Arnellia's, which for years was one of the few area venues to regularly feature live R&B, blues and jazz, is looking to return to its live music roots.

In recent years, the club, located at 1183 W. University Ave. in St. Paul, has been known more as a dance club with disc jockeys spinning hip hop and world beat. But with the re-launch, Arnellia's will feature live music every day of the week. This is according to the owner of the venue, Arnellia Allen.

Allen opened the self-named venue in 1992 after she closed her Metro Bar & Grill, which had operated in downtown St. Paul since 1988. Arnellia's has played host to countless local acts and several national touring artists including Bobby "Blue" Bland, Denise LaSalle and Marvin Sease. Allen said the club is returning to its tradition of live music; and to celebrate her 20 years in business, Arnellia's is hosting a day-long concert featuring several area bands.

The event takes place on Sat., Sept. 8, and is being organized by vocalist Kathleen Johnson, a long-time performer at the club.

"A lot of bands got their start at Arnellia's," said Johnson, who sings with The Original Best Kept Secret.

Johnson, through her promotions company, Musicians 4 Musicians is working closely with Allen to transform the look and reputation of Arnellia's. "There has to be consistency across the board and we're going to showcase the highest quality of entertainment," said Johnson. "People are going to have to let go of some of the things that happened in the past and give Arnellia's

another chance. We're going to raise the bar and raise the quality."

Johnson said in recent times Arnellia's has been known for attracting a younger, sometime rowdy crowd; but with the re-launch the club is looking to attract a more mature audience. Allen said she is making improvements to the venue inside and out.

"We're putting in new lighting inside and outside, new window treatments and we're going to have valet parking for special events," said Allen. "It's going to be a safe, nice place to listen to live music."

Arnellia's has had a tough go of things in recent times with the sluggish economy and most recently, the construction of light rail along University Avenue. The construction has made it difficult to find parking and, according to Allen, cut business by 60 percent. Allen said she has an agreement with adjacent businesses to allow parking for her customers.

Along with the remodel, Allen and Johnson said the kitchen is getting a not-so-new flavor. The venue, which at one time was known for its award-winning chicken wings, is bringing back the original Nardie's Café.

In attracting a more mature audience, Allen said she is going to host a live band earlier in the evening, during what is considered "happy hour" time. Also, Allen said she is going to host a Sunday brunch with live gospel and jazz.

The upcoming 20-year celebration gets started at 2 p.m. and runs until the venue closes at 2 a.m. Acts include The Original Best Kept Secret, The Maxx Band, Hot Smash, D'Monica Flye, the George Scott Trio and more. Admission for the Sept. 8 show is $8 in advance and $10 at the door. Advance tickets can be purchased at Arnellia's.

According to Johnson, all the acts on that day's bill are playing for free so that all the proceeds can go to the club improvements. Allen said the remodel will be complete within six months to a year.

Arnellia's 20th Anniversary Celebration
1183 W. University Ave., St. Paul
Sat., Sept. 8
2 p.m. – 2 a.m.
$8 in advance $10 at the door

For more information on the show, parking and directions, visit www.arnellias.net .