

Rapture Lounge on BizCastr

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POSTED BY TINFIELD IN ASTORIA SOCIAL MEDIA

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“My dad is the owner. My mom is the... real owner.” That’s 15-year-old Sabrina Mendoza, discussing the family business while sipping a soda at the bar at Rapture Lounge on 28th Ave in Astoria. Sabrina, introduced in Episode 1 of one of BizCastr’s debut “reality webseries,” is a prime example of why people love reality shows: Smart, funny, and real, she offers unexpected insights and some of the best “lines” in the show. (My other favorite, regarding her parents: “I love both of them... unconventionally!”) **BizCastr in Astoria** BizCastr, a startup based in NYC, offers a brilliant mash-up of two of popular formats: reality shows and social media. They produce their videos in-house (keeping the usual video production costs down) and make the videos available for social media sharing. It’s a unique hybrid that offers entertaining and informative viewing to reality fans—and customers—while providing a great source of social media “content” for small business owners. It officially launched June 1, and Astoria features prominently in their growing lineup: You’ll find local scenery in both *Love Coach* and *Armos 8 Renovation*, but the biggest valentine to our neighborhood is *Night Life: Rapture Lounge*. I went over to 28th Ave to find out how it all went down, and got to talk with co-owner Roberto Mendoza, shown below with his ~~fire~~ canine companion, Hendrix.



Roberto and Hendrix outside Rapture Lounge. Photo: ASM

ASM Q&A ASM: How did you connect with BizCastr? Did you approach them or did they find you? RM: They found us! They wanted to film a scene for the *Love Coach* here and I said, Sure. After that they asked if we wanted to do a series here, about us. **ASM: Was everyone on your end on board with it right away, or did you have to talk anyone into being filmed? RM:** Oh, no, everyone was excited about it. We had to get permission for the customers, but so far everyone we asked has been OK with it. **ASM: Even your daughter? I have a teenager at home and I know they can be unpredictable. RM:** No, no, she's good with it. She's a student at Frank Sinatra [School of the Arts], for filmmaking. She doesn't want to be an actress, though. She's into writing and directing.

Night Life: Rapture Lounge Episode 1

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Roberto and Sabrina. Kid's got a future in scriptwriting!

ASM: I get a lot of Astoria-centric news on my Twitter feed, but I didn't know you were doing this until I came across the BizCastr site for another project. Did you do any kind of promotion about your webseries? RM: Well, we advertise [on WhyLeaveAstoria.com] and list some of our events there. But no special promotion for this, really. We're going to have a big party when it's finished filming, though. Maybe see if we can play it up on the big screen. *[I'll spare you the Twitter proselytizing I did just then. BizCastr did set up a handle for them—@NightLifeBiz—but it's got a corporate feel; more promotional than "organic." (Businesses in Astoria that are most successful on Twitter are those that feel more personal.) I got Roberto to promise—vaguely—that he (might) sign up for Twitter soon. We'll see! Rapture also has a great website. In Episode 3, we find out that's all Gladys's baby: "Believe me, she's good," says Roberto. "She knows how to do everything with the Internet and computers. She's a genius, I admit it!" Gladys also handles their Facebook fan page (453 likes · 23 talking about this · 2,170 were here). She keeps the patrons up to date with the lounge's heavy schedule of "Nights" (Karaoke Wednesdays, Comedy Night Sundays, et al), and includes links to the webseries as episodes are aired.]* **ASM: So you've lived in Astoria for 20 years [Rapture's been open for eight.] Where are your favorite places around here, when you're not there? What area do you live in? RM:** I live near the diner on Astoria Blvd, Neptune... by Staples. Let's see, where I like... I like **Tu Casa**, on Steinway. Great Peruvian food. For Greek, **Taverna Kyclades**, on Ditmars. **ASM: Sushi? Mexican? RM:** I like **Watawa**, that's also on Ditmars. That's great sushi. And I really like that taco truck on 30th! [**El Rey Del Taco Truck**] They have the best tacos... Besides mine! **BEHIND THE SCENES: ...** There was a bit of a buzz on the set the first day, as people tried to figure out where they knew the producer from: It was Dan Shor—Billy the Kid in *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure*. **... RAPTURE LOUNGE INFO:** 34-27 28th Ave Social profile: On Facebook, Yelp and foursquare <http://www.rapturelounge.com> You can watch the webseries at the BizCastr site, below, or on YouTube. Additional video sharing sites will be added later. **BIZCASTR INFO:** <http://bizcastr.tv/> BizCastr is the home of "Businesses with Character; Characters with Businesses." Remember, they're a startup, so now is a good time to check them out. (I'm thinking it might get progressively more expensive to sign on after they take off.) I spoke with founder and president Dean Soukeras a few weeks ago and asked him what he thought made the best candidate for a webseries, and the three things that matter most are that you have opinions, an outgoing personality, and a solid social network, already in place. (You know how video and sharing works...) Personally, I find the chart on their "Want a Show?" tab a little confusing, though I'm sure it makes sense to marketers and/or tech people. If you're neither of these, but

interested in finding out more, you can cut through that and contact a real person: Dean Soukeras DSoukeras@BizCastr.com 212 889-1911 **SO FAR ON NIGHT LIFE: RAPTURE LOUNGE...**



Episode 1 is more a celebration of Astoria than Rapture Lounge itself, featuring staff, regulars, and Gladys Fabara, Rapture's co-owner (and Roberto's ex-wife), singing its praises: "I'm very proud to live in Astoria, very proud of Astoria... What it's become and what it's becoming. It's just a wonderful area here."

Night Life: Rapture Lounge Episode 2

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Episode 2 is all about "karaoke night," starring the good sport above, who swore up and down he wouldn't sing (right up until the moment he sang). Special co-star: The "Opa!" guy.

Night Life: Rapture Lounge Episode 3

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Jenn the waitress and co-owner Gladys describe a “typical” Friday Night Happy Hour.

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