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Amplified Backstage: maturing beer knowledge with some ‘teen spirit’

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Most music enthusiasts can remember, at some point during those awkward teenage years, owning an abnormally large poster of their favorite band, whether it be a David Bowie red and blue lightning bolt, a psychedelic graphic of Jimi Hendrix or the dripping tongue of The Rolling Stones. At Alex Pierson’s brewery, Amplified Backstage (4150 Mission Boulevard, Suite 105), their poster shrine of choice is a 12-by-30-foot mural of Nirvana, located on the interior wall of the tasting room.

“We didn’t exactly want to copy the teenage bedroom aesthetic, but I guess in a way we did because it’s more of an early 90s feel while paying homage to growing up,” said Pierson. “That was sort of the inspiration for lining the bar with tapes and having all the blacklight posters.”

Over 2,000 music cassette tapes are nestled under the bar with a hand-crafted amp behind the counter. Guests

can peruse the tapes, pick their favorite and have it played upon request. This is designer Aubree Miller’s favorite Backstage feature. Before doing PR, marketing and branding for Amplified, Miller worked in music marketing and spent a lot of time backstage while touring with various bands. That experience is what inspired her design for Amplified Backstage.

“It’s meant to feel like a hangout and capture that ‘calm before the storm’ feel right before a band goes onstage,” said Miller. “The back of the stage is where you gather yourself and collect all your emotions before you go out and perform. That was my inspiration. This is a place to relax, cool down, hangout with your close friends and have a beer before you go and tackle the rest of your day.”

Backstage, which opened just this past April, is an extension of Amplified Ale Works Kitchen & Beer Garden, located just upstairs of the tasting room. The brewery was founded in 2012 by Pierson and his business partner JC Hill while they were searching for a new location for their previously owned restaurant, California Kebab. For a year, Pierson and Hill brewed beer in their garage while their employees—who had formed a band—provided musical entertainment. When a space finally opened up, the group decided to turn their kebab business into a brewery that honored their love of the music.

“JC and I became friends by going to concerts together in college too, so the name Amplified just naturally fit,” said Pierson. “We figured, ‘Hey we’ve been doing this for over a year in the garage, let’s take a stab at it.’”

Though they saturated the space with punk band paraphernalia, from Red Hot Chili Peppers posters to electric guitar cup holders, it wasn’t until Amplified opened up Backstage downstairs, and the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control removed the live music restriction, that the brewery was able to host their beloved punk rock concerts.

“Our end goal was always to have bands come in and play live shows,” said Miller. “The venue holds up to 50 people so, when we have a show, it’s very intimate and you’re right there with the band. Plus, we have a lot of rock history embedded in Amplified that people aren’t always aware of.”

The band photos of Nirvana, Red Hot Chili Peppers and, at their Miramar location, Bad Brains are originals by Miller’s close friend Krk Dominguez, photographer and punk rock archivist. Amplified has also can-collaborated with local bands Low Volts, The Bombpops, The Routine and TJ punk band DFMK to create new craft beers named after the groups, like “Bomb Hops” and “Electric Chair.”

The next show lined up for Amplified is their anniversary concert November 2, though they hope to get more shows on the schedule in the meantime.

“We’ve had a limited amount of shows because we don’t want to blast out the neighbors,” said Pierson.

“We’d eventually like to do weekly concerts and some secret shows,” added Miller. “We want to supply good entertainment and good beers to the local communities, as well as offer a venue for touring and local bands to get out their name. It’s really a labor of love.”