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BJC 8-98
Final Cut
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It's 7:50 p.m. on a Saturday night at the Fort Meade Bowling Center. The attendant behind the counter sprays out shoes with disinfectant. A bowler, taking a break, sips on a soda. Another bowler jumps in the air when she makes a strike. People line up to buy another game.

Before long though, something very unusual begins to happen.

First, the lights in the bowling area flicker off. Then, two disco balls above the lanes start to rotate. The tiny beams of light spin around the room, hitting the walls and lanes.

Black lights flicker on, illuminating the neon-orange bands around the necks of the pins. Multi-colored, rotating lights start to spin. A fog rolls across the bowling area.

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Then the music starts.

The center has been holding “Lights Out Bowl and Jam”, a combination of party atmosphere and bowling, for two years now, said Joe F. Gadreau, Operations Assistant at the center.

The Lights Out Bowling experience differs from standard bowling in many ways. The fact that it is dark is obvious from the start, as are the flashing lights and the music.

Saturday nights provide “four hours of uninterrupted music,” said Gadreau. “It’s really good entertainment.”

But there are two other things that are part of the experience that make its \$3 cover charge worth it.

Upon paying their cover charge, patrons are given a numbered ticket. Later in the night, the DJ draws numbers from a hat calls off winning numbers. Patrons can select from an assortment of prizes. The bowling alley hands out prizes at 9, 10, 11, and 11:30 p.m., said Gadreau.

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Another plus to Lights Out is the potential for free games. In each set of ten pins, there is a solid-neon-colored pin. If that pin should be set up by the pin setter as the head pin, and the bowler makes a strike, he or she wins a free game, said Airman Russell J. Crowe, a Basic Journalist Course student.

The bowling industry has been suffering. In an attempt to recover patronage, they have been doing “new things to attract new bowlers,” said Gadreau.

“Cosmic Bowling,” which is popular in other parts of the country, is the bowling industries answer to declining patronage, said Gadreau. “This is our version.”

Families and young adults seem to be the mainstay of Lights Out patronage, said Gadreau. “We try to set it up for everyone.”

As the music intensifies, Jade Moore, a bowler and her young daughter, Dedra, begin dancing in the middle of the concourse. Jade must bend over to dance with young Dedra, who is grinning from ear to ear.

“This is pretty cool,” said Moore, who claims she hasn’t bowled in years.

“We used to come often,” said Moore, of herself and husband. She suggested that they would start coming more often.

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Spec. Marion R. Moss, a signal intelligence analyst on post says that she comes to Lights Out all the time.

“Every Saturday, it’s a chance to get away from home,” said Moss. “I just come with my fiancée. This is one of our common interests. This is something we can do together.”

Even those who aren’t avid bowlers enjoy Lights Out.

“I’ve never been a big bowler. This is my second time. The first time I was here was last weekend,” said Crowe. “We made a point to come out here tonight.”

“It’s a great atmosphere. I like it. Plus,” laughed Crowe, “people can’t tell if you bowl really bad because the lights are off. I’m defiantly coming back next week.”

The Lights Out Bowl happens every Saturday night, from 8 p.m. to midnight. There is a \$3 cover charge, though that charge will be deducted from the cost of your first game. Additionally, patrons may pay a \$10 fee and bowl all night long, said Gadreau.

For more information, call 301)677-5541.