

## Viper Alley has sound going for it

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The most important aspect of a concert venue is the sound, and Viper Alley in Lincolnshire sounds good.

Even though the venue, which officially opened March 11, lacks the charm of an older and darker place like Subterranean or Beat Kitchen in Chicago, the sound was clear and well-balanced for American Idol winner Lee Dewyze, who performed with a keyboard player at a media and invitation-only event March 10 as part of 105.9 FM's "Fresh Faces" concert series.

Great sound was a priority for owner Scott Greenberg, who enjoys talking about the science behind it.

Basically, though, Viper Alley's sound is a combination of good acoustics, top-notch sound engineers and equipment. Greenberg credits Gand Music & Sound in Northfield and Threshold Acoustics in Chicago for designing the system and enhancing the environment.

The ceiling, floors and walls have sound absorbing material behind them and the sawtooth roof also enhances sound quality, he said.

Sound rules

"When I thought about it, I wanted to achieve a standard found in performing arts centers," he said. "I didn't spare any expense on the sound system."

The 500-person capacity Viper Alley is located on the second level of CityPark, the outdoor mall owned by ECD at the corner of Aptakisic Road and Milwaukee Avenue. The venue, which also has a restaurant and bowling alley is in the space that was once occupied by Putting Edge, the glow-in-the-dark miniature golf course.

Pop music from the last three decades surged through the sound system as Viper Alley opened its doors last Thursday. Inside, guests entered the semi-circular room that contains a small bar, kitchen and restaurant called the Reverb Kitchen. Next door is the brick-walled and wooden-floor Viper Alley Lounge, where the stage, another larger bar and bowling lanes are. Rock and roll art, such as photos of Keith Richards and album covers, hang on the walls.

Nice, but with a distinctly suburban feel enhanced by large windows facing the mall parking lot and Sedgebrook Retirement Community.

Filling a gap

The impetus for bringing a concert venue to CityPark is two-fold: A drought of big name performers coming to the area after Ravinia Festival in Highland Park closes for the year in September and retailers having a hard time surviving in this economy.

"I thought it was a really wonderful place, to put it here in Lincolnshire," Greenberg said. "This is a great market opportunity and a great space."

He's not worried about competition from neighboring and established large sports bar Cubby Bear North, which is just across Milwaukee Avenue.

Greenberg said Viper Room is attracting acts that appeal to audiences ranging in age from 30 (Soul Asylum) to 70 (Herb Alpert). Those audiences will stick around until 11 p.m. or so, but he expects the 20-somethings will file in after 11, when Viper Alley becomes more of a dance club with loud, thumping music played by DJs.

"It's good the Cubby Bear is there. They're doing something very different," he said. "But the kinds of acts we're doing are very different too."

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