

## THE RITZ CLAIMS BEST BAR NONE TITLE FOR 2006/07

Manchester's Ritz Nightclub has been named as the city's overall Best Bar None winner for 2006/07.

The Best Bar None Awards scheme is organised by Greater Manchester Police's City Safe unit and aims to reward safe licensed venues that provide good management, a safe and enjoyable environment for customers, discourage binge-drinking and prevent alcohol-related crime.

The accolade of top pub has been awarded to the Bluebell Inn in Levenshulme and Varsity on Oxford Road came first in the best bar group. The Ritz Nightclub also won best nightclub category. For the first time this year, AXM on Canal Street was named as the best LGBT venue in Manchester and Bargain Beers in Collyhurst clinched the title of best off-license. Best convenience store was handed to Fresh and Frozen in Newton Heath.

The Lord Mayor of Manchester, Councillor David Sandiford and the Lady Mayoress Christine Sandiford, attended the awards at the Hilton Hotel on Sunday 26 November along with representatives from the police, NHS Drinking Responsibly project, Manchester City Council, licensees, the drinks industry and the event sponsors, Budweiser. The event was hosted by television presenter Paul Crone and entertainment was provided on the night by cast from Manchester's newest venue The Birdcage and by Salford band Big Deal.

Eighty venues met the minimum standard of safety to receive accreditation, meaning that they can now use the official Manchester 'Best Bar None' logo on their own promotional advertising to let customers know that the venue is working hard to keep them safer.

Inspector Steve Greenacre who heads up GMP's City Safe team said: "I would like to congratulate The Ritz for claiming the title of Best Bar None 2006/07. All of the entries this year have been of an extremely high standard, with licensees raising the bar even further to ensure that they provide safe and enjoyable nights out for people visiting their venues. The Ritz has implemented many policies and initiatives, such as a fully equipped medical room and displaying maps of the city centre highlighting bus and taxi ranks, to give it that extra edge and win this year's title.

"I am proud of the fact that this scheme originated from Manchester and that dozens of cities have taken our lead to implement Best Bar None in their area. This year we have seen a 24 per cent increase in the number of venues receiving accreditation, meaning that venues are recognising the importance of Best Bar None and are working harder to implement policies and procedures to keep people safe.

"Local venues can be delighted with the fact that they are helping to contribute to Manchester's reputation as one of the safest cities in the UK with a fantastic night time economy and this is something we aim to build on even further over the coming year".

The Best Bar None Awards 2006 form part of GMP's Think Safe Drink Safe and Operation Talon campaigns. The initiatives are aimed at raising awareness about responsible drinking, urging members of the public to pace their drinks, stick with friends and take a taxi home they can trust. By asking people to behave responsibly, police officers and partner agencies aim to make Manchester an even safer place to enjoy a night out, without fear of falling victim to crime, including sexual assaults.

**-Ends-**

**Picture details:** Picture one features Mary and Mark Nunn from the Bluebell Inn in Levenshulme with Ch Supt Gerry Donnellan and Paul Crone. Picture two features Stuart Green from Ritz Nightclub. Picture four features Hayden Pope from AXM on Canal Street with Ch Supt Gerry Donnellan. Picture three features (left to right) Stuart Green from Ritz Nightclub, Chief Superintendent Gerry Donnellan and Paul Crone.

**For further information please contact:** Charlotte Maher, GMP Public Relations Officer, on 0161 856 1327