

VALLEY STYLE

A Speakeasy for Members Only



Proprietor: Brad Roen, co-owner of Rendition Room, behind the bar at Studio City establishment.

Customers visit **Vitello's** for its California inspired Italian cuisine, or to catch a show at the 120-seat supper club upstairs. But a few willing to pay \$1,000 a year get to head straight to the back of the restaurant and pass through the door of the Rendition Room.

The room is a members-only speakeasy bar inside the Studio City restaurant. Although Vitello's has been in business for five decades, the Rendition Room is its newest addition, and will be celebrating its one-year anniversary this month.

Brad Roen, co-owner and general manager of Vitello's Rendition Room, said the dimly lit, cozy room has in the past been used for overflow guests, private banquets and as a recreational room with board games. Roen believes the Rendition Room is the space's most successful reincarnation.

"When we were penciling it out, we said to ourselves 'this is going to be a winner,'" he said.

The Rendition Room is a throwback to a classic lounge bar with large leather seats and private booths that are ideal for quiet conversations. The bar is filled with curated sculptures, signage and glassware that Roen and co-owner **Matt Epstein** have hand-picked from antique shops and flea markets. At the corner of the bar is an original 1929 Wurlitzer jukebox, adjacent to wooden lockers, where members can store their liquor and other personal items for an additional fee.

Members will get to enjoy custom cocktails, and special edition liquors

served in 1930s etched glassware. Epstein, an avid collector of antiques, decided his old sculptures, like that of Groucho Marx from his own personal collection, were perfect for the bar's ambiance.

"I could have done it very kitschy, but it's really about business for me," said Roen. "How do we attract a clientele that's going to pay \$1,000 a year just to walk in the door?"

While speakeasy-style bars are common in the region, the Rendition Room stands out as one of few bars that charge a yearly fee just for access. Roen said he makes sure that

the guests feel the fee is worth it with additional perks. Along with unlimited access to the room, members can attend monthly liquor tasting events, or sit at the VIP table for performances at the supper club while enjoying cocktails delivered from the Rendition Room bar.

"The most important star of the show is my liquid chef, **Scott Ward**," said Roen.

Ward is a veteran bartender, who creates his own syrups and infusions for cocktails tailored to each guest's preferences, Roen said. The bar is also planning to feature a late-night coffee menu, that combines coffee with Ward's various infusions like elderflower or bacon maple syrups.

The Rendition Room currently has around 200 members. While there is no application process, Roen said it tends to attract professionals looking for a place to entertain clients, and the entertainment industry crowd looking for a quiet place to read scripts and sip on spirits.

— Iris Lee



Preferential: Rendition Room members have access to exclusive liquors unavailable at Vitello's.



Opulent: Overstuffed chairs recall the Roaring '20s.



Painting: The bar is inspired by 'Mad Men' style 1960s lounges and Prohibition era bars.



Coat Rack: Entrance to the bar after walking through thick red curtains.



Cheers: Cocktails are served in original 1930s etched glassware.



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- 1 Statuary:** Décor was handpicked by Roen and Epstein from antique shops and flea markets.
- 2 Sound Machine:** Original 1929 Wurlitzer jukebox.
- 3 Security:** Members can store bottles, scripts, books and other belongings in lockers.
- 4 Rare Spirits:** Rendition Room serves special edition and limited edition liquors.

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BRAD ROEN
Rendition Room