

WILLIS

SHOW BAR

PRIVATE EVENTS

WILLISSHOWBAR.COM

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A photograph of the interior of the Willis Show Bar, showing a curved bar with stools, a stage area, and a ceiling with circular recessed lighting. The bar is lined with various bottles and glasses. The stage is in the background, and the ceiling features large, circular, recessed light fixtures. The overall atmosphere is classic and elegant.

HISTORY

Willis Show Bar is nestled on the corner of Willis and Third in Detroit's historic Cass Corridor. Reborn as an upscale cabaret and classic cocktail bar, Willis provides a unique glimpse into the original "show bar" era. First opened in 1949, Willis was a hot jazz club until the city closed its doors in 1978.

The legendary bar, with its carefully restored original Art Moderne-style ceiling and floor plan, captures the attention of every seat in the house. Our unique main stage is behind the rounded center bar and features live music along with burlesque dancers, deejays, and comedians.

WILLIS SHOW BAR
CIRCA 1972

OUR SPACE

Willis Show Bar can comfortably accommodate up to 83 seated guests. The maximum capacity is approximately 125 guests, depending on the room configuration. We also accommodate large groups with partial buyouts. The venue can be tailored to fit your specific needs.

- The large restored entrance vestibule, with coat check, allows your guest to comfortably transition from the outside world
- 24 comfortable seats at our one-of-a-kind 55 foot long bar, which spans the entire main room
- Two sets of romantic banquette seating face the main stage, with tables for 10 guests each
- Plush upholstered booths are perfect for larger groups allowing for 39 guests seated on our upper tier

AVAILABILITY

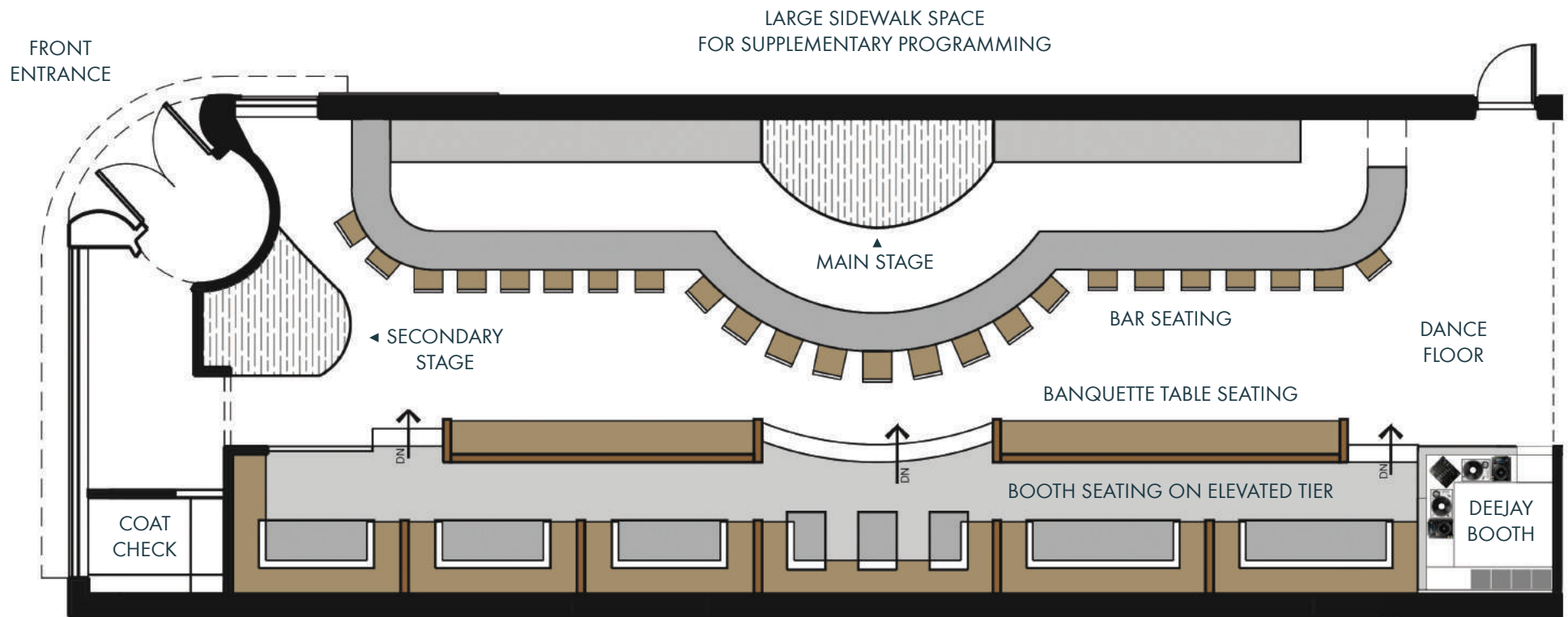
Willis Show Bar is perfect for corporate or social events, private performances, and even live karaoke played over Detroit's best sound system.

Weekday or weekend, daytime or evening, our piece of Detroit history is available for memorable experiences anytime you choose.



FLOOR PLAN

The layout we have today is nearly identical to the original floorplan Willis had in the 20th century and is unique to Detroit.





ENTERTAINMENT

Live music, deejays, burlesque, or other performers may be arranged for your event. Pricing varies depending on the entertainment chosen.

- Our main stage is elevated behind the bar & measures 13' x 6'
- The second auxiliary stage measures 6' x 6'
- Our professional audio system includes an upright piano, drum kit, bass amp, microphones, and more available
- The elevated deejay booth has state-of-the-art equipment
- We also have a green room for entertainers or surprise guests



our house band
THE HEAVY PETTERS

LIBATIONS

Our distinct menu offers a variety of classic cocktails, top shelf spirits, punch bowls served in vintage glassware, beer, wine, and champagne. Custom event packages include but are not limited to...

CONSUMPTION BAR

You pay for the drinks you and your guests order during your stay. Your tab may be capped at a certain amount or open for the entire event, so long as the minimum is met.

CASH BAR

Each guest is responsible for their own tab. Willis Show Bar requires a spending minimum per guest for private events.

TICKETED BAR

You may decide how many beverages you want to provide your guests. Pricing is dependent on the beer, wine, and/or spirits you prefer offering your guests. The spending minimum is applicable to this package too.

CATERING

Our food offerings are limited to locally made snacks including gourmet popcorn, potato chips, and nuts. However, we do allow catering provided by vendors that are approved by our management team.



ACCOLADES

We have received glowing reviews from customers near and far. We've also been featured in...

HOUR
DETROIT

Detroit Free Press

The Detroit News

CRAIN'S
DETROIT BUSINESS

DETROIT
METROTIMES

EATER

Detroit called us
"one of the hottest
new cocktail bars"

part of our ►
feature in
HOUR
DETROIT



A woman with full, dark hair and a Medusa tattoo — a piece that resembles my own Odyssey-themed half sleeve, slightly covered by my dress code-approved, off-the-shoulder top — greets me and my friends as we approach Willis Show Bar located in Cass Corridor. From the outside, it reminds me of the dive spots we frequent on a typical weekend evening; a neon "bar" sign hanging just above its industrial door. But as she leads us inside and pulls back the curtain separating the tight lobby from the rest of the space, it's as if we've entered an earlier decade. "Welcome to Willis," she says allowing the candle-lit atmosphere of the lounge to sink in before we're guided to our reserved seats at the bar positioned directly in front of the main stage.

Settling onto my leather stool, I order the Millionaire's Cocktail #2, a rum concoction featuring lime and grenadine found on the curated drink menu. Within minutes, the house band, The Heavy Peters, takes to the platform before us. Tonight, the group is celebrating Jack White's birthday with a range of cabaret, jazz, and blues renditions of songs associated with The White Stripes. Half way into my cocktail and the nearly 30-minute set, the band starts playing a saxophone-heavy version of "Tcky Thump." In shock, I turn to my boyfriend. "I love this song," I whisper. "And I've never heard it like this before."

This element of surprise, and knack for mixing old and new sounds, is something that Willis Show Bar is exceptionally good at. The venue is also keen on showcasing local talent. "Detroit's one of most important music cities in the world," says Sean Patrick, who moved from Los Angeles to act as part owner and general manager of the now five-month-old space. "Honoring that

reflects a large amount of the programming we do here — jazz, soul, rhythm, blues, funk. We've had up to 11 musicians play when only three were booked. It's amazing how many great musicians are here."

The nightlife veteran has immersed himself in the metro Detroit community to scout and connect with these local performers and to honor the original intention of the space. Founded in 1949, the venue once was home to a popular club, also named Willis Show Bar, that is rumored to have attracted names like Don Cherry and Etta James to Detroit. The space thrived until the city shut it down in 1978. The owners behind Blossoms floral shop bought the property in the 1980s, and used it as a design space for special projects. Patrick and his business partners closed a deal on the space in 2016 and started renovations shortly after.

Drawing inspiration from its beginnings, the team referenced a photo from Willis' heyday to recreate the handsome interior, which is now surrounded in sleek wood paneling and accented with leather seating, soft lighting, and navy-blue paint. Aside from an intentional lack of windows, the most notable feature of the space is the restored curvaceous ceiling. It was a staple of the original Willis Show Bar, and it informed the design of the rest of the venue, including the equally curvy bar setup and floor plan. "The ceiling, when it's lit for the evening, is photographic and cinematic," Patrick says. "Then, you've got this really amazing music going."

He references the popularity that artists like Sam Smith, Mark Ronson, and the late Amy Winehouse have had as a sign that, despite their nostalgic sounds, the genres the bar is offering are well received by today's modern music lovers. About a week after my first visit to Willis Show Bar, I find myself back at the



PRICING

The cost of reserving Willis Show Bar exclusively for a private function varies depending on start time, day of the week, room configuration, and entertainment selections. Your group will always have the undivided attention of our bar, floor personnel, and management team, all while helping you craft and execute an engaging gathering.

For more details, kindly email events@willisshowbar.com and someone from our events team will be in touch.

We look forward to assisting in producing unforgettable memories for you and your guests.



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