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Experience: The Blue Room in Cranston Draws Patrons Near and Far

Drinks and mystique at Pawtuxet Village's hotspot bar for music lovers



Dash Peña plays for a full house at The Blue Room

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE BLUE ROOM

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By Ann Martini

It's a blustery Wednesday night in the Pawtuxet Village neighborhood of Cranston, and two women at the bar at The Blue Room are chatting as they listen to jazz tunes performed by the Tish Adams Duo. "I never thought we'd find a bar that we both loved – at our different ages!" says Ingrid, an 81-year-old retired nurse, to her daughter, Melissa, 55, and also a nurse. They share a laugh and clink their wine glasses.

It's exactly the kind of conversation that moves owner Jen Minuto to tears. "The world can be tough – isolation and technology and politics," she says. "We need a place where we can come together for an intimate, lighter experience, where we can melt into something that matters."

Jen and her wife, Kasey Minuto, dreamed of opening The Blue Room for many years, and it finally came to fruition last spring. Both musicians themselves, they sometimes take the stage in this intimate space that seats about 50 at small tables, spacious booths, and a beautiful mirrored bar with white leather barstools. But the space was built as much for musicians as for the audiences who

pack it six nights a week to see them. “I want musicians to feel like this is their room,” Jen says. “I want them to feel a sense of ownership and the comfort to present their love to an audience.”

It’s a feeling that Jen, an attorney by day, and Kasey, who works for the Department of Veterans’ Affairs, wanted to replicate from their own experiences in the small jazz and music clubs that they’ve visited over the years. “There’s magic that happens in the interplay between a musician and a listener,” Jen explains. “It’s an emotional connection that’s unique to the process.”

So they took a “build it and they will come” approach with The Blue Room. The space, tucked between Basta Italian restaurant and Village Dry Cleaners, is unique to the village. On any given night, the room is packed for the one or two performers scheduled to play, or Sunday night’s open mic. The music is eclectic – lots of jazz and blues, but there are no rules. When I visited, after Tish Adams performed, she sat at the bar to listen to the entirety of the next show, the John Allmark Jazz Quintet. Here, musicians show up for one another – and chat with audience members or share a drink between sets.

Mark Cutler, a long-time local musician who has led a variety of roots-rock bands over four decades, has played at The Blue Room several times. “The vibe in the place is open and friendly, and you feel like you’re in a beautiful little oasis when you walk through the doors. I love how inclusive it is,” says Cutler, and it’s a sentiment shared even by those who haven’t played in public in ages. Jim Kelleher, a local attorney, decided to give open mic night a whirl last October. “The crowd was very supportive, and it felt great to get up and perform in a club setting, something I hadn’t done in at least 40 years,” he says. “I’m planning to do it again, if they’ll have me.”

While the village tends to attract locals from the surrounding Warwick and Cranston communities, The Blue Room is pulling from farther away, too, gaining a reputation as a unique venue worth driving for. “It’s filling a niche in Pawtuxet Village that really complements our community,” says Stephanie Read, operations manager at Fellini’s. “The more interest and traffic in the village, the better for all of us.” And locals love it, too. Steve McGuinness, who lives nearby in Warwick, is a regular. “This space has come a long way since I was a kid growing up here,” he says. “It’s got such a great, sultry vibe.”

As they watch this labor of love grow, the Minutos are talking about expanding into an adjacent space and perhaps adding a small kitchen. But for now, they are just grateful, says Jen. “It’s really been a dream come true.”

The Blue Room

2197 Broad Street, Cranston • 401-280-0288

TheBlueRoom.com (<https://theblueroom.com/>)

Late Night Bites

The Blue Room serves cocktails, beer, wine, spirit-free bevies, and light charcuterie snacks. Follow up a Blue Room Margarita or Sicilian Espresso Martini with dinner around the block to make it a multi-location night with these Pawtuxet Village restaurants in walking distance:

- **Basta Italian** (<https://www.bastaonbroad.com/>) 2195 Broad Street
- **Fellini Pizzeria** (<https://www.fellinipizzeria.com/>) 2190 Broad Street
- **O’Rourke’s Bar & Grill** (<https://orourkesbarandgrill.com/>) 23 Peck Lane
- **Revolution** (<https://revolutionri.com/>) 2190 Broad Street
- **Rim Nahm Thai Cuisine** (<https://www.rimnahmthai.com/>). 2212 Broad Street

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