

## VALLEY STYLE

## Bygone Bowling in Montrose



**Kingpin:** Bob Berger, owner of Montrose Bowl, behind the counter.

In operation since 1936, **Montrose Bowl** is the oldest and smallest operating bowling alley in Los Angeles County. And it retains a bygone charm of the 1950s.

Customers can enjoy dancing under a disco ball, hearing their favorite music from the jukebox or sitting on red vinyl bar stools. Owner **Bob Berger**, whose family has run the alley since 1981, said the '50s style was adopted after the business was used to shoot the 1998 fantasy comedy-drama "Pleasantville." After production on the film wrapped, Berger's father asked the production crew to leave the decor and other props for the bowling alley.

Since taking over the business at 2334 Honolulu Ave. in 2007, Berger has not changed the vibe. The light blue-and-orange colored bowling alley can hold up to 95 people with eight bowling lanes. The lively color scheme and vintage feel gives the alley a distinction for its competitors.

"Most bowling alleys, once you're inside, they all kind of look the same," said Berger. "We have our own style. It's kind of our style

and it works for us."

Another thing that makes Montrose Bowling different than the rest is it doesn't feature a lot of open bowling. The alley specializes in events and parties. Customers rent the venue for birthday, baby showers, wedding receptions and corporate parties.

"All of my business comes from events and parties," said Berger.

The bowling alley hosts from 45 to 55 events a month. Prices range from \$400 for two hours during the week to \$800 on Friday and Saturday nights. The price includes the entire alley and bowling shoes, while customers can bring their own food. The only thing that the bowling alley requires customers to do is buy drinks, which

include water, soda, lemonade and beer and wine for adults.

"I've had company parties and family parties that have been coming in for 25 to 30 years," said Berger.

Montrose Bowl also works as a movie location when the production needs a 1950s look.

"My Latin Lover" and "Jersey Boys" are recent films that used the bowling alley for filming.

Since becoming a well-known '50s style bowling alley and film location, it has grabbed the attention of Hollywood celebrities. As you walk through the bowling alley, you can see signed pictures of personalities including **Nadia Bjorlin**, **Clint Eastwood**, and **Michelle Pfeiffer** hanging

on the wall. Other celebrities like **Bruce Willis**, **Janet Jackson** and **David Cassidy** have also stopped by to celebrate birthday parties.

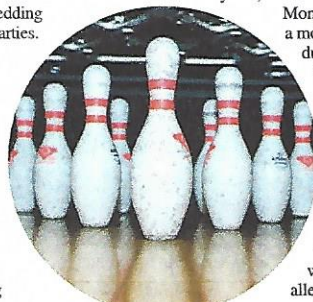
"We still do movie shoots, videos, commercials, YouTube videos and TV shows," Berger explained. He added that although media appearances give the place recognition, he believes word of mouth has sustained the business.

Companies such as **Time Warner**, **DreamWorks Animation**, **Jet Propulsion Laboratory** and **Nestle** have thrown corporate parties on the premises, and the retro style provides a common theme for conversation and bonding.

"People come from different companies and maybe they're not all based together, their based all over Southern California, and they bring their groups here and everybody gets to know each other," Berger explained.

The future is as certain as the past at Montrose Bowl. When asked if he plans to expand to more locations, Berger knows the answer. "I put in 80 hours a week here, my wife puts in about 40," he said. "That's enough for us."

— Stephanie Bedolla



**Ready to Roll:** Classic white bowling pins haven't changed since the 1950s.