

'Agent BB' plans just small changes at Safe House

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The dining and entertainment arm of The Marcus Corp. announced June 15 that it is taking ownership of Milwaukee's Safe

House, ushering in a new menu among other select changes to the iconic, spy-themed downtown Milwaukee restaurant and bar.

"This is a local institution and a city treasure," said Greg Marcus, CEO and president of Marcus. "We're not changing the Safe House. What makes it special is not going to change. We're going to be working on the margins." I caught up with Greg Marcus to talk about the sale and his past experiences at the Safe House.

When did you first become interested in purchasing the Safe House and what was the attraction? "I have known about the Safe House since I was a kid. I even remember the ads for it in The Pfister house magazine my dad produced in the 1970s. We first started discussing the potential transition of the Safe House a number of years ago with Dave and Shauna Baldwin. There were a number of things that attracted us to this business. First and foremost was the enduring success of the business. It's been around nearly 50 years.

"Though, given that we are in the movie business and we have certainly made our fair share of profits off spy stories ('James Bond,' 'Mission Impossible,' 'Bourne Identity,' etc.), we weren't surprised by this. Everyone loves a good spy story. Also, it's iconic to Milwaukee and anytime you get a chance to be involved in something like

this you make your best effort to do so. Lastly, it looked like a lot of fun."

What makes the Safe House so

popular? "As I said, the spy genre will never go out of style. Spying is the second-oldest profession. The Baldwins have used the spy theme to attract all generations. And after many years of continuing to build the business, adding new and fun elements to the concept, they have created something that has great depth to it. Yes, it's a spy-themed bar and restaurant, but among many things there's also movie history, and actual espionage artifacts as well. There is even a door from an actual Russian gulag in the restaurant. And who doesn't like a secret escape route? It's interesting and it's fun."

What changes are you planning?

"Immediate changes will include reissuing the menu to include more fresh and local ingredients. Control (the clandestine organization tasked with establishing and maintaining the Safe House) will also start to make changes to the beverage menu blending the classic Safe House favorites with new craft cocktails. We are also looking at introducing new attractions and additional missions for both adult and young agents-in-training birthday parties as well as for bachelor and bachelorette parties."

Have you visited the Safe House

often? Ever been denied entry for not knowing the password? "Yes, I've been denied. There is actual photographic evidence of this, but you will have to speak to Control to gain access to it."

Are you working on your secret

agent name? "I am Agent BB. Control bestowed this name on me years ago. Its meaning is top secret."



