

INTERNATIONAL **BOWLING INDUSTRY**

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THE WORLD'S ONLY MAGAZINE DEDICATED EXCLUSIVELY TO THE BUSINESS OF BOWLING

DINGHONG, A SYMBOL OF PROSPERITY

HOW KEVIN AND WENDY WEN
ARE HELPING TO REAWAKEN
BOWLING IN CHINA.

**LET LOOSE
IN THE BIG EASY**

**10X BETTER
F2FEC 2016**

**SHELBY BROWN
RISES TO THE VOICE**

**UNEXPECTED RETURN
OF NEIL HUPFAUER**

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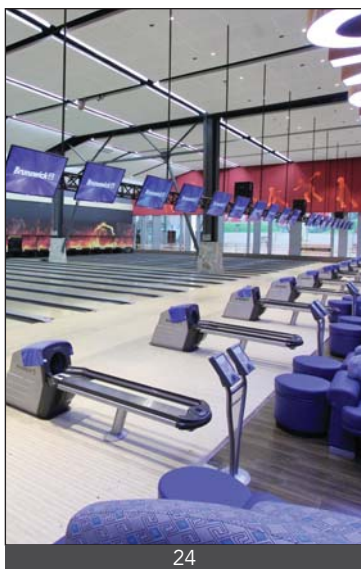
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LET LOOSE AND PLAY ON

At the Big Easy's Fulton Alley, come out and have a great time.

By Robert Sax

New Orleans is a city that reveres its local traditions, from jazz to Mardi Gras parades to red beans and rice. It doesn't jump on trends, preferring that the new be respectfully integrated into the existing local culture. So that's the approach Kyle Brechtel, creator of Fulton Alley, used to bring a contemporary, boutique bowling center and bar to his native city.

"I always believed New Orleans is not a late adopter, but kind of a last adopter," says Brechtel, who opened Fulton Alley in 2013 at Harrah's New Orleans Casino in a revitalized section of downtown. In fact, it took more than a decade for Fulton Alley to come to fruition.

The story began in 2004, when Harrah's had begun adding additional entertainment attractions to its property. They planned to make a section of Fulton Street, near the casino, into a year-round nightlife area. "We had a vision to create a more well-rounded entertainment offering," said Kristin Westberg, Harrah's vice president of marketing. "We've been part of the revitalization of the Central Business District."



Harrah's envisioned an upscale bowling center as one of the attractions. According to Brechtel, they first approached John Blanchard, owner of the city's famous Rock'n'Bowl concert and bowling venue. But Blanchard didn't want to open a second location, and Brechtel, a restaurant developer with a successful McAllister's Deli franchise in the casino, told them that he would be interested in exploring the concept.

In 2005 Hurricane Katrina devastated the city and put the bowling venue and other Fulton Street developments on hold. Brechtel continued developing his group of franchised restaurants, including eight McAllister's Delis, until the recession hit in 2009. He then decided to take a pause from development and get his MBA at Tulane University. He was finishing up his MBA in 2010 when Harrah's came





back to him about the bowling concept. They were getting interest from other developers and told him, "If you want to do this you need to get a proposal together and come present it to us."

Coincidentally Brechtel's last MBA class was New Venture Creation, and for his class project he created a business plan for what ultimately became Fulton Alley. "The timing worked out where I was actually

able to get some credits for my class while at the same time starting the due diligence in earnest on this project," recalls Brechtel. "That's when things really kicked off, and I hired a consultant [Jerry Morola of Amusement Entertainment Management] to do a feasibility study."

He also traveled the country to check out successful boutique bowling concepts including Lucky Strike Lanes, Brooklyn Bowl and Bowl and Barrel in Dallas. "I really got a feel for this boutique model that was emerging everywhere," says Brechtel. He shared that some of the people he talked to mentioned Rock'n'Bowl as an inspiration. "It was kind of ironic that here in New Orleans we may have had one of the early boutique bowling alleys but it got refined and expanded all over before it came full circle [and] came back here."

IT HAD TO BE THE REAL THING

Brechtel and his team didn't want Fulton Alley to simply mimic the other boutique concepts that were already out there. It had to be rooted in the Crescent City and it had to be authentic. "We wanted it to feel like New Orleans without being faux New Orleans. We didn't want to have Mardi Gras beads, and especially being in a location [where] you can get a lot of businesses that cater more towards the tourists," says Brechtel. "We wanted it to be a place where first locals, then tourists, felt like they were in New Orleans and were getting an authentic experience."

Dynamic Design of Michigan handled the architectural and interior design, converting the ground floor of Harrah's parking garage into Fulton Alley. Theming designer Doug Wilkerson's first step was to tour the Central Business District and other areas with Brechtel, "window-shopping" the many interesting establishments there in search of authentic design elements such as light fixtures, wallpaper and windows.

"We gathered all the different pieces of New Orleans we

look that's typical of the old warehouses in the area.

Wilkerson, who also does scenic design for attractions, enjoyed the opportunity to apply his skills at bringing out the strong story elements of the city of New Orleans. "It's one location we did that really had a story built into it."

SINFUL FOOD AND DRINK

Mark Twain praised New Orleans food as "delicious as the less criminal forms of sin." Creating an authentic New Orleans vibe meant paying close attention to food and drink in a city that loves to indulge in both. For cuisine, Brechtel turned to Michael Nirenberg, the chef who launched the Tivoli & Lee restaurant and its modern take on Southern cuisine. He created a menu that



Fulton Alley calls an "essential collection of Southern classics, street food and pub favorites."

You might recognize some of the dishes by name, but they have been reworked for an upscale palate. The appetizer list includes Cajun beef pies with spicy creolaise, fried Brussels sprouts with a pepper jelly glaze and deviled eggs filled with a tangy remoulade topped with chicken cracklins.

Even more substantial offerings include sweet and spicy chicken or pork belly sliders and tacos with barbecued beef or sautéed Gulf shrimp. Desserts are a contemporary riff on New Orleans classics, like chocolate and raisin bread pudding beignets, bacon praline bites and frozen peanut butter bites. It's food for the taste-conscious, not the diet-conscious, but this is the Big Easy.

A bar in New Orleans must have great drinks, so Brechtel enlisted Neal Bodenheimer and Kirk Estopinal, the mixologists behind the city's popular Cure and Bellocq cocktail bars. Guests will find a list of artisanal cocktails including the Ole Miss Betsy, a concoction of cinnamon-infused brandy, demerara sugar,

FEATURE



Angostura bitters and scotch, and The Exchanging Lanes, a variation on the Sazerac, the classic cocktail of New Orleans. There's also a selection of spirits, domestic beers and wines.

Brechtel says the public reaction has been very positive. "Where we are, it's a heavy event-based [clientele], parties during the week. We have a lot of corporate business from the conferences and conventions during the week and then on the weekends, it becomes more locals with people that are going out. We have a very singular focus which is just this idea, this concept of 'playing'."

Harrah's is very pleased with Fulton Alley, which is popular with its customers and employees alike. It also draws a good crowd from the nearby convention center. "Conventioneers are walking down Convention Center Boulevard going back to their hotels and they see this fantastic looking bowling alley," says Westberg, "and it lures them in. It provides a really fun group activity for those folks."

The bowling lanes are in heavy demand, and to give patrons additional

options, Brechtel has added a game parlor. It features shuffleboard, bocce, board games and a giant chess set which encourages group game-play and hanging out. This allows people to start "playing" while waiting for a bowling lane to become available. "We wanted to do it in a way that was somewhat nostalgic in terms of the bowling. People can play with friends and put their phones down for a while and actually have a conversation," says Brechtel.

Now that Fulton Alley is up and running, will Brechtel open others? He says not yet. "I already have some markets in mind, but we're not going to force it. Fulton Alley in itself will probably be a one-off. Harrah's wanted Fulton Alley to be representative of this location and this property," he says. "I'm looking at opportunities as we speak and hopefully within the next couple of years, we'll be moving forward with something."

In the meantime, you know where the party (and the bowling) is on Fulton Street. ♦



Robert Sax is a writer and PR consultant in Los Angeles. He grew up in Toronto, Canada, the home of five-pin bowling.

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The advertisement features a large photograph of a bowling alley lounge area. In the foreground, there are several light-colored, tufted sofas and round wooden coffee tables. In the background, bowling lanes are visible. The text "Bowling FURNITURE.com" is overlaid on the left side, and "Furniture for the Entire Facility" is on the right. At the bottom, there is a logo for Venue Industries, a stylized 'V' inside a square, and contact information including an email address, website, and phone number.



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L-R Shannon Pluhowsky (2nd), United States; champion Clara Juliana Guerrero, Colombia; and Maria Bulanova (3rd), Russia.

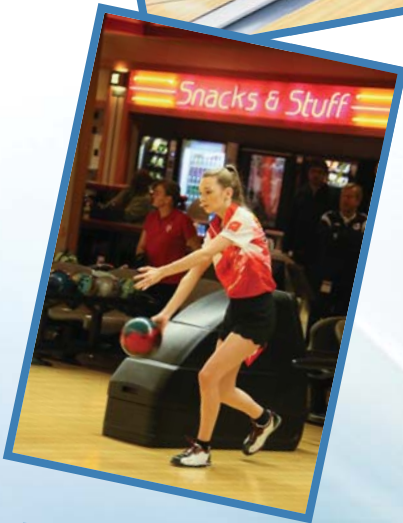


Opening ceremony entertainment.



QUBICAAMF WORLD CUP HIGHLIGHTS

The 51st QubicaAMF World Cup delivered on prestige and excitement while in Las Vegas, November 13-20. The star-filled competitors from around the world put on a great display of bowling in front of nice-sized Vegas crowds at Sam's Town Hotel and Gaming Hall. Siu Hong Wu of Hong Kong won the men's competition and Clara Guerrero from Columbia won her second QubicaAMF World Cup title in a row. ❖



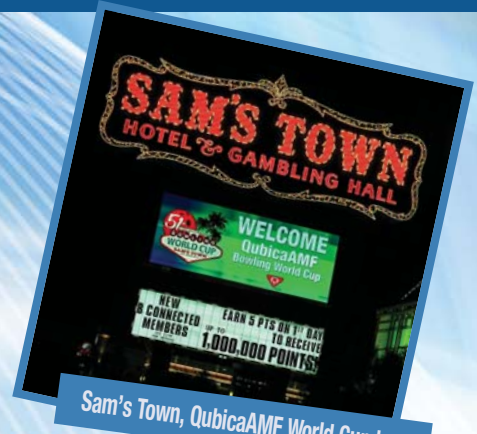
Top 24 women bowlers.



Top eight men and top eight women bowlers.



L-R Francois Louw (2nd), South Africa; champion Wu Siu Hong, Hong Kong; and Jaris Goh (3rd), Singapore.



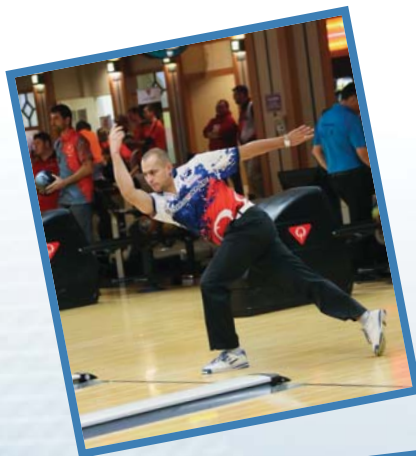
Sam's Town, QubicaAMF World Cup host.



Kevin Dornberger and Pat Ciniello.



Pat Ciniello and Juan Cabezas pass the torch to the hosts of the 52nd QubicaAMF World Cup in Shanghai, China.



Top 24 men bowlers.



QubicaAMF President Juan Cabezas with men's champion Wu Siu Hong, women's champion Clara Juliana Guererro and QubicaAMF's chairman of the board Pat Ciniello.



Mort Luby, Frank Sissons and Paul Lane.

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