

Southend owner's fury after £80,000 revamp ruined by arsonists the day before opening



■ Fire - the arsonist narrowly avoided the blaze as it took hold



■ Callous - another man films the events



■ Lighting - the job lights a roll of toilet paper on fire

Arson pair target strip club days before launch

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ARSONISTS set fire to a strip club the night before its planned grand opening.

Pink Papers was all set to open to the public but has since had to delay the launch due to the attack.

The owner, Andros Stavrou, had completed about £80,000 worth of work on the venue, formerly known as Sunset Bar and Lapdancing Club.

In shocking CCTV footage, the masked men can be seen smashing a front window, before pouring a Jerry can full of petrol into the premises.

One of the jobs then lights rolls of toilet paper on fire and throws them into the building.

The other man appears to have filmed the entire event on a phone.

When the fuel inside catches fire, the pair narrowly escaped getting caught in the blast.

Owner Mr Stavrou, 53, said: "Thankfully the fire didn't manage to spread too far, it's mainly the smoke damage that has caused so much prob-



■ Wrecked - the police cordon outside the following day

lems. "It makes me really, really angry. We were set to open the next night.

"We're not allowed to start repairing anything until the insurance company gives us the all clear.

"When we get that, it should hopefully take about a month to get fixed."

Mr Stavrou said many of the construction workers who helped renovate the club will be in quickly to try and repair the damage.

Sadly, all who were due to start work at the club have been told they will have to wait.

Mr Stavrou added: "I feel more sad for them than anything else.

"A lot of them left their other jobs to start here."

An Essex Police spokesman said: "We are investigating a fire at an address in Southend.

"We received a call shortly before 1.50am on February 26 with reports of a fire at Pink Papers bar in Lucy Road.

"It was reported two men were seen throwing an item at a window of the building and we are treating the fire as arson."

A fire service spokesman confirmed the fire was extinguished by 2.34am.

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