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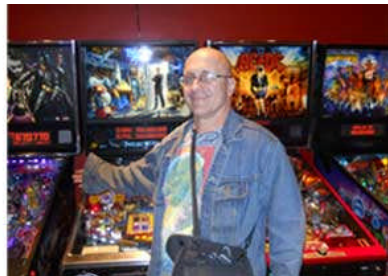
Modern Pinball NYC Opens For Business In Manhattan; IFPA Moves In, Hosts Nov. 16-17 Tournament

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TAGS: pinball sales, Modern Pinball NYC, pinball machine, coin machine, coin-op game, amusement machines, Steve Epstein, Steve Zahler, classic coin-op game, refurbished pinball, solid-state pinball, Jersey Jack Pinball, Wizard of Oz pinball, flipper game, Stern Pinball, Tilt Amusements, Al Cihak, pinball history, Broadway Arcade, pinball collector, Addams Family pinball, Star Trek pinball, Metallica pin, Francesco LaRocca, Eddie Cramer, International Flipper Pinball Association, IFPA tournament, Roger Sharpe

NEW YORK CITY -- If they can make it here, they can make it anywhere. Pinball guru Steve Epstein is bringing the classic coin-op game back to Manhattan, but not in an arcade. Modern Pinball NYC on 3rd Ave. between 26th and 27th Streets is an interactive showroom featuring brand-new pinballs and refurbished models, dating back to the early solid-state era (late 1980s).

The retail showroom, where every game is for sale, is only 1,450 square feet, but it tidily packs up to 35 games. Small quarters in the back can be used for parties or as a staging area for events. Modern Pinball NYC is an official distributor for Jersey Jack Pinball, which began shipping its Wizard of Oz flipper game earlier this year. New games from Stern Pinball are also for sale, and are supplied and shipped by Modern Pinball's allied resellers, including [Tilt Amusements](#) (Ostrander, OH).



PHOTOS: At left, Steve Epstein (l.) and Steve Zahler look over the interactive showroom during a private party held in late October, a few weeks before the official opening on Nov. 16. At right, pinball collector and operator Al Cihak shows off some of his machinery. Cihak is providing many of the games for Modern Pinball NYC.

The pinball venue is roughly the same size of Epstein's former Broadway Arcade, (the second one at 52nd St.), which closed in 1996. Its clientele comprised local coin-op fans, Broadway cast members and celebrities like Roberta Flack, Matthew Broderick and Paul Simon. Lou Reed held his wedding reception -- with 50 guests, cake and gifts -- at the Broadway Arcade. The musician and songwriter died on Oct. 27, the same day Modern Pinball NYC "unofficially" opened for a private party to celebrate the second birthday of Epstein's twin grandsons.

Nostalgia aside, Modern Pinball NYC is about a coin-op institution that has been struggling to find a place in a digital society. Since the Broadway Arcade shut down almost 20 years ago, Epstein has been a go-to guy for collectors, promoters, tournament organizers and manufacturers, and a spiritual figure to soul seekers searching for the meaning of pinball. At Modern Pinball NYC, Epstein's business partner is Steve Zahler, a 44-year-old Web developer from New Jersey, and a serious pinball collector and competitive player.

"We're going to offer white-glove service," Zahler reported. "Every machine must pass a thorough checklist. And taking



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care of customers is the top priority."

VT recently toured the facility and found every game in it to be in excellent working order and in pristine condition. The Addams Family (Bally/1992), Fun House (Williams/1990) and Flipper Football (Capcom/1996), along with Dr. Dude (Williams/1990), Bram Stoker's Dracula (Williams/1993) and Punchy the Clown (Alvin G. & Co./1993) are some of the solid-state games on display. Stern's Star Trek and Metallica pins, among other new titles, are also in the showroom.

Zahler grew up in New Rochelle, NY, where he spent his youth playing pinball at Nathan's. He hopes Modern Pinball NYC will introduce the classic game to kids and teens, and perhaps make it a family experience. Games on display, all set on free play, can also be played after paying a small admission fee.

With the devoted assistance of pinball enthusiasts Francesco LaRocca, Al Cihak and Eddie Cramer, among others, support for Modern Pinball NYC is growing. LaRocca is an experienced pinball tournament organizer; Cihak is a collector who has become one of the biggest pinball machine operators in the Big Apple; and Cramer is an expert at restoring games.

In addition to showcasing pinball machines and hosting special events, Epstein and Zahler are planning outreach programs to provide exposure to pinball to a much broader audience.

Epstein is a founder and co-chairman of the [International Flipper Pinball Association](#), which is moving its official headquarters to the Modern Pinball site. The official opening of the venue will be celebrated this weekend, Nov. 16 and 17, in conjunction with an [IFPA tournament](#), the proceeds of benefiting the city's Food Bank.

Going forward, Epstein and Zahler, who is a top-ranking IFPA player in New Jersey, say tournaments will be a big part of their enterprise. Video footage of tournaments and player interviews will run on TV displays located throughout the store. TVs will also show high-score leaderboards.

The IFPA was created with the express purpose of encouraging, supporting and endorsing competitive pinball throughout the world. The organization provides oversight and assistance in establishing pinball leagues and organizing tournaments. At present, more than 450 IFPA events are staged annually.

The association endorses the World Pinball Tour events, which now boasts more than \$500,000 in cash and prizes awarded each year. With 25 country directors around the world, the IFPA has created the first official player ranking system, which awards points based upon player performance. The World Pinball Player Rankings (WPPR) includes over 21,000 players from 40 different countries. And these numbers keep increasing, as people of all ages from all parts of the globe respond to the timeless appeal of the pinball machine's harnessing of Newtonian mechanics to human ingenuity to present an intriguing challenge to skill and quick reflexes.

"The staggering, explosive growth of the entire worldwide community of pinball players and enthusiasts has been nothing short of remarkable since we re-launched the IFPA just a few years ago," said association cofounder and co-chairman Roger Sharpe. "And the future has never looked brighter for pinball, with tournaments and leagues taking place around the world on an almost weekly basis. I know Modern Pinball NYC is going to become the must-visit place for everyone in the tri-state area."

For Epstein, creating a physical presence in New York City dedicated to pinball has been a long time coming. "Modern Pinball NYC will showcase the best that is pinball," the amusement industry veteran said. "And to have the IFPA headquarters based here is icing on the cake."

Modern Pinball NYC is located at 362 3rd Ave., New York, NY 10016. It's open seven days a week, from 11 a.m. to 2 a.m. Information can be had by calling (646) 415-8440; For parties and corporate events, call (908) 358-7773.

[Click here](#) for directions to Modern Pinball NYC.

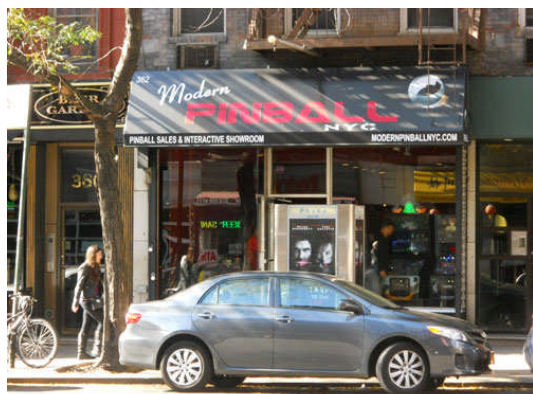


PHOTO: Manhattan's new pinball spot is located at 362 3rd Ave., between 26th and 27th Streets. Modern Pinball NYC includes a public area for displaying



and playing pinball machines. It will also serve as headquarters for the International Flipper Pinball Association.



PHOTO: Kids and their parents crowd Modern Pinball NYC to play brand-new and classic flipper games. All games in the retail showroom are set on free play, and visitors can pay one price to play all of them.



PHOTO: Modern Pinball showroom floor will feature 30 to 35 games at a time. Games can be purchased or leased for a few years.



PHOTO: Steve Epstein welcomes Jeremy Tepper, a music businessman and satellite radio personality, to Modern Pinball NYC. Tepper is the former managing editor of Vending Times who covered pinball and jukeboxes during the 1980s.

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