

# Amusing The Zillion

A former carny kid casts an insider's eye on the amusement business, Coney Island, and fun places in between

## Modern Pinball NYC Opens with New Arcade Business Model

November 15, 2013 by [Tricia](#)



Just Opened: Modern Pinball NYC on Third Avenue at 27th Street in Manhattan. November 10, 2013. Photo © Tricia Vita

This weekend, [Modern Pinball NYC](#), a new destination for pinball enthusiasts in Manhattan, will celebrate its grand opening with a couple of tournaments, including a Saturday benefit for the Food Bank for New York City. Located on Third Avenue at 26th Street, the pinball machine retailer and interactive showroom is a brand-new business model for the arcade, which outside of amusement parks is a [vanishing breed](#).



Metallica, Star Trek and The Wizard of Oz Pinball Machines at Modern Pinball. November 10, 2013. Photo © Tricia Vita

Instead of paying per game at Modern Pinball, players buy time— \$7.50 for a half hour, \$10 for an hour, and \$20 to play all day. The bonus is that whatever you spend can be applied to the future purchase of a pinball machine. The 30 machines currently at Modern Pinball range from beautifully refurbished games from the 1990s like The Addams Family, Fun House and Dr Dude to new titles from Stern and Jersey Jack Pinball.



Playing The Wizard of OZ by Jersey Jack Pinball at Modern Pinball.  
November 10, 2013. Photo © Tricia Vita

When ATZ stopped by on Tuesday evening, we met pinball veterans who'd already made the place part of their schedule and passersby of all ages stopping to check it out. "It's great family entertainment," says co-owner Steve Zahler, who has fond memories of growing up playing pinball in the 1970s, when the games were everywhere—restaurants, skating rinks and Main Street arcades.

"Not like nowadays, when they're mostly in bars," says Zahler. "That's why I didn't want alcohol to be part of this business because I want to help bring pinball back." His daughter and son, who are 6 and 9, are turning out to be pinball whizzes, but they're lucky to have several machines at home. Zahler wanted to open a place where kids could play pinball with their friends and family, just as he did growing up. Birthday parties and special event packages are among Modern Pinball's offerings.



Steve Zahler, Modern Pinball's co-owner, is the #1 Ranked Pinball Player in New York and New Jersey.

November 10, 2013. Photo © Tricia Vita

Players are encouraged to ask the staff, who include high-ranking tournament players and pinball enthusiasts, for tips and strategies. We were wowed to find out Zahler is the No. 1 ranked player in New York and New Jersey, 14th in the country and 27th in the world out of 21,000 tournament players! Steve Epstein, his partner at Modern Pinball is the co-founder of both the International Flipper Pinball Assn. ([IFPA](#)) and Professional and Amateur Pinball Assn.(PAPA) with Roger Sharpe. “We share the same philosophy about business, pinball and promotion,” says Zahler. “We have the same deep passion for pinball.”



AC/DC 'Let There Be Rock' Limited Edition at Modern Pinball.  
November 10, 2013. Photo © Tricia Vita

With Modern Pinball, Epstein, who was the owner/operator of the Broadway Arcade aka “The Pinball Capital of the World” until it closed in 1996, is back in business. The place was legendary and is much missed. According to a 1985 [article from the Times](#), Lou Reed held his wedding reception at Broadway Arcade, and Broadway stars, cast members and members of orchestras ran in during breaks between performances and during intermissions. At Modern Pinball, we met one of those musicians, a French horn player named Michael, who was ecstatic to have a place to play again. “I haven’t played pinball in 15 years,” he said.

***[Modern Pinball NYC](#), 362 Third Avenue (between 26th & 27th Streets), New York, NY 10016. Phone 646 415-8440. Winter Hours: Open 7 days a week from 11AM to midnight, till 2AM on Thu, Fri and Sat.***



Modern Pinball, November 10, 2013. Photo © Tricia Vita

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### 3 Responses

1. on [November 15, 2013 at 10:04 am](#) / [Reply](#) *Randy Senna*

Pinball is a bigger part of our history than most people realize.

At some point, most of us have played pinball, and created fond memories in so doing.

They represent happy times at Amusement Parks, or summer vacations....

Times where nothing mattered in the world other than racking up those points, and the clanging of the bells and chimes.

It has been my life mission to preserve these fantastic pieces of our history, and along with the over 500 pinball machines I have collected, there are thousands of other amusement and arcade devices which have been preserved from the great boardwalk locations in the area.

My goal has been to set up a 150,000 sq foot Amusements hands on Museum; the likes of which has never been seen before, and could never be reproduced again....

The questions remains where...?

A very small version is in operation in Wildwood, NJ, where I have include just some 200 pinballs and arcade games of all kinds; but the area is only 6,000 sq ft....

I need 25 or 30 times that space !

You might have seen part of my collection when I was featured on A & E's HOARDERS.... (the Hoarder of amusement park memorabilia and arcade games)...

Anyone who has a great idea on where this giant Amusement Museum could be located, please let me know !

Meanwhile, everyone, please support these places that try to keep pinball alive....

It is through your patronage that they are able to continue to bring their magic to the world !

Randy Senna Wildwood, New Jersey



on [November 15, 2013 at 10:22 am](#) / [Reply](#) *Tricia*

Hi Randy AKA Mr Fascination,  
Thanks for your comment.  
Yes I saw your collection on the tv show and documentary trailer.  
Long live pinball and Fascination!  
Tricia



▪ on [November 15, 2013 at 12:05 pm](#) *Randy Senna*

Hi Tricia !

Yep, that's me ! Mr. Fascination aka HOARDER.....

Among other titles and labels I guess.....

I enjoy your site postings about Coney.

I am privileged enough to have been born in time to remember going to Steeplechase when I was very young.

About 10 years ago, I had supplied 12th Street amusements with one of my Men's Room Water Race games, which was operated on the corner of 12th street on the Midway...

I was there checking the operation many times during that period, and the biggest thing I remember was how every race game was blasting their announcements and speakers at top volume, so loud that it actually hurt my ears walking down the strip....

However, Coney had lots of personality, above everything else.

Nice to hear of renewed interest there, but I fear developers will not be creating things with the same flavor and feeling of what once was...

And so goes the whole world as well....

See you down the road,

Randy