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A Cure for Mondays

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SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

Who'da thunk that a Phil Collins song could get a joint jumping in this day and age? Especially California Beach Rock N' Sushi, one of the longest-running and trendiest sushi spots in Hermosa Beach.

But on Manic Mondays, Phil Collins is part of the popular sushi-night ritual. When the line is out the door, the bar is standing room only and sake runneth over at every table, it's time for Collins' "In the Air."

As the music blasts across the bright, airy space, the chefs charged with slicing and dicing the raw fish and rice pass out wood blocks to the clientele of beautiful beach people. When the music picks up, a thunderous clapping erupts.

"What can I say? It's our trademark," says Tony Bantiles, assistant manager. "We've been doing it for years."

While most places are recovering from the weekend, Cal Beach, as it's known by regulars, is just winding up. The attraction: all-you-can-eat sushi. For \$17.95, patrons get one hour to indulge at the sushi bar, or 90 minutes at a table.

Make no mistake, weekends at Cal Beach are teeming with crowds. But, Bantiles says, "Monday nights there's more energy here than it's like the weekend has continu

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No doubt the reasonable price is own too, attracting not only folks who go to the beach, but also the people who live and breathe the beach.

Manic Mondays give the tanned and toned scenesters of the South Bay cities a venue to show off their good looks, flirt with the locals and reclaim the sand and surf after the weekend crowd has gone home. Though jeans and surf attire are plentiful, so are the skin-tight get-ups more suitable for a nightclub on the Sunset Strip.

Still, that in-crowd attire isn't totally surprising. Cal Beach may be a restaurant but it feels like a nightclub. Hip-hop and Top 40 tunes pump through the speakers at high volume. The bar area is packed with people who, at times, wait for more than an hour for a table. You have to swim through a sea of flesh to order a drink.

Be warned: You can't follow your high-protein no-carbs diet at Cal Beach. The menu states: "Order what you want, but eat what you order. This isn't all you can eat sashimi. Be forewarned, excessive wasting could result in extra charge."

BE THERE

California Beach Rock N' Sushi, 844 Hermosa Ave., Hermosa Beach. (310) 374-7758. 21 and over unless accompanied by an adult. No cover. Additional location: 3355 Via Lido, Newport Beach. (714) 675-0575.

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