



THE CHASER

Our nightlife reporter hits the bars and calls the shots



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North Shore Nightlife: Five questions for Viper Alley's Scott Greenberg

AMALIE DRURY

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Inside the 15,000-square-foot music venue and nightclub

A Highland Park resident and developer of [the Wit hotel](#), Scott Greenberg will unveil his latest brainchild, the 15,000-square-foot "boutique concert venue and nightclub" [Viper Alley](#), on March 11th in Lincolnshire. With final sound checks underway, he explained to the Chaser why he thinks the North Shore is ready to rock.

The Chaser: Why does Lincolnshire need a place like Viper Alley?

Greenberg: I really thought the entire North Shore needed something like this. The area has 15 or 20 of the largest corporations in Chicagoland: Abbott, Walgreens, Grainger, CDW—the list goes on and on. Yet there's no great live-music venue or nightclub up here. Why wouldn't they want it? Viper Alley will provide a Ravinia-level music experience for customers who are accustomed to that. We're not doing classical, but there's a considerable focus on performance excellence. We're opening with [the most recent American Idol] [Lee DeWyze](#), and we're proud to bring people like [Kenny Wayne Shepherd](#), who's considered the new music genius of electric guitars, and trumpeter [Arturo Sandoval](#). He'd be just as comfortable at Carnegie Hall.

Will anything about Viper Alley remind us of the Wit?

If you're really students of Scott Greenberg and the Wit, you'll probably find the DNA is there. The hotel is infused with my own style of humor, and you'll see that humor in the art around Viper Alley. We had a local artist, Sam Kirk, produce several humorous original pieces. You'll also see signs of my taste for creating tension between what I call "urban grit" and a glamorous theatrically. You see that in the Wit, with windows opened up to city streets and the el. That tension is heightened at Viper Alley because we have this factory motif, but things are highly stylized and there's lots of pizzazz. It's a visual feast, everywhere you look.

An illuminated wall, reminiscent of *American Idol*, faces Milwaukee Avenue.

ABOUT THE CHASER



The freelance life keeps writer Amalie Drury ensconced in her home office most days, but by the time cocktail hour rolls around, she's more than ready to snap her laptop shut and hit Chicago's bar scene in search of the good, the bad, and the gossipy. A native Kentuckian, Amalie has been nursing a taste for bourbon practically since birth. Leave her tips on where to sip in the comments section below, then check back each Thursday for tales of her exploits and the latest in nightlife news.

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What's "rock 'n' roll-inspired" food?

It's small plates, mostly pizzas and sandwiches. Some of the menu concepting came from our chef Evan Percoco at the Wit. He had a history of working with rock celebrities.

Who will your crowd will be? Is it a strictly over-21 venue?

Most of the time, yes. On Sundays we'll do a family-friendly musical brunch. We've tried to gear different parts of the venue for different ages. What we find with [Roof](#) at the Wit is, earlier in the day you have the older people—30 to 70—come from 5 to 10 at night. And then the 20- to 30-year-olds come after 11 until 2 in the morning. A lot of our live acts are geared to the 30 to 70 crowd, and the 21 to 30 crowd will come for the national- and international-level DJs who will play late night. We think people will come in on Wednesday and Thursday nights and use the space more as a bar and nightclub.

Some evenings we'll start out at 6 or 7 with maybe a fashion show or other entertainment, and then it'll morph into an all-out party.

Will there be dancing?

Oh, yes. We'll have outrageously fun dancing.

Interview has been edited for length.



A sample of Sam Kirk's art

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