

Ask Randy Greenstein of new venue Shrine that loaded nightlife question - "So who's your competition?" - and the refreshingly honest owner/operator doesn't bat a lash.

"Mur. Mur and Mixx at Borgata in Atlantic City," he says. "New Yorkers have two choices for casinos and casino nightlife:

Drive north two hours or drive south two hours. A lot of customers are enjoying coming north for the weekend because the traffic isn't as bad as it is to get to Jersey."

Shrine opened over Memorial Day weekend inside the MGM Grand at Foxwoods, itself a new player in the burgeoning Connecticut casino-hotel scene. Shrine's arrival - tagged in MGM Grand's full-tilt media campaign, including television spots - rounds out the property's entertainment offering, giving it a leg-up on the larger and more established Mohegan Sun, and main Foxwoods Resort & Casino complex. The 21,000-square-foot venue is the most thoroughly branded and nightlife-driven "evening destination" among the trio, which is why Greenstein doesn't consider them competition: Foxwoods is only just developing a 6,600-square-foot "ultra-lounge" for a Spring 2009 opening, and Mohegan, for now, is sticking with Jimmy Buffet's Margaritaville to satisfy late-night party-seekers.

Even with a local monopoly, Shrine is feeling the pinch of the economic downturn. "People just don't have the disposable income right now," says Greenstein. "We have unbelievable Fridays and Saturdays, but mid-week is very tough these days. Restaurant and nightclub customers save their money and go out only once a week, or only once a month."

But when the 30 million people who live within two hours of Mohegan finally turn up, Shrine has plenty to hold their attention. The venue incorporates a nightclub, an outdoor lounge area with inviting fireplaces, and an Asian restaurant into a single sophisticated package, reminiscent of New York and Las Vegas' Tao, but with a more intimate feel.

"The concept was designed to attract a metropolitan clientele that would be familiar with clubs and restaurants located in New York and Las Vegas," concedes designer Peter Niemitz, a veteran of restaurant design.

To enhance the clubbing clan's comfort factor further, Shrine's booking policy

skews toward mash-ups and hip-hop, including jocks from Moodswing 360, an artist management/booking agency helmed by Greenstein's brother Ricky.

Greenstein's Boston-based Big Night Entertainment is Shrine's main owning body, with a collection of partial owners and investors dotted by

familiar names, including

DJ Riz, radio host Matt Siegel of KISS 108 Boston (where Greenstein was a business manager for 14 years), and Boston Red Sox owner/chairman Tom Werner, who had to get permission from Major League Baseball to ante up. Big Night owns and operates Estate and Suite in Boston, and Greenstein also consults on chain venues like Tequila Rain and Lucky Strike via his other company, Evolution Marketing & Advertising.

We spoke with Greenstein about the challenges of working within a casino, his sound and lighting choices, and the future of Shrine.

How did you and MGM Grand link up? Our friend, Chef Michael Schlow, had been working on his restaurant, Alta Strada, at the MGM Grand at Foxwoods. He was aware that the nightclub lease was still open, due to a few other clubs that had been negotiating with MGM recently falling through. So Michael called my partner Ed Kane and set up a meeting. Michael then called the former president of Foxwoods, John O'Brien, and quickly set up our first meeting with MGM. We quickly worked on our ideas and signed the lease to become the exclusive Asian concept and exclusive nightclub within this brand new \$800 million facility.



Shrine mastermind and co-owner Ricky Greenstein.



Thirty million people live within two hours of the 21,000-square-foot Shrine nightclub.

What lessons did you apply to Shrine from your previous careers in radio, club promotions, and artist booking?

Celebrity, celebrity, celebrity. Nightclub promotions are about creating the rich and famous experience every weekend. Pop culture has turned into paparazzi nation. The biggest question is what celeb can you get a glimpse of. Well, at Shrine, or our Boston nightclub The Estate, you can get a glimpse of your favorite celebrities for an extremely affordable price. Whether you book a VIP bottle service table or just pay your general admission price (usually \$20), you can "Party like a Rockstar" in your hometown and feel like you are in Vegas or LA.

Which DJs have worked the best at Shrine? What was your best night, and why? Our customers are 21-60+, so we need DJs that have the music knowledge to entertain all. It's hard to entertain different generations, but the best DJs in the country at entertaining the majority are DJ

Chachi and DJ Riz. They have such a wide range of music knowledge and they are so skilled at their craft that they think before



DJ AM spins at Shrine.

they play. Luckily, my brother owns the largest DJ booking agency in the country, Moodswing 360, and we have access to all the best: DJ AM, DJ Skribble, Steve Aoki, Kevin Scott, Jason Smith, Eli Escobar, PS1, Crooked, Ruckus. The two most original parties we've thrown musically were DJ AM and Jazzy Jeff.

Very cool live shows and a lot of fun!

How did you select your sound and lighting systems? DJ Skribble recommended the mad genius Dan Agne of Sound Investments. Dan in turn brought Steve Lieberman of SJ Lighting to do the theatrical lights. Dan came in and told us all about Funktion-One and we knew we had the designer we wanted. We knew we wanted a state-of-the-art sound system, with our facility being 21,000 square feet with two outdoor patios. We wanted to make sure it was loud and clear and we went to check out some other clubs Dan designed and they all sounded great! We also knew we wanted zoned sections for customizable parties of 12-1,200 and Dan hit it out of the park. We are very happy with the sound and lights!

What are the unique challenges of operating a restaurant/nightclub? How are you overcoming them? The biggest challenge is creating an intimate dining experience as well as sensational

Team Shrine

Owner/Operator: Big Night Entertainment
Sound: Sound Investment, Chicago
Lighting: SJ Lighting, Los Angeles
Interior Design: Niemitz Design Group, Boston

LIGHTING & VIDEO

- 11 - Elation Professional DLED-36 color changers
- 8 - Martin Professional MAC 250 Krypton
- 4 - Martin Professional Atomic 3000 DMX strobes
- 4 - Martin Professional Color Scrollers
- 3 - Christie LX450 3LCD projectors
- 2 - Denon DNV-310 DVD players
- 2 - Elation Professional Octopod 80 LED systems
- 1 - Crestron Isys 15" touch screen
- 1 - Crestron CP2E control system
- 1 - Extron MAV Plus 88 audio matrix switcher
- 1 - High End Systems Axon Media Server
- 1 - MA Lighting grandMA lighting console
- 1 - Martin Professional Jem ZR33 smoke machine

SOUND (selected)

Dancefloor

- 4 - Funktion One AX88 loudspeakers
- 4 - Funktion One F-215 loudspeakers
- 2 - Funktion One F-221 loudspeakers
- 1 - MC2 Audio T500 amp
- 1 - MC2 Audio T1500 amp
- 1 - Powersoft Audio K6 amp
- 1 - Powersoft Audio K10 amp

Surround - Up & Down

- 12 - Funktion One F81 loudspeakers
- 6 - Funktion One MB212 loudspeakers
- 2 - MC2 Audio T2000 amps
- 1 - Powersoft Audio K6 amp

Outside Lounge

- 14 - QSC AcousticDesign AD-S82 loudspeakers
- 6 - Community Professional Loudspeakers WET W2-122 loudspeakers
- 2 - Crest Audio Pro 7200 amp
- 2 - Crest Audio Pro 8200 amp

Bar & Lounge

- 20 - Funktion One F81 loudspeakers
- 9 - Funktion One MB212 loudspeakers
- 3 - MC2 Audio T2000 amps
- 2 - Powersoft Audio K6 amp
- 1 - BSS Audio BLU-8-BLK networked programmable remote

DJ Booth

- 3 - BSS Audio BLU 32 networked digital audio I/O expanders
- 3 - Pioneer CDJ-1000 CD players
- 3 - Technics SL-1210MK5 turntable
- 2 - FBT MAX-4a loudspeakers
- 2 - Community Professional Loudspeakers iHP1596 loudspeakers
- 1 - BSS Audio BLU80 networked digital audio processor
- 1 - Crest Audio Pro 8200 amp
- 1 - Pioneer DJM-800 mixer

nightclub experience, and I think we did a great job creating the environment. Another challenge is making sure that the restaurant and nightclub are equally successful. Most establishments that house both end up skewing one way or another and then just focus on the successful one. For Shrine to be successful, we need both parts of the operation to succeed. The restaurant needs to flourish with diners every night of the week, and the nightclub needs to stay fresh and popular by consistently evolving. It's really a 50/50 business: One side can never control the majority of revenue.

Shrine incorporates an Asian restaurant, outdoor lounge and nightclub into one sophisticated package.

Walk-Through

Designer Peter Niemitz takes you on a tour of Shrine.



"The facade is purposefully exotic and mysterious, as we want the guest to explore and experience a surprise. You enter through large doors into a rather modest dark foyer with a low ceiling. You then head through a second set of red Asian doors into the dramatic room. The DJ booth, named 'the pagoda,' reigns over



a 40-foot-high space that is a very sexy lounge with a variety of seating choices. On weekends this space transforms into a dancefloor. Furnishings vanish, the lanterns rise, and the club lighting and sound system descend. Beyond the dancefloor is the large 'race track' bar bordered by raised seating. As you continue towards the rear, the ceiling lowers and you enter a more intimate, quiet atmosphere. There you will find the frozen vodka bar and more lounge seating. A V.I.P. private dining room is at the back. Finally, a pair of doors leads you to the covered terrace."