dad's got some explaining to do. But what about Mom? She carries the virus but has survived the disease. Maybe Army Doc Scarlett (Rose Byrne) can find a cure.

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But before that can happen, guilty Dad and forgiving Mom are swapping spit, Dad loses it and the Green Zone turns Red in a blur of blood and bullets. The Army will have to "cleanse" the place. Thousands will die. The rest will become zombies. The doc and an Army sniper (Jeremy Renner) who grows a conscience and starts shooting his own men struggle to rescue the kids who caused all this mayhem.

Forget the movie's jaded attitude about the coarse and callous U.S. Army. What soldier starts shooting his comrades on a whim?

The effects in this are simple — a set piece involving an unarmed helicopter being used against the living dead, the vivid napalming of central London. The best effect is the simplest of all — an empty city and countryside. The quiet skies are clear of planes, birds and pollution. Streets with abandoned cars and pizza delivery scooters, and only the occasional skeleton to spoil the view.

The sequel takes the story even closer to the bleak heart of the film's obvious inspiration — "The Omega Man." But the plot is absurd in the extreme, as chemical weapons are survived by holding a shirtsleeve over one's face, characters take every opportunity to go into tunnels and dark places, and raging, demented Dad is still clever enough to track his kids hither and yon with a notion of ripping their flesh and making them just like him.

We watch. We endure. Because perhaps, we hope, he'll stop spitting blood and growling long enough to tell the brats the line we long to hear, from the 30-minute mark to the finale: "This is all your fault."

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