



STAMPING OUT A PROBLEM: The Blu Bambu bar.

Under-age drinkers are under the thumb

City centre bar launches hi-tech ID system

By Daniel Cochlin

(0191) 257-1748 daniel.cochlin@ncjmedia.co.uk

A NEW rule of thumb is to be introduced at one of the North-East's busiest bars in a bid to stamp out under-age drinking.

Door staff at Blu Bambu in Newcastle's Bigg Market will ask anyone they suspect of being underage to show them a driving licence or passport.

Their details, along with their photograph, will then be stored on a computer.

A thumbprint will also be taken, so that every time they come back to the club, they do not need to bring identification.

The club's managers hope this will stop anyone who is underage coming in, as well as help to catch people who cause trouble.

At present, bar staff face an £80 fine and instant sacking if an under-18 is found drinking.

Club owners can also lose their licence should underage drinking be found on their premises.

The machine, which has the full backing of Northumbria Police who want other bars to follow suit, was built and designed in Gateshead by Biometric Systems.

The directors of the company now hope the idea will be taken up by gyms, casinos

and private clubs – and they will be approaching the North's three Premiership football clubs to see if they will use it to replace season tickets.

Bob Senior, chief executive of Ultimate Leisure who run Blu Bambu, is hoping to use the Membsys machine across a number of his nightclubs.

He said: "The only two forms of ID customers can use are passport or a driving licence, and these are valuable documents for young people to carry around.

"A lot of 20-year-olds can look very young and we lose custom and they lose the right to a good night out if they have forgotten their ID.

"I am glad that we can help reduce the problem of under-age drinking, but the issue needs to be tackled at source – six out of 10 under-18s have their first drink at home.

"We also hope this will help catch anyone who causes trouble in the club as the police have addresses and names of people inside."

The Membsys machine costs £5,000 a year to run and maintain, but club manager Dale Holden thinks it will be money well spent.

He added: "If we have to turn people away from the club, and if I face losing my licence and job, then this is good value and very easy to use."

The designers claim no-one can hack



DIGITAL ID: Melanie Fletcher has her fingerprint taken at Blu Bambu in Newcastle's Bigg Market.

into the system and access the revellers' details, but a spokesman for human rights group Liberty said he was unsure about the idea.

He added: "We are not overly keen on these sort of things, because you should not need to produce more than a document to prove you are 18, but it is a voluntary thing as people do not have to go into the club."

Chief Superintendent Chris Machell, of Newcastle area command, said: "This is a great idea – not just for the under-age issues, but also if you bar somebody from one place, then they will know if they try to get into any of the company's premises."

He said the system should make life much easier for the bar owners, the police and the customers.



TACKLING PROBLEM: Bob Senior with seized fake ID cards.