

A '20s Vibe for the 21st Century



Knock Brings a Classy Speakeasy Feel to Second Street

by Julie Vitto

It's colder than a well digger's ass out on the streets of Harrisburg, and I'm looking for a place to feel cozy.

With the night's password memorized, I approach the pink doors of Madam Knock's Pine Street Beauty Parlor – a front for the new speakeasy-style bar and night club, Knock.

Knock's grand opening took place on New Year's Eve, and – from the pictures posted on their social media sites – it looks like it was a good time.

Restaurateur Ron Kamionka has made lots of shifts in recent years, creating bar experiences with an atmosphere more conducive to enjoying conversation over a drink. While some might miss the crazy days of the Hardware Bar and Eclipse night clubs, Knock offers a new generation of clubbers the theater of a password-protected speakeasy, while maintaining a little tongue-in-cheek humor.

The sign on the door – fashioned after a coupon clipping – features an illustrated lady's head sporting a purple hairdo, piled high like a dollop of whipped cream.

Once inside, I'm met by a gentleman who asks to see my ID. He guards the bottom of a stairwell next to the curtained entrance of the Susquehanna Ale House. I'm directed up the winding staircase lined with framed pictures of women modeling popular hairstyles of a bygone era.

Signs with arrows lead me to a door displaying a sign for Madam Knock's. I turn the knob and find myself standing on the black-and-white-checkered tile of a vintage beauty parlor. Next to a classic barber's station, a smiling lady in a black cocktail dress is waiting to greet me with a question:

"Do you know the password?"
"Brush?"

Pleased with my response, she walks over to a panel of shelves and pulls the wall open to reveal Knock – the club tucked away in the windowless second floor barroom of what used to be the Second Street Comedy Club.

I'm immediately taken by the crystal chandeliers hanging from the metal-

plated ceiling, the raised wooden paneling accented by red-and-gold brocade wallpaper and vintage mirrors and the roped-off, luxuriously upholstered VIP seating area across the room from the DJ booth.

Straight ahead from the entrance is the bar, aglow with glass-bottled spirits lined up against a mirrored wall. The bartop is covered in a layer of bright copper pennies under glass.

It's just after 9 p.m., and I practically have the place to myself. The DJ vaguely resembles Dave Gahan of Depeche Mode, so I ask if he'll play one of their remixes. A high-octane version of "Enjoy the Silence" spins between two turntables while the Second Street crowd starts to trickle in.

The waitstaff looks sharp in their uniforms: ladies in black dresses, some wearing tulle headpieces; gentlemen dressed in black with white satin suspenders and matching ties. The DJ matches the dress code, too.

There's even a bathroom attendant, who's ready to hand you a paper

towel and make light conversation as you wash up.

The drink list consists of old-fashioned cocktails, variations of martinis and mules along with bottled beers and wines by the glass. A bound drink list is available at each table, and the bartenders are happy to mix pretty much anything you can come up with. (No absinthe or moonshine, though.)

I'm a Moscow Mule enthusiast, so I have to sample theirs. I drop a fresh lime wedge into the cluster of ice floating in Smirnoff vodka and fizzy ginger beer – the good kind that bites the tip of your tongue – presented in a frosty copper mug. Perfect.

My date convinces me to sample the Forbidden Fruit – a well-balanced concoction of Ketel One vodka, triple sec, sour mix and fresh pomegranate juice.

Next up is the Penny Arcade – consisting of Johnny Walker Red, fresh pineapple and lime juices, simple syrup and a dash of bitters.

A bit later, I'm walking against the thickening crowd of 20- to

30-somethings making their way towards the bar. I'm mesmerized as the DJ spins a steady beat of current dance remixes while the chandeliers change color from white to red to blood orange to blue.

It's time for this flapper to head home, so I make my way toward the red exit sign over a door on the other end of the room from the secret entrance. Down the winding staircase, where the muffled sound of competing dance beats can be heard, I come to the ground floor and am deposited onto the sidewalk beneath the Second Street Comedy Club sign.

Knock is absolutely worth a visit – I'm already looking forward to my next trip – but make sure you're in the know by visiting the club's social media sites, where they reveal each weekend's password. And make sure to post some photos of you and your friends living it up at this spectacular Second Street speakeasy.

• 129 Pine Street, Harrisburg; 681-8012

• Friday and Saturday, 9 p.m.-2 a.m.



PHOTOS / EMILY MALLIS

Potato Facts

Mr. Potato Head was first distributed by Hasbro in 1952. The original version of the famous children's toy contained only the parts – parents were supposed to supply their children with an actual potato for the body.

Mr. Potato Head was the first toy to be advertised on TV in 1952.