

TWO

BLUE CUBE BILLIARDS & LOUNGE

ORANGE, CONN.



SQUARE FEET

4,500

TABLES

9

COST

\$360,000

TABLE RATE

\$5-\$6 PER PERSON/HR

AMENITIES

PRIVATE ROOM, CUE
LOCKERS, FIREPLACE,
GOURMET
APPETIZERS

BY MASON KING

The events of Sept. 11, 2001, had a profound effect on the residents of New York City. Many New Yorkers reevaluated and changed their careers. Many others moved from the city. Case in point: Three 30-something actors trying to break into the New York theater scene decided to open a poolhall in Connecticut.

"I think it hit everybody in America: Life is too short — why wait?" said Cary Gallant, former house manager for Amsterdam Billiard Clubs' westside location.

Gallant met fellow aspiring actor Dan Sawka at the club in 1999, and, with both pool and theater in common, they became instant friends. The two then met actor Derek Herrling while performing in an off-off-Broadway production of "Men Without Dates," and he joined the coterie.

Gallant and Sawka had been tossing around the concept of opening their own poolhall before the 9/11 attacks occurred. Spurred then to enact their dream, they brought Herrling on board and moved to Connecticut in search of a community underserved by upscale poolhalls.

They ended up in Orange, which is along the heavily-traveled I-95 corridor and adjacent to several college towns. Their blueprint for Blue Cube Billiards and Lounge (so named after they discovered most permutations of "Chalk" were trademarked) called for a hybrid room, mixing elements of a chic martini bar and a hardcore players' room.

"We wanted a place where everybody could feel comfortable, especially women," Gallant said. "We wanted to make it contemporary and trendy and very comfortable for someone who doesn't know how to play pool. [But] the equipment had to be top-notch, so the people who love the game can appreciate it."

The trio of owner-operators invested \$360,000 in the project from personal savings and bank financing. The poolhall opened on Feb. 20, 2004, after four months of construction.

Despite the fact that the room shares space in a mini-strip shopping center, its décor is surprisingly swanky. The room deftly picks its moments, laying down a base of understated hues like black and flat blue and then adding dashes of flash with chrome, stain-

less steel and frosted glass. Six custom-made couches from California cushion the room's otherwise angular look.

Nine black-and-chrome Olhausen pool tables line the long, narrow room. All tables feature electric-blue Simonis cloth, double bridges, and Super Aramith balls. One-piece Valley sticks sit in cue racks.

Contrary to what some might believe, actors can use their craft to successfully run a business. Here, the three thespians play complementary roles: Gallant is the front man; Sawka works the numbers; and Herrling handles ordering and private parties.

But for now, the partners aren't too concerned with their old ambitions. Sawka is expecting his second child, and Herrling is soon to be married. Their goal now is to open two more poolroom locations in Connecticut over the next six years. Then, who knows?

"I've always talked about starting my own independent film company," Gallant said. The experience in finance and management should come in handy.

