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Honky-tonk haven to bring Nashville action to BG

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Aug 1, 2023



Owners Chris Gipson (from left), Amber Pendley and Jackson Washer have converted Fountain Row's former Ramen Bar into a honky-tonk, bringing Nashville staples like live country music and line dancing to Bowling Green.

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A new business venture on Fountain Row is trying to lasso a slice of Nashville's Broadway nightlife for downtown Bowling Green.

Business owners Jackson Washer, Chris Gipson and Amber Pendley have spent the summer converting the former Ramen Bar location at 927 College St. into an old-fashioned country honky-tonk fit for any sized hoedown.

Christened the "Dusty Boot," the bar offers live music, a western theme and room enough for cowpokes to line dance to classic country hits.

"I think we're here to deliver the Broadway experience at home," said Gipson, a senior at Western Kentucky University. "I think that's what it boils down to. Trying to save people an hour drive and (giving them) a safe way to get home."

Washboards, tools and signs salvaged from rural Warren County dot the interior. The tables have been decked out with classic longhorn skulls.

"It's a southcentral Kentucky honky tonk," Washer said. "Every item that's in here has been pulled out of a barn in southcentral Kentucky."

Washer said he'd been wanting to open a honky-tonk since seventh grade, brewing up several names and themes for business ventures as a youngster.

“I’ve got a book. It’s got four or five different bars in it,” he said.

The trio of owners first got in contact during their time at Southcentral Kentucky Community & Technical College. Gipson said Washer was the first person he called once there was an opportunity to move downtown.

“I was like, ‘Jackson, what should we do?’ And he said ‘this is crazy you asked – I have a book,’ ” Gipson said. “Jackson’s creativity is in the sky. I can’t pull him down.”

Washer said he saw a clientele that was not being served in Bowling Green.

“There’s not a lot of line dancing that goes on. Something that we bring to Fountain Row is something to do other than drink and listen,” he said.

Washer said the bar is all about the details. A thin wooden lip has been installed across the wall to accommodate customers who will be seeking out a cupholder once the dancing begins.

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“This ledge seems so simple, but if you go to any bar in town there’s not a place to set your beer down when you dance,” Washer said. “Imagine this – you’re posted up here, you just got done line dancing, this girl comes off and you’ve met your future honey right here at this ledge.”

To go along with the theme, the bar is stocked with 76-ounce cowboy boot-shaped glasses inspired by the German “das boot.”

“There is a boot to the Dusty Boot. We couldn’t have it without it,” Gipson said. “This is a behemoth of a beer. We’re priced right now at \$15 a boot.”

The owners are also working on procuring a special “Dusty Boot” beer, which will be brewed locally. Gipson said the bar will remain focused on serving alcohol in its early months before expanding its offering to include food.

“When you bite off more than you can chew, sometimes it doesn’t turn out right and the whole thing crumbles,” he said.

The Dusty Boot crew has already put on a few soft openings, bringing live music into the bar to test the waters. Gipson said there hasn’t been a single night where the bar wasn’t slammed.

“People are coming from all over to dance,” Washer said. “People aren’t really here just to drink. There’s plenty of other bars on the square to do that. We’re really seeing people getting engaged with the dancing and live performances.”

Gipson said the focus on country music has been to the bar’s benefit. He said that a customer told him the atmosphere provided “a feeling of home.”

Washer said that the Dusty Boot makes for “a good in-between to knock the dust off them boots” before heading to Nashville.

Demographic wise, Gipson said the bar has been attracting folks in their 60s all the way down to the early 20s college crowd.

“It comes down to the memories,” he said. “It doesn’t matter the cost. It doesn’t matter how long you were there. It’s how good of a time you had.”

The Dusty Boot will celebrate its grand opening Sept. 1.

“I think places don’t have a huge identity, and this is country and southern rock,” Washer said. “I think it’s going to bring a whole lot of new people who don’t normally come down here.”

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