

# Pinball!

## Tournaments return to Merry Time Bar and Grill

BY PETER KORCHNAK

Calling all pinball wizards.

Following a pandemic-induced hiatus, Merry Time Bar and Grill in downtown Astoria has resumed its monthly pinball tournament.

Players of all skill levels are invited to participate and win cash prizes every first Sunday of the month, with the next event being held this Sunday at 6 p.m. It only takes a \$5 buy-in, a stack of quarters to drop and crazy flipper fingers.

Todd Robinett, who co-owns the Merry Time as well as the nearby Labor Temple Diner and Bar with his wife, Terry, began installing pinball machines at the remodeled mezzanine space some three years ago. What started with two machines co-leased with a friend grew to six just before the coronavirus pandemic, all the way to a full dozen of their own today.

Robinett launched the tournament shortly after the machines arrived at the Merry Time, but was soon forced to halt play due to COVID-19. The tournament returned in December, with a soft relaunch.

A self-professed pinball enthusiast, Robinett said the addition of pinball machines to the bar made sense because it allowed him to both support his hobby and generate revenue. “If I were just a collector, I would have a hard time justifying owning these machines, because they’re not cheap,” he said, with some limited edition models on the market costing around \$10,000. “These machines are paying for themselves.”

Robinett has special appreciation for the immersive nature of the pinball experience, with artwork, gameplay and sounds. “The more you play them, the more you realize that they’re actual games with objectives, not just a random chaotic thing,” he said.

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### Play in a pinball tournament

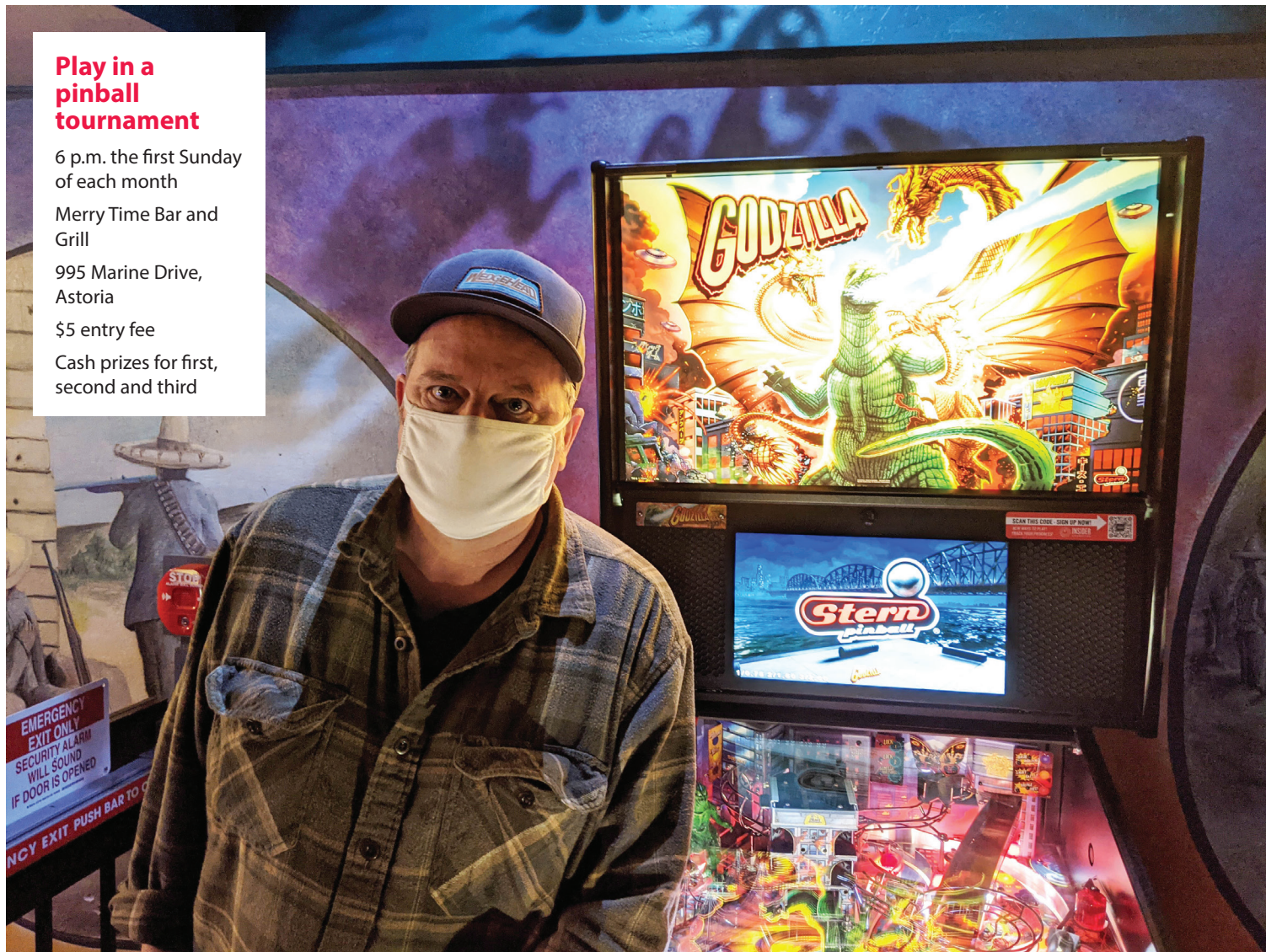
6 p.m. the first Sunday of each month

Merry Time Bar and Grill

995 Marine Drive, Astoria

\$5 entry fee

Cash prizes for first, second and third



Todd Robinett stands next to one of the pinball machines at the Merry Time Bar and Grill in Astoria.

Photos by Peter Korchnak



The pinball machines stand aglow at the Merry Time.



A pinball machine lights up.