

Innovator Ric Rooney wins 2007 Smart Tan Award

Ric Rooney's vision of the future of the indoor tanning industry is already up and running in his Colorado Springs, Colo., tanning business.

That should come as no surprise to anyone who knows Rooney. Step inside Sun Spot Atlantis and you'll see all the evidence of a salon that was built to push the tanning industry's envelope in the mid-1990s, and which has evolved to once again redefine industry professionalism.

More than a decade of such commitment to excellence has earned Rooney Smart Tan's highest annual award, The Smart Tan Award for Industry Excellence. Smart Tan Vice President Joseph Levy will present the award to Rooney at Smart Tan's 12th Annual Conference at the ITA Tanning World Expo Oct. 14.

Rooney has always been a bit of a visionary. In 1996 he opened Sun Spot Atlantis as one of the industry's first "super stores." An elaborate \$500,000 build-out - unprecedented in the mid 1990s - positioned his store as more than just a run-of-the-mill tanning studio. Atlantis was partially inspired by Dive - Hollywood director Steven Spielberg's mid-1990s Los Angeles restaurant - and features a sort-of art deco-submarine and nautical décor.

"We wanted to do it right," Rooney said. "We wanted to change the perception of what a tanning studio was."

A grand opening with a live on-site radio spot set the stage for a store whose attitude strove to match its elaborate décor - transcending mid-1990s industry norms. Training, country club-like service and a clinical approach to overboard cleanliness were Rooney's model long before the industry embraced over-the-top service.

In an era when plug-and-chug and churn-it-out could succeed in the tanning business, Rooney strove higher, looking to the future. Sun Spot Atlantis was a tanning spa - a



SUN SPOT: Ric Rooney opened Sun Spot in 1996 as a revolutionary concept salon. His business model has always called for innovation - a trait that earned him the 2007 Smart Tan Award for Industry Excellence.

Cadillac in an era when Chevrolet would do just nicely.

And today - as the industry has caught up with the Cadillac service model - Rooney is once again attempting to redefine the professional tanning spa. He's added and is aggressively marketing a full package of spa services to complement the tanning business.

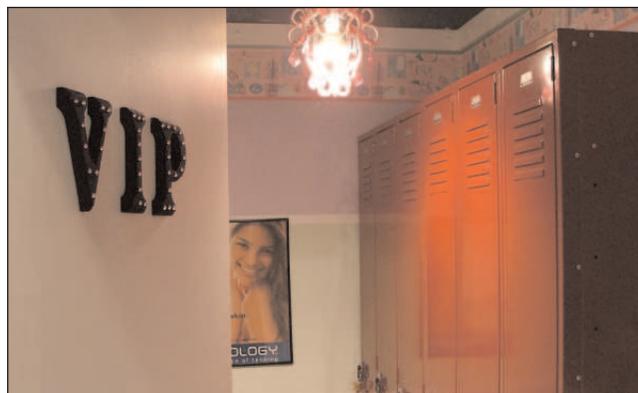
VIP members are treated like country club guests. Step into Rooney's store today and

you'll see members walking the halls of this luxury salon in white robes, enjoying full access to Rooney's red light therapy equipment, a Zen-like massage chair room, a Sybaritic hydration station as well as the salon's tanning equipment.

He's put tanning in the health spa environment - once again changing the culture of what constitutes an indoor tanning facility. And his community loves it. "The VIP approach has changed our business," Rooney says. "We've been able to redefine the community's perception of tanning."

Make no mistake, the high road for Rooney has had its bumps - as doing things the right way often does. But that effort and expense paid off when the Colorado Springs Gazette did a full-page feature on Rooney's spa. His efforts to put tanning in another context led to positive press for his tanning business.

For a store with country club submarine décor, Rooney's model is well above the water line.



VIP TREATMENT: A spa-like atmosphere, which includes lockers for VIP members, differentiates the Sun Spot approach from traditional indoor tanning facilities.