

Rock & Rita's with Flair



Nicolas Saint-Jean makes a drink the hard way

It was a hot, arid, desert night in June of 1975, when I last stepped foot inside Circus Circus. I remember the night very, very well. It was the night I was escorted out of the slot bank area of the casino by two huge security goons for committing the crime of underage gambling. The bastards, ruining my good time like that. Anyway, I was asked to cover the grand opening of Rock & Ritas and guess where it is located? It is inside Circus Circus Casino. I was going to pass, still being traumatized like I was, but then their publicist twisted my arm and said she really wanted me to be there. So, last night I took those first steps back inside the scene of the crime.

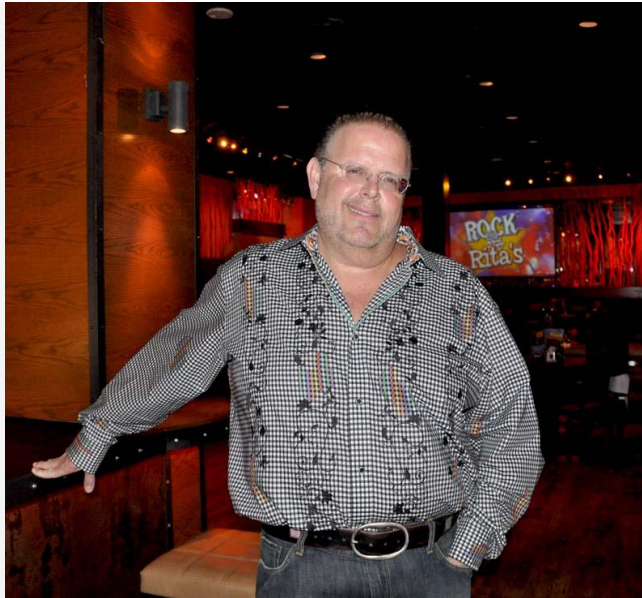
I hesitated at first, but forced myself to go through that front door. The place seems smaller in this millennium, given that it is now surrounded by so many newer, bigger Strip properties. The first thing of notable interest was a very large sign that warned minors must keep out of the gambling areas. I'd like to personally take credit for that.



No Minors allowed in gambling areas of Circus Circus

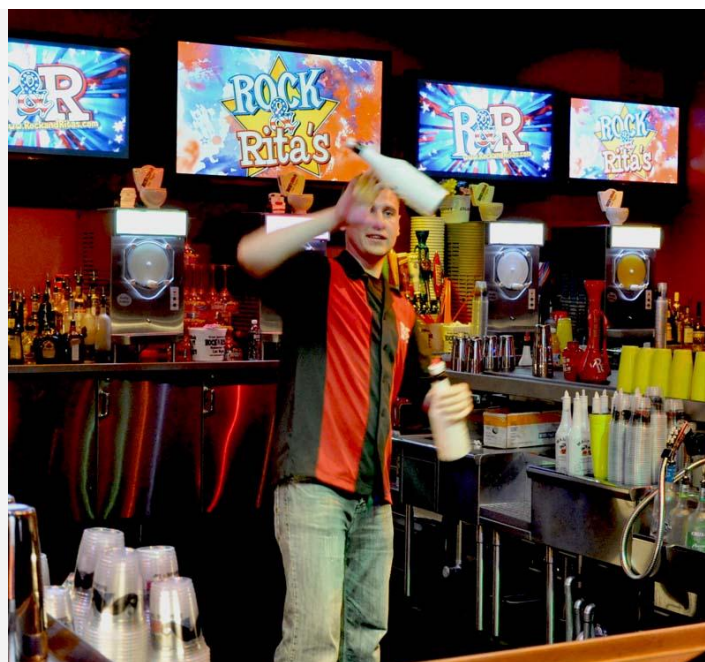
There are some differences in the place now, although, I don't detect any serious change of theme in there. There are no longer trapeze artists flying around and a regular circus going on in there. I couldn't help but notice the security guards don't look nearly as gnarly as they used to under Vegas Mob rule. Now, they are rather friendly. I even had to nudge a yawning one and tell him to stay awake.

I got to Rock & Rita's early due to there being hardly any traffic on the Las Vegas Strip. Our President is in town and I think everyone found other things to do in fear of being trapped behind a Presidential motorcade. So I wandered around the restaurant and spoke with the manager for awhile. He was terribly excited for opening night and everyone was rushing around taking care of last minute details and plans.



David Tuttleman, the Manager of Rock & Rita's

The place is set up with serious partying in mind, but there are plenty of tables for a nice, sit down barbeque meal. The menu has the usual features of ribs, steaks and fish with a large selection of the appetizers you're used to seeing in Vegas. I had a couple of their hot dog sliders and they were great! I also sampled a little of their macaroni & cheese of which they are rightly very proud. I saw someone eating the baby back ribs that looked awesome. So, of course, I interrupted his dinner to ask how they were. He looked up at me only long enough to tell me they were, "really, *really* good," then he dove back in like he hadn't eaten in days.



Vladymyr Buryanov shows me his stuff

The thing that makes this place different and such a party place is that they feature flair bartenders. My mom used to tell me stories about this when she would visit the islands in the Caribbean. She just had a blast watching and interacting with these guys. Well, this restaurant/bar has more than their share of the flair bartenders. And mom was right, as mom's always are, they are a load of fun!



Vladymyr balances some liquer

The guys twirl and toss and balance bottles and cups while making your drink. It is sexy and fun and of course, the guys are just full of personality. Showing off is what they live for. Sometimes they perform alone while pouring your drink and other times they are working together as a team.



Dario Doimo admiring his bottle in the air for a split second before making the drink

There are several bartenders working the bar, breaking into their drink dance on demand and sometimes just because they want to. But, wait, there's more! They have a stage and actually have little bartender shows, at least

they did last night. I don't know if it is regular feature. I think this has just taken pole dancing to a whole new level. There is no pole, for one. And it's guys, for two. It is juggling, but it's not juggling. This is much more entertaining than having some emaciated chick hanging upside down showing you her stuff. These are performing guys doing a dance with the ingredients to make your drink, all to the beat of some great tunes. Good times!



Nicolas Saint-Jean makes a drink while balancing it on a steel spoon

Their drink menu includes the usual favorites but also has drinks like "Suck it From the Bucket" and the "Toilet Bowl." These people have a great sense of humor. And yes, you get to keep that souvenir "cup" it came in.



Colin Griffiths and Vladymyr Buryanov, flair bartenders at Rock & Rita's

I don't do parties well. I'm usually the person in the corner dinking around with her BlackBerry all night. People came up from time to time to say hello, sometimes I knew who they were and sometimes I didn't. I find it all rather unnerving sometimes. I just don't know what to say. By the time the place was wall to wall people, I thought it was time to go home to work on my video and photos from the night.

