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Center Story #15

Badlands Saloon: Long-Time Neighborhood Bar

15th in a series of stories focusing on Commercial Center as written by noted long-time Las Vegas journalist, Diane Taylor.

In this article, Diane pops in to scope out Badlands Saloon, a long-time neighborhood bar at Commercial Center:

- *What hit television series helped this establishment survive (and thrive) during and after COVID?*
- *What is one key thing that isn't allowed at Badlands Saloon?*
- *How diverse is the programming schedule for this popular 24-hour a day hangout?*

Thanks again to Diane for her continued help with uncovering the fascinating stories that live throughout Commercial Center every day.

Badlands Saloon: Long-Time Neighborhood Bar

After 37 years living in the Chicago area, Dan Dainton retired from a career in teaching and needed something to do. He desired a warmer climate, moved to Las Vegas and joined with two friends, Jim Osterberger and Michael McCartney, successful bar owners of QuadZ Las Vegas/Palm Springs, to buy Badlands Saloon, a 30+ year old gay bar in Commercial Center.

Several updates were made quickly to Badlands and soon the bar's legendary country/western theme transitioned into a "chill" video bar, open 24/7, with gaming and special events. Initially, business at the bar was pretty good. Then COVID hit and the bar shut down in 2020 during two separate 10-week periods.

Now what? Heading into 2021, restrictions were slowly lifted and the good folks at *Bar Rescue*, a Paramount series, hosted by John Taffer, who resides in Las Vegas, contacted the owners about doing an episode.

At the time, Taffer and crew wanted to help local businesses adversely affected by COVID. For a week, the production team took control of the bar making valuable changes to operations and décor as well as installing virus-killing equipment to enhance air quality. Badlands re-opened, and Dan reports business has improved every year since.

The bar employs ten people over its three shifts. "We are particularly proud of the staff here," says Dan. "in particular Eric Garcia, General Manager, and Travis Wilson, Manager. Our mission is to be friendly and to welcome everyone. Nothing is worse than an unfriendly bartender."

Over time, the staff at Badlands has created a special vibe offering drinks at "reasonable" prices, gaming options, free parking, and a back area for special events.

One thing not allowed at Badlands is "drama". "Yes, we are a gay bar," says Dan, "where everyone is welcome, but we don't tolerate bad behavior, fights, or vandalism on the premises. "

Regularly, Badlands has quite a schedule: Monday (12:30 PM) Bingo with Luther, Tuesday Trivia (7:30 PM), Wednesday Karaoke (9:30 PM) with KJ M'Adam, a Friday (11 PM) Hips, Heels, Tucks drag show hosted by Fanny D Pack, and a Saturday (11 PM) Neon Rabbit exotic variety show hosted by Axiom.

The 2nd Friday of each month, a Pup Play event hosted by "house" DJ Major starts at 7 PM. On other Fridays around 8 PM, DJ Major will kick off the weekend with his high energy playlist. Then, after the show around 12:30 AM, our other "house" DJ Broheimer gets the crowd going with Physique Fridays. In addition, management schedules "custom" birthday parties and other special occasions for up to 60 guests to celebrate that special someone.

Weekends are the busiest, but Dan says the bar also gets a decent daytime crowd. Every day, 12-8 PM, a guest's second drink is just \$1 (BOGO\$1). "We are very grateful to our regular guests and gamers," says Dan. "Without them, our drink prices would be higher."

For promotion, the bar depends on Instagram and Facebook. “We are tucked away in a corner and need the social media presence,” he continues. “Once people find us, they usually come back.”

Badlands is not a restaurant (except for chips), but bartenders/guests routinely order pizza/food for delivery/pick up. Catering is an option for bigger events.

Want to meet a friend in a neighborhood bar, enjoy some music, grab a drink, possibly gamble, and eat some chips? Open 24 hours, Badlands Las Vegas just might be the place!