

# weekend



## Off the beaten track

At Santa Anita, some things never change: winning, losing and the rituals of putting horses through their paces before the bugle call.  
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A NIGHT AT VINE STREET LOUNGE

# A club that lives up to the legend

**It has a glam address, a changeling structure and star power too.**

By HEIDI SIEGMUND CUDA  
Special to The Times

**W**HEN the Viper Room made its Sunset Strip debut in 1993, there was no place more exciting. It wasn't just the movie star owner, Johnny Depp, it was the caliber of performers. You got to see some of your favorite artists in a dark, cozy club with perfect sound. And it was all so sexy. On any given night, you were bound to bump into somebody famous.

Over the years, various club owners have tried to re-create the Viper Room's recipe in downtown Hollywood, a once-down-trodden stretch of Hollywood Boulevard that's now finally going uptown. But the only joint that may have what it takes to make it to the big time is the Vine Street Lounge, the new split-level venue at Hollywood and Vine.

"There are few times in your life where you have a chance to develop one of the true icon corners of the world," says Scott Shuttleworth, who owns the Vine Street Lounge with Peter Zamani. "At some point, you have to live up to the legend. So we built a contemporary classic."

Like the nearby Geisha House, the Vine Street Lounge — located at a former Bank of Hollywood built in 1929 — ups the Tinseltown ante: To design and comfort, the lounge adds smarts and talent.

"We're not in this for the short term," says Shuttleworth, who has 15 years in the restaurant, club and hotel business. "Music's not going anywhere, great artists are not going anywhere and we don't plan on going anywhere."

First off, they didn't bite off more than they could chew. Some neighboring spots went B-I-G and many are ending up D.O.A. Face it, it's tough to fill large clubs night after night.

Vine Street, on the other hand, has an ace up its sleeve. Its capacity is small, about 300, but it expands readily when an upstairs door opens into the second level of Hollywood & Vine, a beautiful restaurant also owned by Shuttleworth and Zamani. Combined, the rooms accommodate 750.

That feature has already come in handy. Although the club opened only a few weeks ago, Jamie Foxx and Halle Berry both chose it to throw private parties (Foxx's Oscar bash and Berry's birthday). When Foxx's party began to spill over capacity, they opened up the door leading to the restaurant and, *voilà*, the parties continued to roar.

One nice touch at Vine Street is that everyone who enters the club feels as if he or she has been handed a backstage pass. Yes, anyone can get onstage while bands are performing.

To access the mezzanine level, where a VIP room is loaded with a round, oversized bed, you have to walk onstage behind the band. You can wave to the drummer and rock while you walk.

The sound system is top notch, and the stage is impressive. It's raised about 7 feet from the dance floor, making for great sight lines. And the Bedroom VIP lounge doubles as a skybox, because guests can see right down onto the stage.

"I love to people watch," says actress Vanessa Kay, who was scoping out guests from the Bedroom. "It's not like most VIP rooms where you can't be part of the action. Here you can check it all out."

The club's design, a collaboration between Shuttleworth and Hatch Design, is elegant but user-friendly. The look is early '60s with modern twists. There's a creamy onyx bar top that glows in various hues, mahogany ta-

Gary Busey and Rolling Stones sideman Bernard Fowler have been regular singers.

On Tuesdays, actor Michael Sutton hosts an uber-trendy affair that's already attracted the likes of Kimberly Stewart, Paris Hilton, Christina Aguilera, John Stamos and Rod Stewart.

"The club has a very Vegas ultra-lounge feel," says Sutton, who also hosts Guy's on Fridays. "It's only getting hotter."

On Saturdays, veteran promoter Steve Dimon hosts a night for an older, upscale crowd. And on Sundays, Danny Masterson brings his Cotton Club redux, where live jazz is always on the menu.

Speaking of menus, the club offers a late-night appetizers menu, but many guests opt to duck into the restaurant for a quiet, sit-down meal in the middle of the mayhem.

**W**HEN you go from the club to the restaurant, you can't help but feel a wee bit like Alice in Wonderland. To get to there, you cut through another section of the mezzanine, where people are lounging, as if they're kicking it in a giant green room. From there, you descend a wide steel staircase into the restaurant, which is both noir and postmodern. It looks like a large-scale Musso & Frank done with Art Deco lighting, and it takes very little to imagine Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall nuzzling in a booth.

Bar manager Bobby Jones made sure he designed drinks to fit the mood. There's the Bogie (Crown Royal, Apple Pucker and pomegranate

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juice), the Dean (Jägermeister, peach and cranberry juice and Red Bull) and the Monroe (Effen Black Cherry vodka, lychee, pomegranate and a splash of Champagne).

"You know what? There's no place I'd rather be right now," says Miriam Jones, who crashed Foxx's party with pals but took a break from dancing to enjoy the German chocolate cake in the restaurant. "This is the hottest spot in L.A. right now. I'm telling everyone."

See, in Hollywood, it's all about eating your cake and having it too.

Heidi Stiegmund Cuda can be reached at [weekend@latimes.com](mailto:weekend@latimes.com).

## Vine Street Lounge

Where: 1708 Vine St., Hollywood

When: 9 p.m. to 2 a.m. nightly

Price: Cover varies; 21 and older

Info: (323) 468-0188 or [www.vinestreetlounge.com](http://www.vinestreetlounge.com)



Photographs by JAMIE RECTOR For The Times

**WATCH IT ALL:** Vine Street Lounge has 10 HDTV plasma screens and a VIP lounge with a view.

bles juxtaposed with white vinyl booths and tan low-slung couches.

"I could totally see myself hanging out here night after night," says Arturo Bega, a guest who came to check out the scene on opening night. "It's so comfortable but nice. Everyone's cool and the music's cool."

The club seems to be cool with musicians too. "I've got to

say, it's a good addition to the Hollywood scene," says Bob Boulding, lead guitarist for the Young Dubliners, who had their record and video release party at Vine Street.

"It had everything we wanted. It's located centrally, it has an in-house top-notch sound system and in-house video system. It's excellent for live music. We play about 200 shows a year, and it

compares to the nicest clubs in the world."

Among the club's weekly highlights are Monday's China Club ProJam, where folks can hear famous musicians and unsung studio heroes play their hearts out. A 20-year tradition from New York to L.A., the ProJam has featured such guest stars as Eric Clapton and Bruce Springsteen, and recently actor