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'Cheers' Bar Finally Finds a Museum Home

9:00 AM PST 08/07/2014 by Bryn Elise Sandberg

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The set, which has been mostly neglected in storage, is in the process of being cleaned and restored to go on display in James Comisar's planned Museum of Television.

A version of this story first appeared in the Aug. 15 issue of *The Hollywood Reporter* magazine.



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2006 Viacom split in which Paramount transferred its entire television studio to CBS, the latter gained the rights to the *Cheers* franchise.

The bar mostly was neglected in storage — apart from a stint at the short-lived Hollywood

TV memorabilia collector **James Comisar** spent 20 years chasing his holy grail: the bar from *Cheers*.

It wasn't until July that CBS donated the iconic set to Comisar's nonprofit Museum of Television.

"You would think that this bar that served up laughs for 275 episodes must have ended up in the *Smithsonian*, right?" says Comisar, 49. "Nope, they turned it down." (The Smithsonian thought the 1,000-square-foot set would take up too much space.)

The functioning bar — custom-made by Paramount in 1982 of wood, brass and leather — is still home to Sam Malone's black touch-tone telephone and careworn cash register.

Corporate mergers and studio changes clouded ownership of the famed piece after the *NBC sitcom* ended in 1993. Following the

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Entertainment Museum that allowed guests to sit at the bar, order drinks and even throw bachelor parties. "No real museum lets its patrons party with the artifacts," Comisar protests.

The former television writer finally obtained the bar with assistance from series co-creator **James Burrows** (director of 237 episodes), whose office helped petition CBS on Comisar's behalf. One of Burrow's longtime assistants, **Chris Connor**, was particularly helpful in nudging the studio by calling and writing letters throughout the whole two-decade-long journey.

"Twenty years? That's nothing," Comisar scoffs. "I honestly wouldn't have stopped. I would have called them even when I was in assisted living."

Preserving the piece will be no easy feat. A team of former **LACMA** conservators soon will begin cleaning and restoring the set, a process Comisar estimates will run him at least \$100,000. Not to mention the amount of time such a task requires — he's already clocked 200 hours figuring out how to repair the bar's deteriorated brass trim alone.

Comisar hopes by the time they're done he will have established a permanent home for his 10,000-item collection — which includes **Johnny Carson's** desk, **George Reeves'** Superman costume and "blue sky" meth from *Breaking Bad* — starting with a 5,000-square-foot preview space planned for 2015.

He is considering locations in Phoenix and Las Vegas, but Los Angeles is Comisar's first choice if he can secure funding: "These artifacts need to be exhibited, celebrated and discussed here in Hollywood."

Agrees *Cheers* star **Ted Danson**: "What a great home for the bar. We're all beginning to feel like museum pieces."

TED DANSON JOHNNY CARSON

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'Cheers' 30th Anniversary Party Reunites the Iconic Series' Stars (Photos)

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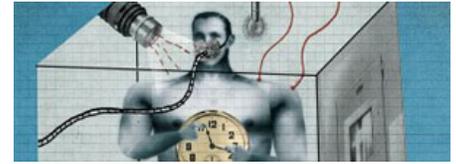
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Hey, Comisar, don't knock the Hollywood Museum. It was a rare treat to be able to actually interact with the bar at its former home.

You're right, most museums would never let you "party with the artifacts." But let's keep some perspective here, it's just a set from an increasingly old TV show, not the Declaration of Independence.

I'm delighted that I got a chance to briefly sit at the Cheers bar.

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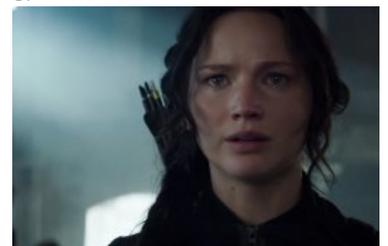
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