

DISPATCH

Christchurch MAKES ITS COMEBACK

As it moves out of
clean-up into
reconstruction mode,
PETER SWAIN
discovers vitality
coursing back into the
South Island city



From top: racy promo for a forthcoming show at ultra-contemporary Dux Live; a young crowd and after-hours cocktails amid old shipping containers at the Cargo Bar; living-room atmosphere at family-run Pegasus Bay Winery

Recent seismic events have engendered a neo-pioneering spirit in Christchurch, as Cantabrians wake up to the once-in-a-lifetime possibilities of their post-quake predicament. “We now have a unique opportunity to remake, in fact to re-settle, a modern city,” explains Justin Murray, who sits on the Board of the Christchurch Earthquake Appeal Trust.

The influx of US\$24.2 billion over the next five years or so will create upwards of 30,000 jobs in what will be the biggest single construction and regeneration project in the country’s history. “The economic trickle-down

effect will become a waterfall as sporting, cultural and hospitality amenities expand to service it all,” says Murray. And with hip new neighbourhoods now emerging, the first shoots of that recovery are already beginning to appear.

New restaurants and bars are opening every week in **SoMo**, the increasingly modish district South of Moorhouse Avenue. Built from shipping containers, the current construction technique of choice, **Cargo Bar** (cargobar.co.nz), on Lincoln Road, is just one of a new generation of pop-up gastro-bars that includes **The Pedal Pusher** (thepedalpusher.co.nz), **Mosaic by Simo** (simos.co.nz) and the **Addington Coffee Co-op**

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3 (addingtoncoffee.org.nz). Waipara wine lists are long, the cuisine inventive and the enthusiasm of the service infectious.

In this sports-mad city, the March opening of the nearby 18,000-seater **AMI Stadium** (vbase.co.nz), new home to the Crusaders, is also a telling symbol of rejuvenation, as is the successful relocation to a converted grain warehouse in SoMo of the iconic **Court Theatre** (courttheatre.org.nz). Just around the corner, the younger crowd is flocking to **Dux Live** (duxlive.co.nz), a music venue with a good sideline in yakitori.

Several blocks north, the colourful container-based

Re:START (restart.org.nz) development on Cashel Mall is the new home of 30 or so enterprising retailers including the fashionable **Hunters and Collectors**

(+64 3 365 3751), **Contemporary Lounge** (contemporarylounge.com) and **3 Wise Men** (3wisemen.co.nz). Free wifi and sublime coffee from **Hummingbird's** baristas (hummingbirdcoffee.co.nz) keep young professionals happily wired.

Irrepressible restaurateur Phillip Kraal has relocated and actually upped his

gastronomic game, with his Asian-fusion **Bamboozle** (+64 3 326 7878) in Sumner regularly packed, as is 2012 opener **Strawberry Fare** (strawberryfare.com) on Bealey Avenue. Shaken but not stirred, luxe hospitality venues **Pegasus Bay Winery** (pegasusbay.com), currently NZ Winery Restaurant of the Year, and historic **Otahuna Lodge** (otahuna.co.nz), the boutique hotel beloved of politicians and *Hobbit* actors, have also raised their culinary standards to international levels.

The recent announcement of the city's temporary new "**Cardboard Cathedral**" (christchurchcathedral.co.nz), scheduled

to rise by December like the proverbial phoenix from the ashes of St John's in Latimer Square, has been another morale raiser, leading Murray, whose day job is managing director of Christchurch-based investment bank Murray + Co., to encapsulate his hometown's mood: "Our vision is to re-create 21st-century Christchurch as one of the great small cities of the world." The renaissance has begun. ■

CRAFT BEER

With an imaginative range of real ales and beers, created in traditional wood-fired copper kettles then served with food and live music, **Cassels & Sons** is very much in the vanguard of Christchurch's microbrewery revolution. casselsbrewery.co.nz



From top: avant-garde apple dessert at the secluded Otahuna Lodge; ready for dinner and a brew under two wheels at The Pedal Pusher; calm before the storm at the normally packed Strawberry Fare