

Catalyst restaurant undergoes a facelift

By JOAN KLINGENBERG

The old Catalyst restaurant in Santa Cruz — whose scruffy, beer-drinking and drug-using clientele once attracted the curiosity of cops and tourists alike — has undergone a major facelift.

For almost two years, the once popular nightspot with its mirrored walls and huge vine-covered skylight, has been shut down. Its indoor fountain hasn't flowed since owner Randall Kane built a modern Catalyst several blocks away — in his words, a "posh" version of its dilapidated predecessor.

The old Catalyst, located a block from the county jail on Front St., was abandoned to further deteriorate into the remains of what was once a beautiful, ornate structure. Its only companion has been the group of old people who congregate next door in the lobby of the aging St. George Hotel. They watch black and white TV and stare at passers-by on the Pacific Avenue shopping mall. They used to while away the hours — from 10 to 2 a.m. — observing the parade of Catalyst customers who used the hotel lobby as a back door to their favorite hangout.

However, a \$200,000 investment and nine-month remodel job has brought the old Catalyst up to par with building codes and transformed it into a "paradise."

"Paradiso's" is the name of

the new restaurant in the old Catalyst. It opened Monday and is advertised as an "Italian-Continental-American gourmet" restaurant featuring tuxedoed waiters, an expensive wine list, a host at the door and \$7 to \$12 dinner prices. Quiche, lasagna and combination sandwiches will be served at lunch (prices range from \$3 to \$5) and canelloni, beef "tournedos Henry IV," veal cordon bleu, shish kabob and New York steak for dinner.

The image of Paradiso's is a far cry from that of the Catalyst. The old Catalyst featured chocolate chip cookies, pastrami sandwiches, cheap beer, loud rock and blue grass music. It was the only place in town for awhile that served San Francisco steam beer on tap. During Friday night happy hour, sweaty customers rubbed against each other, all pushing toward the bar for another drink. The tiny dance floor was jammed with gyrating bodies, the tables were cluttered with empty pint beer glasses and there was a bouncer at the door.

Paradiso's will feature "fine dining, fine service and nice music," according to its owners, brothers Dan and Del Dallal. "There will be a host at the door and we'll cater to the para-professional crowd. People will feel the image when they come in," they said.

By contrast, some of the more notorious patrons at the old Catalyst were the Hell's Angels, although young lawyers, businessmen, reporters, students and even "para-professionals" went there to eat, drink, dance and talk.

The music at Paradiso's is to be "soft variety." The atmosphere will be "very conservative and formal," the Dallals said.

Del added: "It will be a totally different clientele, not a deli counter and not for rifraf. Don't even mention the Catalyst."

The building has been repainted inside and out. Shades with gold tassels hang in the windows where Catalyst coffee drinkers used to peer out onto the street. The electrical and plumbing systems were completely redone. Cost of the plumbing alone was \$10,000.

Ten thousand dollar's worth of kitchen vent equipment had to be helicoptered onto the roof of the building for installation. (A young man who was later arrested tried to hijack the helicopter while the job was in progress.)

When remodeling started in September, Dan Dallal said the kitchen floor had two-foot-wide holes in it. When the floor was redone, it buckled due to the bad plumbing underneath. He said the skylight, was "in total shambles." The fountain was reactivated and a new statue installed.

Chinese and Middle Eastern carpets adorn the newly-laid indoor-outdoor carpeting. Murals depicting dancing nymphs with Miss California faces were painted by New York artist Peter Bartzak, commissioned for the job by the Dallals. The works took the artist two months to complete, Dan said.

In a final move to isolate the

restaurant from the St. George Hotel, the Callals separated the restaurant's plumbing and electrical system from the hotel's, and the door leading from the hotel lobby to the fountain room was turned into an emergency exit. Customers can go out that door, but hotel occupants can't come in.

"I don't think the people in the St. George can afford to come here," Dan commented.

Enough tables have been set up in the three dining rooms to accommodate 235 persons. The stage has been built out toward the center of the main room so that diners in the other two rooms can see the performers, something which was not possible at the old Catalyst.

Dan, 33, and Del, 32, said they have been in Santa Cruz for over a year. They export equipment to the Middle East at their other business, Imperial Bay Co. They were both in the restaurant business in New York, before moving west.

Assembly to sponsor march

El Salvador Assembly of God Church, 30th and Brommer, will be sponsor of a "March for Christ," from noon to 1 p.m. Saturday to Pacific Avenue Mall, Santa Cruz.

Dale Wenger and Steve Ramirez of the church are organizers of the march to begin from Penny's Department Store and ending at San Lorenzo Park, where a gospel concert will be held from 1 to 3 p.m. The concert will feature "Country Gospel Gleaners," and "Children of the Day."

The event will be designed as an inter-denominational Christian activity with members from five churches, including Four Square Gospel Church, Christian Community Church of Santa Cruz and Mid-county Church of Santa Cruz.

Additional details are available by calling 476-6759 or 423-8297.

Demonstration workshop set

Resource Center for Non-violence will be the location for a "Nonviolent Demonstration and Direct Action Workshop" Thursday and Friday, June 29-30. The overnight event will include skills-sharing and practice of planning, organizing and conducting a demonstration.

The workshop will begin at 2 p.m. Thursday and will conclude at 2 p.m. Friday. The Resource Center is located at 515 Broadway, Santa Cruz. A donation of \$6 to \$8 will be requested, and scholarship status is available. For pre-registration or more information, 423-1626.



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