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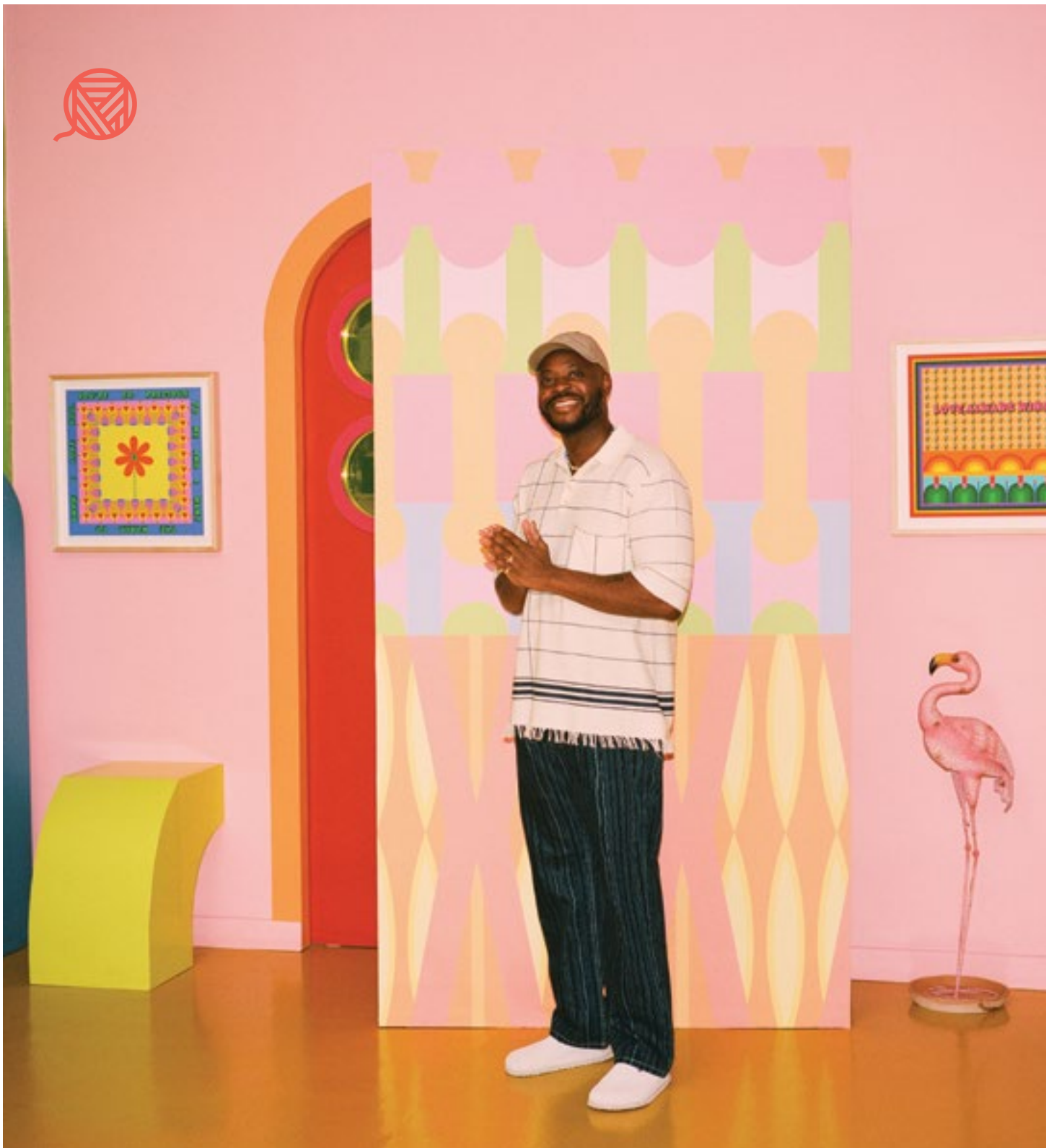
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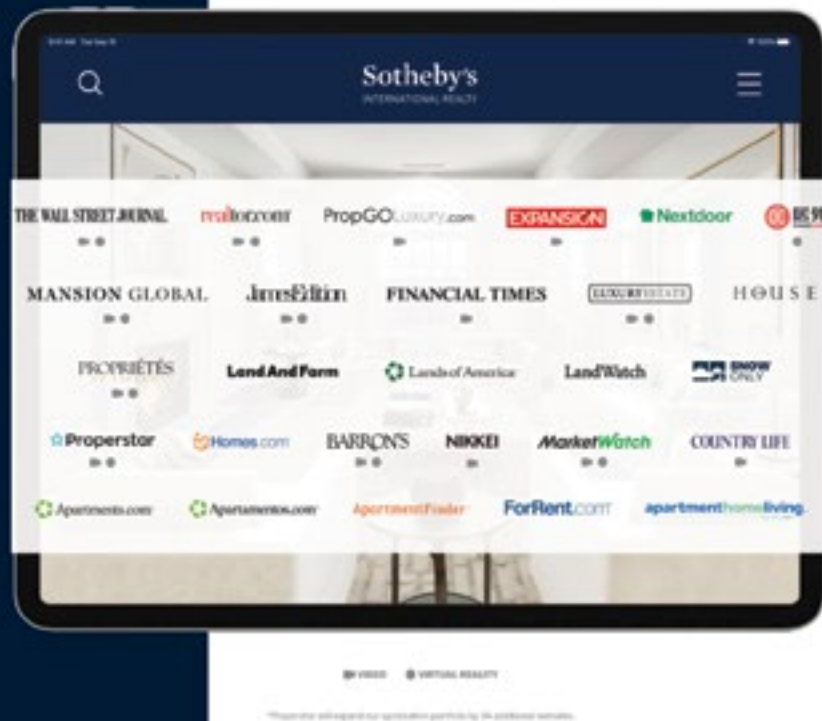


David Tupaz

Photo by Jaime Lim

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From the Editor

As you spend the next few weeks enjoying your summer of sun-soaked days and warm nights, start thinking about the fall season ahead of its arrival in September. The fall season, my personal favorite, is a time of unparalleled beauty. It paints the world with vibrant colors and fills the air with a sense of purity, creating a serene and comfortable environment. With its subtle winds of change, this season invites you to reflect on the past year and anticipate new beginnings.

This current edition of Chic Compass boldly celebrates the beauty and transformations of the approaching fall season. We shine a light on the power of introspection and self-improvement and hope the stories of individuals who have triumphed over adversity and achieved personal growth will inspire you.

Let me introduce you to our cover star, Jerick Padsing. Inspired by his role model, Manny Pacquiao, he gave up his love of football to pursue a professional boxing career. Pacquiao's influence impacted his career path, proving role models significantly impact us all. Our cover star's daily commitment to his craft makes him an incredible example of resolution and perseverance. His journey, including many life lessons learned inside and outside the ring and his next big moves, is a testament to the power of determination and courage.

Changing from one sport to another, the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA) has more than 30 years of shattering stereotypes, including the idea that women's sports are "not as exciting as their male counterparts in the NBA." In this issue, we sit down with Nikki Fargas, the president of the Las Vegas Aces, a team that has demonstrated tremendous growth from its beginning to its current status as two-time world champions. The Aces have ignited a rising interest in and love for women's basketball, are a shining example of gender balance in sports and hold great hope for the future of women's basketball.

Like the WNBA, Dr. Jen Welter has broken many barriers, including becoming the first female National Football League (NFL) coach. Her story is a testament to resilience and determination. With her various football camps, she has changed the lives of girls and women worldwide. When you read about her journey, you will discover that she is an inspiration and that you can achieve your goals and overcome adversity.

This issue also highlights the Social Issues Theatre, a nonprofit that touches on diversity and inclusion through theater. Meet L.A. Walker, one of the co-executive directors of the Social Issues Theatre, who pours her heart and soul into writing, producing and performing. I was impressed to learn about the challenges and obstacles that she has faced and how she has incorporated them into each of the plays that the Social Issues Theatre performs. Each play tackles social issues, such as health concerns, racism, homophobia and gender inequality, which are still important and relevant today. Through her work, she fosters empathetic, supportive communities while advocating for mental wellness. Her life's journey and everything she accomplishes with the Social Issues Theatre provides witness to the transformative power of change.

In the world of music, we spotlight powerhouse vocalist Lannie Counts, the topic of our grace segment. The humble and sweet singer explained the significance of grace and how it has impacted his career. I enjoyed learning about his remarkable life and how he got into music. He chats with me about his aspirations, broadening his horizons and challenges he has faced. Through it all, he is still pursuing his dream and has made a name for himself as a talented singer and member of various bands. Read his feature story to learn more about his inspiring journey, highlights from this past year and future ambitions.

These are just some exciting people and stories you will read about in this jam-packed issue. As you read it, I invite you to take a moment to acknowledge and celebrate your personal growth and those around you as you look forward to the new beginnings of the fall season.

Chanelle Hayes



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JERICK PADSING: THE NEXT BIG THING IN THE RING

By Chanelle Hayes / Photography by Jaydon Jacalne

Born in Kidapawan City, Cotabato, Philippines, 26-year-old Jerickcel (Jerick) Lito Losis Padsing has always known he wanted to be a professional athlete. His initial love was football, which he dedicated his life to until his freshman year of high school. By then, he had become burnt out and desired a different outcome. This shift didn't deter him; on the contrary, it increased his passion for sports and served as a daily reminder of his perseverance and unwavering resolve—a tale that inspires everyone who hears it.

Padsing quit football and looked to his faith for direction. "I prayed to God and said, 'Lord, please give me a chance to become a boxer,'" he recalled. At 18, all it took was one prayer to start him toward his dream. He found inspiration in boxing legend Manny Pacquiao, who united the Filipino community with each victory in the ring. "One day, my dad came to my room and said that a trainer, Pablo Taffanelli, wanted to meet me, and I couldn't believe it," Padsing recalled. "After meeting Taffanelli, the rest is history."

From starting as his trainer to currently serving as the man behind the scenes, Taffanelli consistently pushes Padsing to the limit and is helping him further his career through business opportunities and the promoting



Above: Jerick Padsing dominates his 6th fight at a packed event at Rock City Harley-Davidson Little Rock in Arkansas on June 28, 2024.

and marketing side of boxing. "It's a pleasure to work with Jerick," said Taffanelli, who has more than 20 years of boxing experience working with world-class champions. "He's one of those young men you don't get to see anymore."

Taffanelli's business partner, Anushavan (Anush) Yeranosyan, is also part of Padsing's "dream team." "Anush was excited to be a part of my journey when he heard about Coach Pablo's passion for me," Padsing said. "He believes in what we're doing and sees the vision ahead. He's an essential part of my

team and was the missing link we needed."

Taffanelli and Yeranosyan's guidance and Padsing's innate talent, commitment and work ethic were evident in his last fight. This co-main event occurred on June 28 at Rock City Harley-Davidson Little Rock in Arkansas. The fight lasted one round, as Padsing knocked out his opponent in under three minutes with an uppercut and a chilling left hook that flattened him out. "He had the best fight of the night out of the seven fights," Taffanelli proclaimed.



"After the fight, so many people complimented me about how I fought and wanted to take pictures with me," Padsing said. "I was extremely glad that they loved the way I fought because of the amount of work I put in. They showed so much love and support." This win leaves Padsing undefeated with a record of 6-0.

To get to where he is today, Taffanelli has put Padsing through a rigorous schedule that includes mental conditioning, physical training and sparring at least five days a week. Padsing's remarkable dedication and perseverance are evident in his demanding schedule and how intensely he prepares.

Taffanelli often lectures about the value of having a positive mental attitude in any circumstance, whether in or out of the ring. "In my experience, boxing is more mental than physical," Padsing stated. "Doing the same thing every day can become draining and exhausting. To help him develop that mindset, Taffanelli sent him to train with fighter Kid Diamond and experience life in Kyrgyzstan, a Central Asian country.

"I was there to train for a month and a half but had to stay for about 10 months due to the pandemic in March 2020," he stated. "It was an encounter that changed my life. It felt like stepping back in time to be there. For instance, people continue

Above: Jerick Padsing was styled by David Tupaz at the presidential suite at Red Rock Casino Resort & Spa.

to clean with their hands and hang their clothes from threads. Kid Diamond was amazing. I was taken in by his family and permitted to live with them. They were once a part of the USSR, so I had to learn some Russian. I also learned what it meant to be a warrior and rely solely on myself. After that vacation, I had a mental shift. I will always remember that event."

Taffanelli mentored Padsing and taught him everything about the mental and physical sides of the sport. In addition, Padsing has received



Above: Jerick Padsing wearing a tuxedo by David Tupaz.



encouragement from other boxers, like Manny Pacquiao, who is his biggest inspiration. "Everybody says he's like Pacquiao," Taffanelli said. The comparison to Pacquiao is a testament to Padsing's potential and people's high expectations for him in the boxing world.

Taffanelli, who had connections with Pacquiao's team, arranged for Padsing to meet him while he was in Las Vegas training for his fight against Jessie Vargas." It was a moment of immense pride for me and the Filipino community," Padsing stated. "I didn't believe him when he

told me I would meet him. But the mood shifted as soon as we entered the gym where he was. I will always remember his powerful presence."

Padsing has also drawn inspiration from Jeff Mayweather, the uncle of Floyd Mayweather Jr., the five-time world champion. "Working with him was an honor and privilege," he stated. "He used to come into the gym where I worked out and just looked at me, observing my moves. I'll never forget what he said to me at the time. Whether I was practicing or fighting, he would constantly tell me to calm down and be more relaxed."

Above: Jerick Padsing and his coach and manager Pablo Taffanelli at Angel Park Golf Club discussing business and future events.

Padsing's admiration for Héctor Camacho, who Taffanelli trained with early in his career, is evidence of his passion for the game. Despite not having the opportunity to meet Camacho—who tragically died in 2012—Padsing saw him mature. "I loved his presence and energy," he stated. "His personality lit up the room. I have always loved seeing his bold and extravagant outfits when he stepped into the ring." Boxing



Above: Jerick Padsing styled by David Tupaz at the presidential suite at Red Rock Casino Resort & Spa.



Above: Jerick Padsing styled by David Tupaz at his studio.

legends like Camacho are highly regarded because they influence the current generation of boxers and their connection to the sport's rich past.

In addition to his boxing mentors, the Las Vegas Filipino community and beyond have been a considerable

source of support for Padsing. Among his supporters are the following: Nadia Arroyo, CEO of the Philippine Times of Southern Nevada; Jeff Kimble, writer and entrepreneur; Cin-Cin Landeros, CEO of Trans-Pacific Multiservices; Izzy Benavidez, shoe designer and founder of Tru Essence Customs; and Dr. Michael Stajuana, producer for Fil-Am News, which highlights the Filipino community and recently presented Padsing with the

2024 Outstanding Man of the Year award. Their combined encouragement proves the community's importance in an athlete's life.

Outside the boxing ring, Padsing is all about his family and faith. "My parents have supported my journey, so I would love to help them as much as possible and give my time to churches that have helped me spiritually," he said. "I would just be a great



example to the youth. My team and I would love to give back to people in need. We would help in any way we can here in the United States, the Philippines, or any other country with food and shelter."

When asked about his future career goals, Padsing said, "My ultimate goal is to inspire upcoming generations of Filipino boxers and leave

a lasting legacy in the sport. I want to become a multi-world champion, not just any champion, but a champion with multiple belts and weight divisions. To get there, I plan to stay focused and persistent. That's what Coach Pablo and I have been doing since 2016. We never gave up, kept believing, kept pushing and kept our loyalty to each other as many fighters and coaches/managers split all

Above: Jerick Padsing with Anushavan (Anush) Yerososyan (left) and Pablo Taffanelli (right).

the time. It's been a long time coming for us."

To stay updated on Padsing's journey, visit www.jerickpadsing.com or follow him on Instagram (@jerickpadsing).



THE LAS VEGAS ACES HIT THE JACKPOT

President Nikki Fargas Reveals
Their Winning Hands

By Sheryl Aronson

Continental 

Continental 

A new era for women's basketball slam-dunked the sport's world with the WNBA draft on April 15, breaking the record for viewership—averaging 2.4 million viewers and moving up to 3 million people—for this event. After almost 30 years, the WNBA continues to break barriers of being pigeonholed as "not being as exciting as their male counterparts in the NBA" by igniting fans' enthusiasm and love for women's basketball.

One team has truly been dealing the "lady luck" cards of winning—the Las Vegas Aces—two-time world champions of the WNBA title under the coaching of Becky Hammon and the hard-working organizational building of Nikki Fargas, president of the Aces. The Aces won the WNBA Championship in 2022 and repeated in 2023. No WNBA team has had repeated wins in more than two decades.

Under Fargas' leadership, the team boasted back-to-back championships, led the WNBA in attendance in 2023, sold out its regular season home schedule in 2024 and procured a state-of-the-art practice facility/team headquarters built for the sole use of a WNBA team.

At the helm of the organization stands Fargas, whose prolific professional resume includes playing for the University of Tennessee (1990-1994 under coach Pat Summitt), assistant coaching at the University of Tennessee (1998-1999 and

Left: October 18, 2023 WNBA Finals Game 4 - A'ja Wilson. Photo by Brian Babineau NBA Photos.

Above: Nikki Fargas speaks at The White House. Photo by Stephen Gosling NBA Photos.



2002-2008) and head coach at the University of California, Los Angeles (2008-2011) and Louisiana State University (2011-2021). Fargas also has a broadcasting background as a color analyst.

Our interview reveals her vast experience and deep commitment to women's basketball. Fargas leads with compassion, intelligence and deep resolve and brings everyone in her organization along for a full-court press into the future.

Chic Compass: I've been a female athlete my entire life and played basketball before Title IX existed. My experience growing up in New York was playing pickup basketball with the guys. So, I've been especially engaged in watching women's basketball from the beginning of the WNBA. Nikki, you've had an extensive career in basketball. What was your personal experience as a young girl?

Nikki Fargas: I grew up in an athletic family. My mom and grandmother played basketball when it was half-court. I've seen the game evolve into what it is today. Growing up in a close-knit family in the small

town of Oak Ridge, Tennessee, I rode my bike to Linden Elementary School to play with the boys, even though I knew being picked was slim because I was a girl. This experience motivated me to prove myself. Eventually, I became a regular when they chose the first 10. It wasn't that I didn't have a game; it was more like, 'Who's gonna pick the girl?'

Many female athletes grew up having to earn the respect of males. Playing against the boys taught us to be more fundamentally skilled because they would be more athletic. I also lived in an environment of sports. We had a great system, whether through the Boys & Girls Club, playing on the elementary and junior high teams or making it to the high school team. There was always a place for me in sports.

I understand that we've come a long way. We were discriminated against because we were girls, but give us our due respect. Many of us have sacrificed and put in the work just as much as our male counterparts, but the people in leadership roles must even the playing field. Provide resources for these girls and women and allow them to show the world



what they can do. We can be just as entertaining. Many people say, 'Women's basketball is exciting and fast-paced. We love watching the women play.'

Chic Compass: Let's talk more about your career. You played college ball for the University of Tennessee, coached by the well-known Pat Summitt. In one interview, you mentioned that it wasn't just about the game, but the discipline learned on the court. Coach Summitt taught every female that it was about education and succeeding in life.

Above: April 15, 2024 WNBA Draft - Kate Martin holding jersey with Cathy Engelbert. Photo by Sarah Stier

Right: October 18, 2023 WNBA Finals Game 4 - A'ja Wilson celebrating win with raised arms. Photo by Brian Babineau.

Nikki Fargas: I have unbelievable role models, and it starts with my mom. She trusted Coach Summitt with me when I decided to attend the University of Tennessee. When I was in Tennessee, the on-the-court

discipline was a given. Coach Summitt showed us that women could lead and be successful. Women can be head coaches, athletic directors, medical directors, academic managers or public relations directors. When I was at the university, all I saw were successful women leading the way, including Joan Cronan (athletic director), Jenny Moshak (medical director and one of the best trainers that I've ever known) and Debby Jennings (sports information director).

You mentioned education—we had an upfront no-miss policy in every class we attended. We had to sit in the first three rows; if we missed a class, we missed a game. If we made a mistake and did miss a class, there was a system in place. You would immediately call your academic advisor and tell her you overslept and took full responsibility for the tardiness. Then, you would speak to the professor after class to find out what you missed and apologize. Those were life lessons she taught us. I played for her in the 90s. The other life lesson I learned was that she wasn't just the coach. She was a mother, wife and daughter. I got to see her outside of being a coach. Her faith and family were top





Above: WNBA Finals Game 4 - Team celebrating win on court. Photo by David Dow.

priorities for her. She could juggle it all, which allowed me to dream that later on —if I was going to make this sacrifice—not to worry about what other people think. You can be effective as a mom and a wife in this sports environment. Sometimes, this concept isn't promoted or supported when you're in the workplace. I've seen some women coaches miss an opportunity to become mothers because they were on this path and did not receive such support.

Chic Compass: You bring this philosophy and much more into your job and your organization. You coached for many years for UCLA and LSU

and had a career in broadcasting. From those experiences, how did that prepare you for this fabulous job as president of the Aces?

Nikki Fargas: It's about the people. You win with people, and that little round basketball allowed me to travel the world, provide new experiences and provide for my family. I got here when Mark Davis purchased the franchise. I came on board in May 2021. He wanted to be a champion for women. We need allies; we need our male counterparts saying, 'Yes, I'm here to support anyway I can.' He supported us hugely by purchasing the Aces, but more importantly, he invested in us by providing a home. Our headquarters is the home to the greatest basketball players to ever play this game, like

Candace Parker, A'ja Wilson and Chelsea Gray—we have Olympians and All-Stars. The front office in the building gives us a unique environment in which our ticketing, sales and marketing team can see Coach Hammon and the players. Therefore, everybody knows we're the team behind the team.

I've always supported every institution I've been a part of. With a public relations background in media relations, donors and corporate partners are very important. There was a lot of fundraising at LSU, and you're dealing with name image. Being a part of the conversation and bringing revenue into the institution is no different from how we bring revenue into the franchise.



Above: October 18, 2023 WNBA Finals Game 4 - Trophy presentation with Becky Hammon and her children. Photo by Sarah Stier.

Being engaged with the community and that area is something we all did as former players and from coaching, too. I go out to promote the Aces. What better marketing tool than winning back-to-back championships? To be able to broadcast that in such a large and amplified way is a result of my communication background. I can pull all these experiences together and be who I am today, able to walk into any room, talk to others, explore, motivate and surprise people with my story and how I got here from the little town of Oak Ridge in Tennessee. All I want to do is give back and be of service to our ticketing team, marketing, partnerships and whatever we need to do for the basketball side.

Chic Compass: The Aces won two championships in a row. It had yet to be done in 20 years, plus having the highest attendance in all-female women's basketball. I heard you say—and I loved it in this interview—that the Aces play selfless basketball. You have stars, even though you also had a lot of injuries last year that the team had to pull together. I watched that last game against the New York Liberty, and the Aces pulled it off to win by one point. Talk about your players.

Nikki Fargas: We've succeeded because of young ladies who sacrificed and worked hard. The hours, days and months they have put into their craft. A'ja is one of the finest young ladies I've ever met on and off the court. Her ability to motivate not only her teammates but also anyone who is in her presence makes us all want to be better. I've seen her

grow into a woman of faith and a woman who understands that there are things bigger than herself. She's trying to leave a legacy behind and open more doors for those young black and brown-faced girls who come after her. I call her a two-way player because she plays on both sides of the basketball. She's one of the best-shot blockers in the game today, and I love her competitive spirit. Kelsey Plum is a different specimen. Her competitive spirit is very big, so I can't say enough about what she brings to our team. We have the best point guard in Chelsea. She does the no-look passes like Magic. She's here to entertain you. Kiah Stokes made the best comment about Chelsea. 'I don't know when the passes are coming, so I keep my hands up.' Chelsea is more excited about giving you a pass to score than making a shot for herself. That is selfless. Then there's Jackie Young. I call her the quiet assassin. She's a woman of very few words, but her game speaks volumes. Her ability to take over a game? I can see her being our MVP. For the first half of last year's season, we had Candace, a Hall of Famer and one of the greatest players in the game.

However, everything starts with Coach Hammon. Her system allows all the players to get fed, succeed and share the basketball and glory. She and her staff have done a phenomenal job not only with the starters but making sure that the bench is ready to start as well, so when we were injured in Game 4 with the loss of Chelsea and Kiah, we had two players put in a starting position (Alysha Clark and Cayla George alongside A'ja). Their number to be called—and for them to answer the calling—created a great culture for the Aces. That moment taught me what Coach Hammon, her staff and the team could accomplish.

Chic Compass: Now, talk about Coach Hammon. She's the first woman to be an assistant coach in the NBA, a former player in the WNBA for the Utah Starzz and San Antonio Stars and a winner of back-to-back titles with the Aces in 2022 and 2023.

Nikki Fargas: The team loves playing for her. A little side story: As a player, she went undrafted during the WNBA 1999 draft. This prolific scorer from Colorado State advanced her team to the Sweet 16 and the NCAA tournament. The Liberty allowed her to play with some of the best players in the game's history: Teresa Weatherspoon, Vickie Johnson and Crystal Robinson. Knowing her journey and what she

had to overcome to get to where she is today is remarkable. She was with the Stars for several years and played overseas. When she finished her career in 2014, Gregg Popovich invited her to go on his staff as an assistant with the Spurs. We were fortunate to position ourselves (and thank you, Mark Davis, for financially giving us the opportunity) to go after Coach Hammon and make her the highest-paid coach in the WNBA. This speaks to how deserving she is and what she represents. Her jersey was retired by the Stars and is hanging in our rafters. When we acquired the Stars from MGM, we wanted to make sure that she knew her legacy would still be a part of the history of the Aces. We have an alum initiative where we

bring back alums who played for the Stars, Starzz or Aces and give them an all-expense paid trip. That was when we reconnected with her. At that point, Mark and I discussed who would succeed Bill Laimbeer, and we secured Coach Hammon and two world championships.

Chic Compass: You also have Natalie Williams, the general manager who played with the Starzz, and Jennifer Azzi, chief business development officer, in your front office. Hiring alums creates a family that shows respect and honor to these women.

Nikki Fargas: We become one big family. One of the things that drew me to Aces was Mark's vision to have women in leadership roles, particularly those who have paved the way. I wholeheartedly believe it was through the alum initiative that I connected with Natalie.

Chic Compass: The WNBA draft watch had the largest audience since 2000. The numbers prove that women's basketball has become very popular and respected worldwide.

Nikki Fargas: The anticipation had to do with the exposure the women players were receiving from the media and how stories were told before the draft, including stories about Angel Reese and Caitlin Clark within the NCAA throughout the season. And there was a buildup and anticipation of whether these young women would enter the draft. Once they declared, everyone was eager to see which teams picked them. We all knew that Caitlin would be taken in as the No. 1 pick and going to Indiana, but we didn't know where everybody else was going. All that excitement resulted in 2.4 million viewers; we peaked at over 3 million at one point.



Above: May 14, 2024 Nikki Fargas smiles with Tom Brady pregame. Photo by David Becker NBA Photos.

When you call attention to those in decision-making positions and put these women on prime time to give them the coverage they deserve, they sell out arenas. Something is bound to change! The Aces sold out their regular season home schedule in 2024. I challenge you to ensure these women are part of the conversation just as their male counterparts are; we've seen what they can deliver.

Chic Compass: You had the draft pick of Kate Martin from Iowa. Please talk about how she fits into the team.

Nikki Fargas: When you look at her with Iowa, a six-foot utility player who is selfless and shows that she can defend players, her toughness and ability to use her physical play to go inside are admirable. She's such a great compliment to our draft class.

Chic Compass: The new team headquarters and training facility that the Aces train in is phenomenal.

Nikki Fargas: We're incredibly excited. I can't thank Mark enough for the first-of-its-kind WNBA practice facility and team headquarters. This practice facility has all the resources our players need. When you enter the headquarters lobby, you're greeted by two 16-foot LED barn doors where we can display broadcast television; we can do custom-made content or live video. Then those doors open to two full-size basketball courts. There are player-specific areas, such as the team locker room, film room, player's lounge and weight room. What's neat is that each locker is equipped with a TV and built-in Mac mini-PC so players can check emails or download videos. The players love music, so we also have an overhead sound system with a Bluetooth connection.

The training room has hot and cold plunge pools, a hydro treadmill and an infrared sauna. We offer cryotherapy, a nutrition bar and training technology. When our team is not practicing, we can utilize our facility to host community events. The practice facility has up to 400 retractable seats.

Chic Compass: Let's discuss Nike's new uniforms for the Aces.

Nikki Fargas: We have three different uniforms – one type is black, one red—just launched—and called The Rebel to pay tribute to the Aces' legacy by keeping it red. But we've transitioned to the silver and black. The silver and black – if you pay attention historically to the Aces, those were our primary colors as well. We're excited to have the uniforms represent the team. We also signed a major partnership with Ally Financial, our marquee jersey patch partner. We maintain our values to have Ally as part of the Aces family, a like-minded brand that aligns significantly with our culture. Andrea Brimmer and her team are making strategic decisions. They're here to support and grow women's sports. We feel this partnership is one of many because we see those entities step up and say, 'We want to ensure that we're equally in this fight with you.' They committed to a 50/50 campaign, pledging equal spending on advertising between men's and women's sports within five years. Being part of that story is huge because the Aces are part of hitting their paid media spending across men's and women's sports.

Chic Compass: That news is amazing and exciting. To end our interview, let's discuss the future of the WNBA. Going back to Title IX in 1972, which opened the door for women athletes, to the creation of the WNBA in 1994, to the millions

of fans following the game. What is the future?

Nikki Fargas: I see this game continuing to be exciting. Watching this unbelievable class of individuals entering the WNBA now thrills me. But it also starts at the grassroots level and guarantees that we continue to provide opportunities and places for the development of female athletes. I see colleges offering high-level resources so these young ladies can train, travel and compete at the same level as their male counterparts. Through college, women athletes become household names before they get to the pros. We're gaining momentum. The WNBA is not a one-hit wonder. We must continue to build and ensure that those guardians of the game continue using their voices, resources, networking capabilities and decision-making opportunities to empower us. Let's keep investing in women's sports because this is the way of the future.

Congratulations to A'ja Wilson for winning Best Athlete in Women's Sports and Best WNBA Player at the 2024 ESPY Awards.



Above: June 7, 2024 Coach Becky Hammon smiles from the sideline. Photo by David Becker NBA Photos.

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SPIEGELWORLD'S DISCOSHOW

A New Boogie Wonderland
Opens on the Strip

By Stacey Gualandi



"I've always said I want Spiegelworld to be about no rules, so as long as you don't get injured and you don't ruin anybody else's experience, then we don't need the rules."

That is the gospel according to Ross Mollison, Spiegelworld's chief impresario extraordinaire, or as he calls himself, "a naughty boy from Melbourne, Australia, just having fun in Vegas."

Mollison is the mastermind behind the legendary, long-running Las Vegas productions Absinthe at Caesars Palace, Atomic Saloon Show at The Venetian and Superfrico at The Cosmopolitan. They are all a one-of-a-kind, in-your-face, over-the-top Big Top. Oh, and a little dirty.

"Fortunately for us, Vegas keeps recreating itself, and if I want to stay relevant there, it's incumbent upon me to do that as well," Mollison says.

Well, there ain't no stopping him now. Mollison wants to turn the beat around with his latest—"DiscoShow"—a circus-turned-Studio 54 dinner and show space now in previews at the Linq (3535 S. Las Vegas Blvd.) He says it's a chance to experience the 1970s dance craze culture again.

"It's something that I can't wait to experience with a community of like-minded people who are going to enjoy reliving that period and that music," Mollison says. "But it's all done through a contemporary prism that is globally unique. Nobody has ever built a show like this."

Left: DiscoShow early release preview courtesy of Spiegelworld.

This is surprising, but Mollison admits it took many years of hustle to officially bring "DiscoShow" to the dance floor. Ultimately, it will be a celebration of disco's origin story.

"Obviously, you can see the theatricality of Bianca Jagger riding naked on a white horse, of course," Mollison jokes. "But around 2014, I started researching disco and reading all the books I could find on it and discovered [famous DJ] David Mancuso and the Loft in New York, and the whole reason that disco was created. I fell in love with that story."

When "DiscoShow" was first announced in 2023, everyone was Le Freaking out. But Mollison has no shame about keeping details close to his sequin vest.

Below: DiscoShow early release preview courtesy of Spiegelworld.

"I really want people to come without too much expectation other than to say, you're going to get on a subway, and there happens to be a bar in the subway," Mollison reveals. "Now, strictly speaking, that's not historically correct. There were no bars in the 1970s subways of New York City, but nobody wants to move more than 10 feet without a bar."

From there, young hearts will run free to Glitter Loft, another layer before reaching the actual disco show.

"It's another bar, but it is loosely based on what a loft may have looked like in Soho in the 1970s," Mollison adds. "Then out of that comes a space where you can go and have dinner and more cocktails."

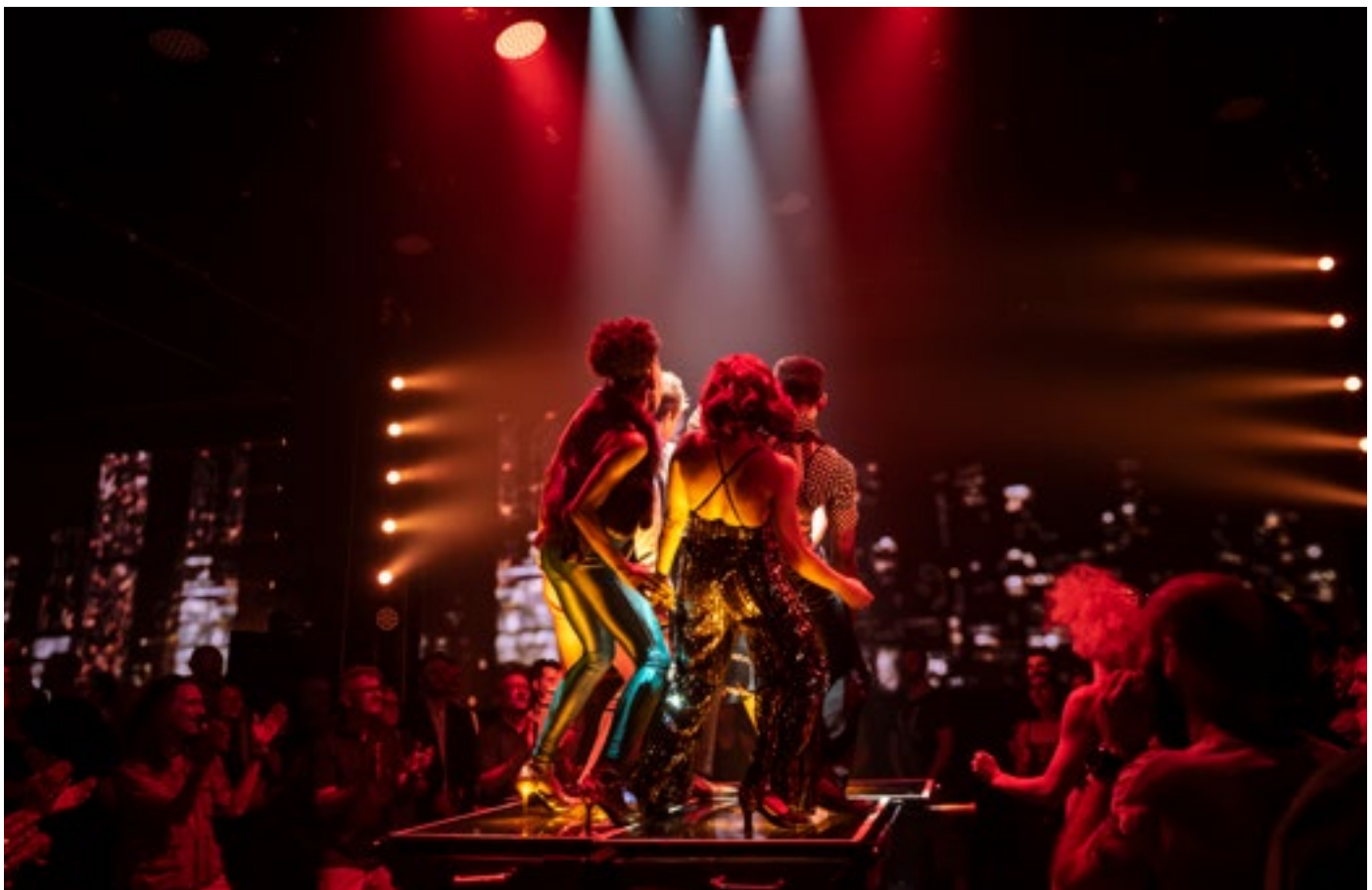
That space is cleverly named Diner Ross after the boss, Miss Ross, herself. Mollison says it will offer

Tomahawk steaks to share and a burger (like the "best burgers on the Strip" at No Pants at Absinthe).

"There are elements of food that I love, but there's gotta be a casualness to it," Mollison adds. "All these buzzwords like elevated, immersive, and all that stuff are none of that. It's just gonna be great and fun."

Spiegelworld is like a three-ring circus right now. After "DiscoShow" officially launches, Mollison plans a new show and restaurant concept in New Orleans incorporating elements from Vegas hits. This follows the recent debut of "The Hook," its dinner-and-a-show concept in Atlantic City.

"[In June], I think we had our biggest week ever. I think the whole of New Jersey and Philly are discovering the renewed Atlantic City and just how





gorgeous that coastline is," Mollison says.

But Las Vegas certainly has Mollison to thank for spreading Spiegelworld's successful seed along the Strip.

"I think it's exactly the opposite. I am grateful for Vegas," Mollison admits. "I started in 2000 trying to get 'Puppetry of the Penis' [in Vegas]. I finally found a casino that said yes, and then the Gaming Control Board said, 'If you do that, we'll take your license away.' I had been trying to get my shows into Vegas for years, and I finally got in with Fontainebleau in 2008, but then they went bankrupt. So, that was a tragic part of the story. Fortunately, Caesars Palace gave us a chance in 2011."

With the grand opening set for Sept. 7, "DiscoShow" has got to be real. And speaking of Miss Ross, can we expect disco divas from decades ago to appear?

"Nicky Siano learned the art of DJing and disco standing next to David Mancuso," Mollison says. "He will be there on opening night. That, to me, is a disco legend."

It takes one to know one!

In the meantime, Mollison says you should be dancing. But will he?

"I don't think anybody's gonna be interested in seeing that. It's terrible," Mollison jokes. "We have professionals for that."



Top: DiscoShow early release preview courtesy of Spiegelworld.

Above: Ross Mollison, Impresario Extraordinaire and producer of Vegas Nocture. Photo by Adam Shane.



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L.A. WALKER USES CREATIVITY TO SHARE HER MESSAGE

SOCIAL ISSUES THEATRE BRINGS SOCIETY TOGETHER ONE LINE AT A TIME

By Debbie Hall

In a darkened theater, audience members are immersed in "The Wonderful World of Was," a musical dramedy presented by the nonprofit Social Issues Theatre, about a man diagnosed with Alzheimer's who loses his wife and caregiver. His care falls to his self-centered daughter, personal assistant, long-time friend and maintenance man, all of whom have no prior experience in dementia care.

"The Wonderful World of Was" features music and humor that makes the information palatable and opens up conversations—an experience that L.A. Walker (author, playwright, songwriter, podcaster and co-executive director of Social Issues Theatre, along with Marcia Norris) understands. Through Social Issues Theatre, Walker uses her skills to help advance dementia and caregiver awareness.

Dementia is a general term that describes symptoms that affect cognitive abilities, memory, thinking and



Right: Photo of L.A. Walker by Amanda Carter/Jaia Photography

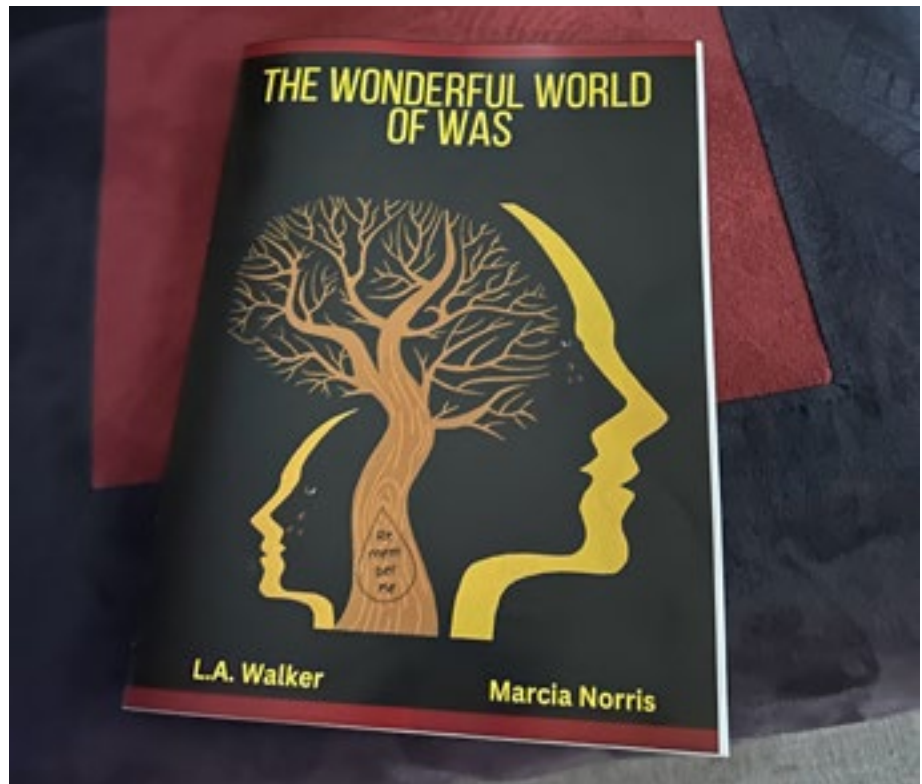
behavior. It's not a specific disease but an umbrella term for a group of symptoms. Alzheimer's is the most common cause or type of dementia, accounting for the majority of cases, but there are many diseases with symptoms, including Lewy body dementia.

Walker's wife, Terry, died from Lewy body dementia in June 2020 during the pandemic. "After she passed, I spent a lot of time with myself and looked back at some of the episodes I encountered," says Walker.

Walker says that the point of "The Wonderful World of Was" was to keep the story about dementia light. "It tells the story of a chosen family who bands together and assumes the responsibility of caring for a guy who's been in their lives as a friend, a father figure, a neighbor and an actual father because he did have a daughter. His wife passed in the process of giving care," says Walker. "There are an estimated seven million people in the United States who have dementia or dementia-related conditions. Marcia's mother is presently in a dementia decline and the music director's mother has dementia."

Health issues, racism, homophobia and gender bias are among the subjects covered by the plays written, produced and performed by the Social Issues Theatre. Walker is inspired by the ability of the arts to confront societal concerns in a revolutionary way. "Writing a play that inspires hope and a sense of possibility in the audience, rather than just for laughs or entertainment, motivates me," adds Walker.

"Together, we wrote songs for the production that would be uplifting. We tried not to make them sad but relative to the subject matter. Also, as a relief, we take the pressure off of the conversation for the audience.



Because people kept asking questions, we created a service, not just a play. That's when we put our heads together and devised Enable Me Theatre, a pilot program we're working on now."

Walker hosts her motivational podcast, "Up is Higher Than Down," where she seizes opportunities to have guests share their dementia journey. The podcast is available on all podcast platforms. "Years ago, my wife and I had a brief program on WEBB in Chicago with the same title. I didn't think about it until COVID-19, her death and all of that came about. I realized that it would be essential for me to latch on to anything positive and help others hold on with all our might to get through what we went through because that was an ordeal. I was very fortunate," says Walker.

She has interviewed Steph Payne (Las Vegas entertainer), Tamechi Briggs (who created the "Hammer pants" and made all of the outfits for



Top: Program for the play "The Wonderful World of Was." Photo courtesy of L.A. Walker

Above: "Up is Higher Than Down with L.A. Walker" podcast. Photo courtesy of L.A. Walker

"Soul Train"), Coco Montrese (drag performer) and Ron L. Haynes (from "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom"). Other guests included Marcell Ateman (UFL football wide receiver), David



Above: Photo of Dr. Jason Flatt by Becca Schwartz/University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Above Middle: Photo of Jay Nagle by Geri Kodey

Above Right: Photo of Patrice Isley courtesy of L.A. Walker

Raibon (comedian), Skip Martin (former lead singer for Kool & The Gang), Morris Hayes (Prince's musical director), Ariann Black (magician) and most recently Michael Peterson (Grammy-nominated country star).

"We often think when we talk in terms of motivation that the person hosting will say everything's right, good and bright, and all you have to do is fill in the blanks. That's so unrealistic, untrue and disturbing. We have challenges, and sometimes life is like a puzzle. Sometimes, we drop the pieces and don't know how to put them all back together. But if we can pick up that one piece, that's where we start," Walker stated.

Another aspect of her outreach is collaborating with Dr. Jason Flatt, an associate professor specializing in social and behavioral health from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) School of Public Health. He'll



work with Enable Me Theatre's pilot program. With his profound expertise in LGBTQ health, gerontology, Alzheimer's, and caregiving, he'll be pivotal in guiding the program's development and providing invaluable insights.

Jay Nagle, a distinguished director and teaching artist from The Smith Center's Education and Outreach Department, is heading the creative direction. With certifications from the Cleveland Clinic and Southern Nevada State Veterans Home in TimeSlips, Nagle will guide dementia caregivers as they script and perform their emotional narratives in a poignant final stage production.

International recording artist Patrice Isley will add a melodic touch to the initiative. Renowned for her Confident Performer Workshop Series in partnership with UNLV, Isley will serve as the music coach, harnessing the therapeutic power of music to alleviate stress and elevate moods among dementia caregivers. Isley and Nagle will assist caregivers in transferring their experience into mini songs to be infused into their final production. Amanda Carter of Jaia Photography, the program's dedicated photo documentarian, will capture the essence



of this transformative journey, ensuring that every moment and emotion is preserved and shared. Together, this interdisciplinary team is pioneering new avenues for social impact through the arts, empowering caregivers and reshaping the narrative around dementia care.

After being interviewed for a San Francisco Bay Times article about her life and works, The Outwords Archive sought Walker out to interview her for an on-camera oral history project, which became the first-ever national project devoted exclusively to recording the stories of older LGBTQIA2S+ nationwide.

Before creating Social Issues Theatre, including Enable Me Theatre and the Up is Higher Than Down podcast, Walker lived an entirely different life. The native Chicagoan was raised on the south side of Chicago in a family of ministers and dedicated her life to community efforts. She joined the military in May 1976 and attended the Defense Information School (DINFOS) for television and radio broadcasting, where she learned film production, directing and switching, and later spent time in Panama as a television news anchor. After leaving the service, Walker worked



Left: Terry and L.A. Walker share a tender moment. Photo by Nelson Ramirez

as a news director in Baltimore. After the passing of her mother, she transitioned to selling luxury automobiles.

Walker met her wife 33 years ago and wrote her first play in 1994. "I was responsible for the ministry for some young people from foster homes without guidance on living, working together, or building their self-esteem. I wrote a play entitled "A Serpent in the Garden" so that each of them would have a character so they could see themselves, if not during that time later in life, they could put it together."

Walker and her partner moved to Las

Vegas in 2003 because Terry wanted to move to Southern Nevada. They were operating two boutique furniture stores in the Midwest, but with the stock market and 9-11, they decided the struggle was too much to continue.

"When we could get married, I proposed to her during my first stage play, "Six No Uptown," at the Clark County Library Theater, inspired by the late great artist Annie Lee. They would marry later, and as Walker stated, "Our whole time together was just romantic; it was a romantic time."

While working as a luxury home realtor, Walker noticed something was happening with her wife. Terry could no longer execute a phone call and make appointments. "I wrote the play "The Mam Show," where Terry portrays Louis Armstrong's wife, speaking two lines. She couldn't remember her lines and changed them every single time. Fortunately, the actor who played Louis Armstrong was a professional. The audience never knew the lines changed. Then Terry told me she knew she was losing her memory because she was buying me something for Christmas but forgot to bring her credit card. I said, 'Well, girl, you know you lost your memory if you didn't have your credit card.' So we laughed, but nothing was funny," remembered Walker.

They tried to get past it, but it became a solemn and surreal moment when they found out that the mother of a dear friend also had dementia. "We all cried. It was like, you know, tears from way down deep. But even with that acknowledgment, it took me a minute. It's never easy for someone to admit they have dementia. The care partner, who could be a spouse, sibling or a close friend, also finds it difficult to accept that the person with it exists. Therefore, a lot of time is lost in denial by refusing to accept it. We acknowledged her dementia in 2014."

In 2017, she underwent cognitive testing, and the results showed that she had cognitive impairment. They didn't diagnose it as Lewy body dementia until the following year. "It was all over, but it's never over for those of us who've lost a loved one to dementia. It's never over for us," says Walker. "One of the things that's very important to stress is that

caregivers and care partners really go through it while the patient is living, and they go through it afterward."

Another one of Walker's plays, "No Labels," is about a homophobic dog that gets adopted by a gay couple and freaks out, so the entire family seeks therapy. Performer Chase Brown sings "I'm a Man Who Loves a Man" from the play, an anthem shining the light on the road to self-acceptance. The song, written by Walker and arranged by Joey Melotti, was recently presented and well received during The Composers Showcase of Las Vegas at Myron's at The Smith Center.

Walker also appeared in the film "Move Me No Mountain," written and directed by Deborah Richards, portraying herself during a therapy session, revealing how guilty she felt



Above: Performer Chase Brown, posing with L.A. Walker, sings "I'm a Man Who Loves a Man," an anthem shining the light on the road to self-acceptance. Photo by TGo Network

moving forward with her life after the passing of her spouse. The movie, streaming on Tubi, centers around real estate agent Jenna Anderson crippled by guilt from the violent and

sudden death of her daughter. With nothing to lose, she walks away from society to live on the streets in Las Vegas.

As Walker explained, dementia has become so stigmatized and people don't want to talk about it. "If someone in your family has it, it's like a mark. People don't want to get into it. First, we want to do everything possible to destigmatize, normalize and make it a conversation because so many people have it. Dementia is a silent health crisis that begs for our immediate attention.

Walker is available for speaking engagements. For more information, visit www.thesit.org or follow @socialissuestheatre and @upishighert-handown on Facebook.

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Faith

CARPENTERS LEGACY SPARKLES IN LAS VEGAS 350 Shows in a Vegas Residency Happens with Talent, Faith and Persistence

By Debbie Hall / Photography courtesy of Carpenters Legacy

"The best revenge is massive success." – Frank Sinatra.

Sally Olson and Ned Mills, the driving force behind Carpenters Legacy, have brought their passion, shared belief in their entertainment path and unwavering dedication to life. Their journey, marked by hard work and perseverance, is a testament to their talent and the power of faith. On May 21, they celebrated a milestone of 100 shows for their residency at the V Theater, located in the heart of the Las Vegas Strip inside the Miracle Mile Shops at the Planet Hollywood Resort & Casino. This was a significant achievement, considering their previous 250 shows during their residency at Alexis Park, bringing the total to 350 shows in a Vegas residency.

Along with performing in Las Vegas, they tour with their show and are currently working on their second



Sally Olson and Ned Mills



Sally Olson and Ned Mills

album, which will be a treat for Carpenters fans. Carpenters Legacy was featured at the Carpenters 50th Anniversary Celebration held in Thousand Oaks, California (April 2019) and the Carpenters 55th Anniversary Celebration (April 2024) at the Downey Theatre in Downey, California (home of the Carpenters). Olson and Mills are the first-ever and only Karen and Richard Carpenter tribute artists to perform in the world-renowned "Legends in Concert" show. They survived the pandemic together and currently perform to enthusiastic audiences in Las Vegas and worldwide.

Olson's portrayal of Karen Carpenter is truly unparalleled. She doesn't just mimic her; she embodies her essence with authentic hairstyles, vintage costumes, gestures

and a stunning voice. Her unique interpretation resonates with any Carpenters fan, making her performance a must-see for anyone who loves their music. Mills embodies Richard Carpenter with talent, musical styling, arrangements and infectious personality.

The road to Olson and Mills' accomplishments and successes has not been without challenges. They have faced trials and tribulations, including working long hours, learning new skills and taking risks. But these challenges, which they have met with resilience and determination, have shaped their journey and made their success all the more inspiring. Their resilience to these challenges is a testament to their dedication and passion for their craft.

"I think every artist goes through that thing where their peers, family, relatives and friends question their career choice, but they ask with love. That reminds me of one night when Johnny Carson asked his audience two questions on "The Tonight Show." He asked how many audience members believed doctors charge too much money and lawyers are corrupt. Most of the people applauded. He then asked how many wanted their children to become doctors and lawyers. They all laughed. That says it all," adds Mills.

They have educated themselves on how to rent venues, promote themselves in new mediums such as social media and learn about the business aspect of the entertainment industry. They desire to understand all aspects of show business.

"It is still late nights for both of us, just doing all the behind-the-scenes work we do," laughs Olson.

Their backstory has brought them to this stage of their lives and careers.

"I remember the first time I rented a concert hall. I nervously did it and didn't know what I was doing. I was 29 years old and scared to death. I rented Thalian Hall in Wilmington, North Carolina, and did a show called "Piano Follies." It sold out, and we did very well," explained Mills.

"I grew up in Wilmington, North Carolina, and Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. In the 1990s, I played gigs all over the Carolinas." After moving to Las Vegas, Mills performed and served as musical director for many corporate events at every major casino, including the MGM Grand, The Venetian and Mandalay Bay. He brought back his show, "Piano Follies," a tribute to the music of Gershwin, Jerry Lee Lewis and Broadway tunes.

"I've always been an artist, visual and singing. My whole family is in dentistry, so in the early 2000s, after college and a post-baccalaureate studio art program, I started getting slightly nervous about how I would make a living as a visual artist," said Olson. She worked as a dental hygienist for four years before returning to her passion, singing, in Burlington, Vermont.

Then fate took over with an introduction between Olson and Mills.

"For me, it's been quite a long journey. I'm a decade into performing Carpenters Legacy. I started the early planning stages of this Carpenters tribute project during the summer of 2014, and it began as just a cabaret show that was going to be a one-time performance," explains Olson.

"I didn't know where it would go, and I enjoyed it, so I kept doing it. My interest and passion in this project brought me back to New York City at the Triad Theatre in April 2017, where I performed while studying at Circle in the Square Theatre School in 2010. A gentleman who attended my show introduced me to his childhood friend, Pam Sullivan, a former showgirl living in Las Vegas. She was very enthusiastic about what I was doing and said I should come to Las Vegas and audition for "Legends in Concert." So, I made my first trip to Las Vegas in January 2018, and Pam introduced me to Ned at the Tap House," explains Olson.

They connected and spoke about the Carpenters project. Olson wanted to find someone to portray Richard Carpenter and take it to the next level, and Mills was very interested. Olson would move to Las Vegas in April 2018, which was the beginning of their collaboration.



Sally Olson

They both admit they had no idea what challenges they would face. It was exciting for them, but also hard work to get a show from ground zero to a residency.

One of their first shows was at the CasaBlanca Resort, Casino, Golf & Spa in Mesquite, Nevada. However, after touring with the show, they focused on getting a residency in Las Vegas. Carpenters Legacy was booked into smaller venues, including Stoney's Rockin' Country and then The Mint. Shortly after their two-week stint at The Mint, the duo landed a residency at Alexis Park for 13 months and then moved to the V Theater in October 2023.

Carpenters Legacy is a recreation of live performances of the Carpenters celebrating the music and legacy of

the famed brother-sister duo. They bring back the classics, "We've Only Just Begun," "Yesterday Once More" and "Superstar," Karen's drum solo, Richard's classical piano feature, and comedy interspersed throughout the show.

They released their first album, "Carpenters Legacy: 1976," which featured all their greatest hits as well as a Latin version of "Superstar" sung by Olson in Spanish and some bonus tracks.

"We're in the finishing stages of our Christmas album, including the Carpenters' greatest holiday hits, like "Merry Christmas, Darling," "The Christmas Song" and "Sleigh Ride." I composed an original Christmas song from the perspective of Karen and Richard producing music and added five and six-part jazz vocal

harmonies to it," said Mills. "It is entitled, 'Christmas Time With You,' and we're really proud of it. Sally did a great job singing the lead vocal, and it's very much in the spirit of the Carpenters."

The album will feature strings, harp glissandos and a piano solo for "Oh Holy Night." Once released, it will be available on CD and digital download on all the major streaming platforms, including Spotify, iTunes and Apple Music.

Olson works at her computer until the early morning, working on graphic design, answering emails and handling social media. Mills writes arrangements and negotiates contracts.

"We've had to educate ourselves to the point that we could write a book on how not to promote a show because we've made just about every mistake there is," said Mills.

Mills credits his parents, who always encouraged him and were the driving force behind his career. At the end of the show, a photo montage of each of their families is displayed, and Mills always points to heaven to say hi to his parents.

Carpenters Legacy performs at the V Theater in the heart of the Las Vegas Strip inside the Miracle Mile Shops at the Planet Hollywood Resort & Casino. Showtime is 5 p.m. Monday to Thursday (dark Friday to Sunday). For tickets, visit www.vtheater.com.

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**Sally Olson as
Karen Carpenter
Artistic Director and
Lead Vocals**

Sally was born in Rutland, Vermont. She graduated cum laude from Middlebury College with a bachelor's degree in both studio art and French. Additionally, she attended the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the Florence Academy of Art in Italy and the Circle in the Square Theatre School in New York City. She has been involved in acting and singing since childhood and has participated in various local and regional commercials, films, theater and live music events. She starred in "Emily's Bridge" for Heritage Automotive Group commercial, written and produced by

Mt. Mansfield Media. The commercial won an award for "Television Agency Produced Most Creative Commercial" of 2011 by the Vermont Association of Broadcasters. She was also featured in the award-winning short film "Widow," directed by Michael Fisher, which received acclaim at both the Green Mountain Film Festival and the White River Indie Film Festival in 2010. In addition, she appeared on the CBS television series "Hack" (Season 2, episode 15, "Extreme Commerce"), directed by Chad Lowe and starring David Morse and Andre Braugher in 2004.

For more than nine years, the Vermont native has immersed herself in all things Carpenters. From 2009 to 2018, she was the managing

director of a voice studio in South Burlington, Vermont. Carpenters Legacy debuted in January 2015. In April 2017, she made her New York City debut at the famed Triad Theater on Manhattan's Upper West Side.

**Ned Mills as
Richard Carpenter
Musical Director,
Arranger, Pianist, Lead
and Backup Vocals**

A versatile pianist, singer and entertainer, Ned Mills was born in Charleston, South Carolina, and began playing piano at four. He's entertained audiences in more than 20 countries and on three continents. After receiving his bachelor's degree in music cum laude in jazz arranging at North Texas State University, he moved back to his native North Carolina and performed regularly throughout the Southeast. He has opened for many national acts, including Bobby McFerrin, Don Rickles, Bonnie Raitt and Sheryl Crow.

He has served as musical conductor and arranger for the Stars of the Lawrence Welk Show, the Ink Spots and the Shirelles. His arrangements have been performed by the Dallas Jazz Orchestra and Miss North Carolina Pageant, as well as in Pizazz starring Debby Boone. He has also performed as a pianist for the Rockettes and in "Legends in Concert." In 2003, Ned performed "Rhapsody in Blue" at the Liberace Museum on Liberace's famous mirrored piano. His film and TV credits include appearances in "Matlock," "Against Her Will: The Carrie Buck Story" and the George Lucas film "Radioland Murders." He was the piano coach for Halle Berry and Eric Thal in Oprah Winfrey's production of "The Wedding."



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NOTORIETY GIVES Supporting At-Risk Youth Through the Healing Power of the Arts

By Channele Hayes / Photography courtesy of Notoriety Gives

Ken Henderson, a Las Vegas native and co-owner/CEO of BESTAgency, embarked on a philanthropic journey after the resounding success of the 1 October Vegas Cares benefit concert in 2017.

"Vegas Cares was a phenomenal event," he said. "We had singer-songwriter Jewel perform, as well as many local performers and entertainers. We raised a little under \$100,000. We planned to build a memorial with the funds, but Robin Leach, who also helped me with the event, suggested I donate it to the Vegas Strong Fund, but they had already raised \$21 million. So, we went back and forth on what to do with the funds. Eventually, all involved with the help of Brittany Dupree, we came up with the idea to support the arts with it."

In 2018, Neonopolis building owners Loraine Kusuhara and Rohit Joshi allowed Henderson to pursue his long-time dream. In 2019, he



Ken Henderson, founder of Notoriety Gives, a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting at-risk youth by promoting the healing power of the arts



opened Notoriety, a premier performing arts venue in the heart of downtown Las Vegas. Shortly after, he formed the nonprofit organization Notoriety Gives. "I wanted Notoriety Gives to commemorate the resiliency and compassion of the Las Vegas community and showcase unity through the arts," he said.

Henderson hired a consultant to help him develop an idea on how to make his vision come to life. In the beginning, "We began offering two classes for at-risk youth in grades 5-12," he said. "Michael Shapiro taught a guitar class and Clint Holmes taught a songwriting class. We had youth from local programs, such as the Boys & Girls Club, come down to Notoriety to participate in our program. It was a great program but very challenging logistically, so we moved in a new direction and started a charity fund to offer scholarships and access to existing performing arts programs in Las Vegas."

Henderson and the Notoriety

Gives' board of directors (Antonio Fargas, actor; Clint Holmes, Grammy-nominated singer-songwriter; Greg Errico, founding member of Sly and the Family Stone; Gwyn Lloyd-Hughes, senior vice president of BESTAgency; Kurt

Ouchida, president/co-founder of Braintrust; Lorraine D'Alessio, attorney; Michael E. Seiff, MD; Michael Shapiro, Richard Burgi, actor; Ross King MBE, TV presenter, actor and writer; and Tracee Gress, partner of BD & Associates, CPAs) launched



Michael Shapiro teaches a guitar class to youth that Notoriety Gives serves

Concerts for a Cause, a monthly series designed to unite the community through music and philanthropy.

This initiative has brought the community together and provided a platform for talented musicians to showcase their skills. It has also allowed at-risk youth to experience the healing power of music and the arts, significantly impacting their lives and aspirations.

"Our first event with Clint Holmes was great," Henderson said. "He performed songs from his favorite artists and some of his original music. I wanted him to do the first event because he has been a huge supporter of everything I do and a long-time friend. He always tells me, 'Whatever you need me to do, I'll do it.'"

Just like with the Vegas Cares benefit concert, Henderson has once again utilized his entertainment talents and connections for a good cause. "It feels good to know that the Las Vegas community wants to help," he said.

"If you have heard Clint's story, he will say he wouldn't know where he would be without music. He just knew that music was what he was supposed to do. That's the thing with people in this business. They're very passionate about what they do. We're giving them a beautiful platform to perform at and letting people who love concerts see musicians they might not have seen before. It's also about giving back to the young people who want to take that journey and make it in the entertainment industry. Putting together this concert series has been fun, and it's in the wheelhouse of what I've been doing for 25 years."

The remaining dates for Concerts for a Cause are Sept. 10, Oct. 8, Nov.



12 and Dec. 10. Tickets can be purchased online at www.notorietylive.com.

To learn more about Notoriety Gives, visit www.notorietygives.com.

Grammy-nominated singer-songwriter Clint Holmes performing at the first Concert for a Cause event at Notoriety on June 11, 2024

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BLOOD: IT GIVES LIFE

The National Bleeding Disorders Foundation Offers Assistance

By Debbie Hall

Blood is vital to life. It brings oxygen and nutrients to organs, fights infections and provides functions for people to survive. But what happens when it becomes diseased or causes medical issues? This is where the National Bleeding Disorders Foundation (NBDF) Nevada chapter steps in, making a significant difference in the lives of individuals with inheritable bleeding disorders across Nevada.

The most well-known bleeding disorder is called hemophilia, but that is not the most common. "We provide resources and support for individuals and families affected by these inheritable bleeding disorders, such as educational events," explained Jacob Murdock, executive director of the Nevada chapter.

"Our role extends beyond providing resources and support," he said. "We plan camps for our teens and families, provide financial and mental health therapy support, hold fundraisers and host other unique events. We cover the entire state, hosting events in Las Vegas, Reno, Carson City, Elko and Ely. We provide this extensive range of services



thanks to your assistance, which significantly improves the lives of numerous people."

Stephanie Dupree, the development manager for the Nevada chapter, has been with the organization for over two-and-a-half years and has worked for over 10 years in

Jacob Murdock, executive director of the National Bleeding Disorders Foundation (NBDF) Nevada chapter. Photo courtesy of the NBDF Nevada chapter

the nonprofit industry in Southern Nevada.

"I came here [NBDF] to see what I could do to make a difference. And just getting to know the community the past two years, it's been enjoyable," says Dupree. "Jacob and I are running this organization and hiring for a third person right now. But with a small organization like this, you wear a lot of hats. I help with organizing and programming events. But my primary role is to make sure that we're fundraising. We're raising money through grants, events, and individual giving, ensuring we can do as much as possible to support people with bleeding disorders here in Nevada. Your support is not just a donation; it's a lifeline for these families."

Murdock started with the chapter in September 2021. "I'm nearing my third anniversary," he said. "I have also worked in the nonprofit sector here in Las Vegas for about 15 years. Before that, I worked in higher education administration. I'm responsible for guiding the ship and helping make some of those



Children showed their support for the 2023 Unite for Bleeding Disorders Walk.



Participants raised funds during the 2023 Unite for Bleeding Disorders Walk.

significant partnerships locally, state-wide and nationally to ensure our organization can succeed. I build relationships at the larger level with the local treatment center and some other medical professionals who treat folks with bleeding disorders. I also work on many of our advocacy projects, both statewide and national advocacy. I'm involved in the programming and fundraising events. We're small. We wear various hats, and we're an organization involved in the grassroots part of the nonprofit work and some of the higher-level stuff."

The chapter sends a representative to attend meetings of the Nevada Chronic Care Collaborative (NCCC), which, through advocacy work, helps improve the experience and lives of people with chronic conditions in Nevada.

It's important to note that the chapter does not provide information on the medical side of bleeding disorders. Hemophilia treatment centers, hematologists, doctors, and other healthcare professionals manage the healthcare aspect.

But for anything outside of medical issues, NBDF helps with social issues, financial issues, connecting

people, mental aspects that come with growing up with a bleeding disorder and navigating that transition from childhood to adulthood.

People who have a bleeding disorder need that guidance. It's a rare condition, and it's unlikely that people will be able to meet people with that condition in everyday life.

"We provide opportunities for the community to come together, meet and help support each other," says Murdock.

The NBDF recently rebranded. For the first 75 years, the organization was known as the National Hemophilia Foundation (NHF), created to work primarily with people with hemophilia. However, as medical science has progressed, the understanding of bleeding disorders has progressed.

While hemophilia was definitely and still is probably the most well-known bleeding disorder, it's not the most common. There are ones that are even rarer.

"The most common is von Willebrand disease, which is one of the reasons why we went through a rebrand: to be more inclusive of the other types

of bleeding disorders that are present in Nevada and across the country," explained Murdock.

"The goal of the name change is to embrace our identity and the desire to find cures for all inheritable bleeding disorders. We also want to make sure that folks with inheritable bleeding disorders can live highly successful and healthy lives. And so, for us, it represents our work."

According to Murdock, those diagnosed with the disease affect up to two percent of the population. According to the general statistics, nearly 30,000 people in Nevada haven't been diagnosed with the disease but most likely have it.

The rebranding encourages folks to get tested and spread the word about the symptoms of bleeding disorders so that people can have better access to treatment. Symptoms they thought were "normal" in their family aren't normal. For example, a longer-than-seven-day menstrual cycle is not normal. A medical professional should check that out. Hour-long nosebleeds in a month are abnormal; a medical professional should check that out.

"By changing our name, we're embracing the diversity of our community because we've always been serving people with all sorts of bleeding disorders in Nevada since the chapter was founded in the 1990s," explains Murdock.

The founder of the Nevada chapter was a registered nurse with von Willebrand disease. The chapter started by offering non-medical resources to others diagnosed with the disease.

On Saturday, Oct. 12, members and supporters of the bleeding disorders community will join to raise

money for the NBDF's Nevada chapter. All Las Vegas are invited to Floyd Lamb Park (9200 Tule Springs Road) for the annual Unite for Bleeding Disorders Walk. This annual fun walk allows participants to celebrate or honor those affected by bleeding disorders and assist in the organization's mission to find cures for inheritable blood disorders and address and prevent complications of these disorders through research, education and advocacy.

"It's our biggest fundraiser of the year, supporting our mission and programming efforts. All the money raised at the Unite for Bleeding Disorders Walk will assist our families, help our community and do what we can. We've been doing the annual community event for over 15 years," said Murdock.

"We invite friends and family when someone is new to the bleeding disorder community and they're dealing with a new diagnosis," added Dupree. "This can be a very expensive disorder to have; the treatments are costly, and there's a lot of times there are issues with getting insurance companies to cover the treatment just because it's a chronic condition." Many times, multiple family members are diagnosed because it

runs in families, so many members get these treatments.

The Unite for Bleeding Disorders Walk is also a way for corporate teams to get coworkers together and go out for a worthy cause. Sponsorships are available, and local businesses support them by having a booth and providing a fun activity for the kids.

The NBDF's Nevada chapter, founded in 1990, dedicates its time to finding cures for inheritable blood disorders and addressing and preventing the complications of these disorders through research, education and advocacy, enabling people and families to thrive. Donations stay here in Nevada, providing family services, youth development and emergency funds to help patients reach a productive, pain-free, independent future. More than 300 volunteers annually support more than 30 programs and events like the NVChapter Family Camp and the Unite for Bleeding Disorders Walk. For more information on NBDF's Nevada chapter visit www.hfnv.org or connect socially at @NevadaNBDF.



Volunteers were the backbone of the 2023 Unite for Bleeding Disorders Walk.

Generations of Strength: A Family's Journey

Aileen Garcia's son has been diagnosed with von Willebrand disease, and it runs in her family with a sister diagnosed with hemophilia.

"My mom was the first to be part of the organization in the late 1990s. I was just a teenager, and my baby sister was only three. She was the first member of our family to be diagnosed. Doctors spoke to my mom about the organization where we would learn more about her bleeding disorder. After my son was born in 2007, a little shortly after his toddler years, he was also diagnosed with von Willebrand disease. My sister is now 29, and her daughter, her firstborn, has been diagnosed with hemophilia. My son, now 17, looks forward to college and lives an everyday teen life. The organization has been a great part of our daily lives for my sister, son, and family," said Garcia.

"The organization has been a lot of help for our whole family. We have been involved in most of the events, as well as dinner classes sponsored by those in the organization to help us learn about bleeding disorders and how to advocate for our son's health and bleeding disorders. My son has participated in their camp in Big Bear, California, where he met other children with other bleeding disorders and learned to infuse and advocate for themselves. We will participate in the walk happening in October," she added.

"The organization [NBDF] helped us create a 504 plan for school and teach our teachers and school nurses about von Willebrand disease from elementary through high school. My son was unafraid when asked about his medical alert bracelet, which he



Aileen Garcia's son, Ethan, enjoys the NBDF Nevada chapter's Teen Camp.

had worn since being diagnosed. He feels comfortable and open to talking about what it represents."

Garcia is incredibly grateful to the Las Vegas-based organization. She knows that residents in rural Nevada will have to travel but appreciates that the foundation can help many others who need resources, help and education.

"We also get one-on-one time with them. We can talk to them if they need anything, and they can help us," adds Garcia.

The foundation educates on different topics, including bleeding disorders, teens, how their bodies are changing, how they're growing up and what to expect.



Photo of Aileen Garcia and family by Kristina Alexis Photography

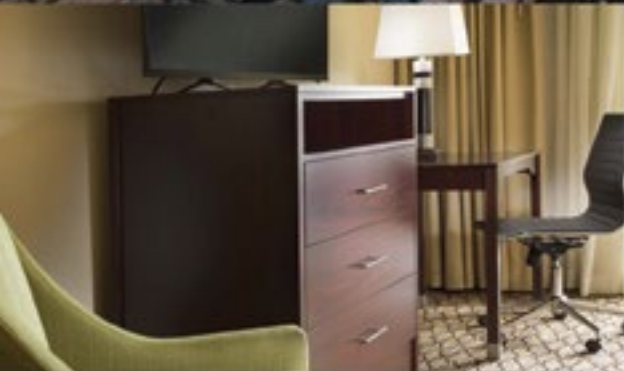


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LANNIE COUNTS

Las Vegas Musician—Dubbed the “Heart of Soul”—Reflects on His Life and Career

By Chanelle Hayes

There are many ways that Las Vegas singer Lannie Counts looks at the word grace. “It means you can be as prolific, as professional, as on top of things as you can be, but someone has to give you the yes, no matter what you’re doing or what field it is,” he said. “You see people come on Shark Tank, for instance, with brilliant ideas. You can have a product sell itself, but at some point, either Daymond John or one of the show’s other investors has to say, “Yeah, let’s do it.” In my mind, it’s about getting a yes.”

Counts’ journey is a testament to the power of determination and resilience. “I’ve never given up, no matter how many doors may have closed or how many times I may have heard the word no,” he said, inspiring us all with his unwavering spirit.

Born and raised in Phoenix, Counts’ love of music has always been there. He was primarily exposed to gospel, R&B, soul and jazz in his early years. “I grew up in the church,” he said. “I attended Tonto Street Church of Christ. My mom



Photo of Lannie Counts by Jerry Metellus



Left and Right: Photos of Lannie Counts by Jerry Metellus

was instrumental in getting me involved in the choir. Our church didn't believe in instrumental music; it was all acappella singing. It was very traditional and reserved. I loved sitting beside her and hearing her voice as we sang the congregational songs. My dad loved music as well. With him, it was the Ray Charles records and big-band sounds."

Counts' musical influences span a vast spectrum, from Motown legends like Diana Ross and the Supremes, the Jackson 5, the Four Tops and the Temptations to crooners like Frank Sinatra, Nat King Cole, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr., Tony Bennett, Nancy Wilson and Johnny Mathis. His brothers introduced him to artists such as Bob James, Eric Gale, Earl Klugh and George Benson, showcasing his diverse and intriguing musical palette.

But in high school, his taste in music varied even more. "In my junior year, I stumbled upon a group of kids who were into rock 'n' roll and progressive rock," he said. Already an "occasional" piano student, Counts began playing the bass then. "We made a lot of cover music and spent time writing and composing together."

Counts continued in music and began his professional career at 22 when he fronted the top 40 cover band Dreamer in Phoenix five nights a week. "We covered everything from Michael Jackson and Prince to Ratt and Bryan Adams," he said. "It took me a while to learn how to use my voice since we performed five nights a week. We ended up being a powerhouse band that packed the house every night."

After his time with Dreamer, Counts

became involved in other Top 40 bands and was later the lead singer of Joey Navarro's Joey Navarro Project, which opened for acts such as Keith Sweat, Najee and Kenny G. "Fronting his band was such an amazing experience for me," he said. "Joey Navarro is still going strong in Los Angeles today. He teaches and plays with several huge touring groups, like El Chicano."

Finding a music gig five or six nights a week was easy for Counts, but things took a turn when it fizzled down to only one or two nights a week. With the decline in gigs, he saw it as an opportunity to move to Las Vegas. "When I got to Las Vegas, I quickly learned that if you were in the right band, you could still find a great gig five or six nights a week. Bands would play at one casino for four to six weeks in one place, then four to six weeks at another place, and the next thing you knew, your whole year was filled. Of course, everyone told me, "Man, you should've been here in the 80s; you would've been turning work away," but I somehow managed to find those open doors."

Since moving to Las Vegas more than 30 years ago, Counts has made a name for himself as a featured performer in various bands and shows, such as Sante Fe and the Fat City Horns, the Las Vegas Tenors (who travel the world as headliners for the Royal Caribbean cruise line), Tyriq Johnson's Serpentine Fire (an Earth, Wind & Fire tribute band) and the Lon Bronson All-Star Band. You may also find him occasionally performing at the Italian American Club in Las Vegas. He was also a part of "Ain't Nothin' Like the Real Thing," a show that celebrated the 50th anniversary of Motown, which ran in the



Bally's Showroom in Atlantic City. Counts' performances have earned him a reputation as an extraordinarily versatile and talented vocalist.

He also has his original music available on Amazon and iTunes. Some of his songs include "I'll Always Know Love," written and produced by Emmy award winner Jerome Gilmer, and "Take Time" and "You're Free to Go," both written and produced by Smokey Robinson's guitarist Robert "Boogie" Bowles. He's also featured on a song called "Be Young, Be Foolish, Be Happy" with Jason Brewer of The Explorers Club, "who Counts says creates unique, authentic old-school R&B sounds."

"I can proudly say that after all these years here in Las Vegas, I performed my first original piece of music at The Composers Showcase of Las Vegas show at Myron's at The Smith Center in May. "It was such an incredible thrill," he said. "This wouldn't have been possible without Keith Thompson, who worked with me on my original composition "Loving You So," produced and released on digital platforms in 2015. Keith and I had been trying to make the scheduling line up so I could

perform it shortly after I released it. Finally, almost 10 years later, it worked out."

The year 2024 is working in his favor. Counts was a special guest in Michelle Johnson's "The Look of Love—A Tribute to Burt Bacharach" at Myron's at The Smith Center in June. "I was thrilled when Michelle asked me to join her Burt Bacharach tribute show. Michelle and I go way back to 1995. We first met when we did "Country Fever" at the Golden Nugget in downtown Las Vegas. We were in a six-member gospel choir in the show until it ended in 1997." Counts also worked with Brody Dolyniuk on "The Peter Gabriel Project" at Sunset Station in Henderson. "Brody has always been a vocal hero of mine," Counts said. "He's one of the most gifted sound makers and creators of live music I have ever heard and seen."

Counts is working hard on a new self-written and produced 16-track album, which he hopes to release by the end of the year. "The album will contain only one remake," he said. "I have been working on this for about three years now. I'm

extremely excited to get this out and feel like the tracks on the album will open more doors for me."

He's also working with Clint Holmes on "Crossroads," a brand-new show highlighting highly unlikely pairings of artists and songs. The show, featuring Rita Lim and Dennis Blair, among other fantastic vocalists, is scheduled for Nov. 12 at the Starbright Theatre in Summerlin as part of The Rendezvous series. "Fortunate and truly blessed are understatement, to say the least, for how I feel," Counts said, as he and Holmes collaborated on "Cooke," a tribute show celebrating the life and music of Sam Cooke, and "The Greatest R&B Songs Ever Written." These upcoming projects promise to be exciting additions to his already impressive career.

"I deeply appreciate the many people who have opened doors and taken a chance on me," Counts said. As the saying goes, "When one door closes, another door opens." "If that other door never opens, that door opening to me is grace." This sentiment of gratitude and humility is a testament to his inspiring journey.

LIQUID
STAR
PHOTOGRAPHY

DESIGNER: SUE WONG
MODEL: TIFFANY CHANG
HAIR & MAKE UP: REYNA KHALIL
PHOTOGRAPHY: JAIME LIM



SUE WONG'S GODDESS COUTURE SPRING/SUMMER 2024

Article by David Tupaz | Designs by Sue Wong
Photography by Jaime Lim, Liquid Star Photography

California designer Sue Wong has unveiled her Spring and Summer 2024 collection, featuring classic cut dresses with an explosion of prints in unexpected color combinations. These wearable ensembles are perfect for summer soirees, offering women a stylish and sophisticated look for resort dressing.

With decades of experience in the fashion industry, Wong is known for her couture evening gowns and red-carpet creations and has dressed numerous notable personalities. Her approach to fashion

is rooted in the belief that women who wear her designs are ultimate goddesses. As a woman designing for women, Wong's unique and beautiful creations are at the forefront of American style, showcasing her expertise in understanding what women desire and what flatters them.

A veteran American designer of Asian descent, Wong's designs blend exotic and cultural elements, making her one of the great California designers today, as captured by fashion photographer and artist Jaime Lim.



LIQUID
STAR PHOTOGRAPHY

DESIGNER: SUE WONG
MODEL: DUSTIN QUICK
HAIR & MAKE UP: REYNA KHALIL
PHOTOGRAPHY: JAIME LIM



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STAR
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MODEL: ANNA GUPTA
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PASS, PUNT AND CHICKS

Out of the Stands and Onto the Field, Dr. Jen Welter Ignites a Passion for Women's Football

By Stacey Gualandi & JJ Snyder

When Dr. Jen Welter is on the football field, do not cross her line of scrimmage. "Sometimes I forget I am retired because I still tackle people on demand!"

It might sound unusual for a doctor—let alone a 5-foot-2-inch woman—to go from sideline to offensive line, but Dr. Welter follows her playbook.

In 2015, Welter became the first female in the NFL when she joined the Arizona Cardinals as a linebackers coach. She was also the first woman to play running back in the Champions Indoor Football League with the Texas Revolution. In 2018, she was inducted into the first class of the Women's Football Hall of Fame.

This motivational speaker and author continues to move the chains for all women by teaching confidence through football. She believes there is no game you cannot play and no field you do not belong on.

"I think of football as full contact chess," Dr. Welter says. "Every time you step on the field, you've got to



Photo of Dr. Jen Welter by Roscoe Myrick

own the space, not just in football. That's in life."

Almost a decade ago, Welter—who has a doctorate in psychology and master's in sports psychology—created "A Day in the Life," the ultimate

insider experience for women by women.

This annual event also benefits Welter's other cause, the Grrridiron Girls Flag Football Camp for young girls. Welter draws from her



Above from Left: Stacey Gualandi, Dr. Jen Welter, and JJ Snyder. Photo by Frank Cutrone/Prime Action Images

decades of playing, winning and coaching to make football accessible and inspiring for women so they can "break through barriers and realize their potential."

"In football and life, it's a game of leverage," Welter says. "If you lose contact with where you came from and what you started with, it's easy to get knocked off balance."

Welter just announced that her next "A Day in the Life" event will occur on Feb. 7 during Super Bowl LIX weekend in New Orleans at the NOLA Sports Center. This follows her successful camping trip earlier this year to Las Vegas for the Super Bowl LXIII edition.

Amy Buchan Siegfried, co-founder and podcast host of "Last Night's Game," is part of the event's traveling team. "Women make up 48 percent

of the NFL's fan base, so why are we not showing them what's happening on the field?" Siegfried asks. "What an empowering moment to play, execute and learn the game. Dr. Welter speaks the language. She understands who and where they are and is here to empower everyone."

While my friend/fellow adventurer JJ Snyder and I are Las Vegas Raiders fans and always up for an empowering workout, we've never played football before. So, we called an audible and officially got drafted.

This was unlike any huddle we've ever seen!

Dr. Welter kicked off the day with a playbook session and warm-up, after a rousing on-field arrival to cheers and DJ tunes—and a pep talk to rival all pep talks. Calling

plays alongside her were over a dozen celebrity coaches, including former running backs Ricky Watters and Ahman Green, linebacker Chris Draft, cornerback Paulson Adebo and punter Marquette King.

"This is a collection of some of the best at what they do," Welter adds. "They are here because they all believe in me, and they're going to put that into you."

After swapping heels for cleats, we spent the afternoon in groups learning how to kick, shuffle, catch, hike, snap and spiral properly. Oh, and yes, tackle. "Muscle in the front, hustle on the outside, crazy in the middle," Welter says repeatedly during the drills.

The point after, we realized, is the power of teamwork and ultimately finding where your talent is best

suited. "Everyone is even on the field, and we have a diverse balance," Siegfried says. "It's just an opportunity to connect and be a team. We may hear only about Patrick Mahomes or Brock Purdy, but a whole contingent ensures they can be Mahomes and Purdy. Jen does a great job of teaching that we are all working on this together."

Siegfried says a woman once admitted she walked on the field "just a mom" but walked off "a cool mom who knows football!" That tracks for many participants at "A Day in the Life" in Las Vegas.

Celebrity coach and pro football player Lois Cook (@cleatsandstiletto) says this representation also matters to young girls.

"I accepted 'No,' and that I couldn't play the sport," Cook says. "But 'if she can see it, she can be it,' so if I had seen Jen, I would have known that the possibilities are endless, that I could reach for the stars...there are challenges and obstacles, but I can always overcome and get through it."

Snyder has spent her entire life observing football but knew little about the sport. Getting to experience it on the field firsthand shed light on the power of women being handed the ball.

"Dr. Welter busted in like a boss overflowing with motivation, giving me little choice other than to share her passion for the sport," Snyder says. "We were challenged to find a skill we could excel at, like throwing, running or tackling. It was mind-blowing to experience being part of the game rather than cheering from the stands."

If you're like me and enjoy reaching goals, working out and hitting the



Above (All): Photos from "A Day in the Life" by Frank Cutrone/Prime Action Images

gridiron, "A Day in the Life" is fantasy football. It also reveals just how much football mirrors reality.

Welter says life is full of fumbles, interceptions and lateral moves, but to get great, you've "gotta get real ugly" before you score a touchdown.

"Then you start to be addicted to greatness, and you know what you're worth," Welter says. "Once you find that in yourself, you hunger for it. Don't settle for anything less because you deserve magic."

Put me in, coach!



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Photograph of Jonathan Karrant
by Joseph Donato (Cashman Photo)



VIVA UNIDOS!

By Kendall Hardin

In the music industry - as in all industries - when you need to innovate, you must collaborate. The mixing of minds leads to that special synergy that fuels brand-new ideas with bigger and better outcomes than anyone imagined at the start.

That's exactly how the UNIDOS Project was hatched as a collaboration between the Youth Artists Orchestra of Las Vegas (YAO) and the Las Vegas Academy for the Arts (LVA) Mariachi Internacional, with a bevy of supporting cast members.

The Nevada Community Learning Project, which funded the initiative, chose UNIDOS as one of the top

Above: Mariachi Internacional performs on stage at LVA's Lowden Theater. Photo by Cashman Photo

20 proposals in the state. The project allowed students and young professionals to learn, perform and record traditional mariachi music in a symphonic format.

UNIDOS was the brainchild of Cuban-born violist Yunior Lopez, founder, music director and conductor of YAO. Lopez is also a chamber musician extraordinaire and entrepreneur/CEO of Lord of the Cigars Corporation in Miami. Working alongside David Rivera, director of LVA's Mariachi Internacional, the project immediately gelled.

On May 25, a concert performance of 20 mariachis and nearly 80 classical musicians filled the stage at LVA's Lowden Theater. The following day, everyone was in four rooms of UNLV's recording studio, ready to

record seven tracts in one day with Maestro Lopez conducting.

"With over 100 people, the top concern was achieving musical balance," cited Lopez. "Most of our young musicians had never been in a recording studio, but they were incredibly well prepared. There was no overdubbing. It was all in real-time at the same time."

Add to the mix three of the most celebrated arrangers in the field: California-based Alberto "Beto" Jimenez Maeda (official arranger for LVA's Machiachi Internacional), Arturo Hernandez (proud alum of LVA) and Canadian Roberto Occhipinti (revered as a jazz bassist and all-around composer). Cuban songbird Noybel Gorgoy provided amazing vocals.



Above: The Young Artists Orchestra performs at The Smith Center. Photo by YAO/Liliana Tejo Vanegas

John Seaton, director of LVA's band program, assisted with specialized percussion instruments. Chuck Foley, Gil Krupp and other UNLV audio engineers handled all the advanced technical recording support.

"We couldn't find any other mariachi symphonic recording like the one we just completed in Las Vegas," explained Lopez. "Mariachi Sinfónico will be available in Dolby Atmos, the futurist 'spatial audio' that allows listeners to hear the recording in an immersive environment much like that of a state-of-the-art movie complex."

The UNIDOS recording recently launched, taking off like a rocket loaded with brand-new fuel. Shifting to a fully digital platform release allows UNIDOS artists to provide original content directly for the Apple

Music catalog and other portals like Spotify, bypassing the need for CDs. "We may do a limited run of LPs, though," Lopez mullied. "They're coming back in style."

"We're already registering for a Grammy!" grinned Rivera. "I'm hoping we can create an ongoing partnership every year - perhaps in the form of a *Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead) concert in the fall at The Smith Center or Lowden Theater. We need to think big."

It's forever astonishing what creative, enterprising minds can do, regardless of age, background or location.

According to entrepreneur recording executive Scooter Braun (who signed dozens of stars like Justin Bieber, Demi Lovato, Ariana Grande and Kanye

West): "As a music industry, if we remain in competition, then we die. We have to understand that we're all in this together. Collaboration and synergy, it's one of the most important things out there."

Note: In its inaugural year, the Nevada Community Learning Project brings the Nevada Future of Learning Network's Portrait of a Nevada Learner initiative to life, transforming education with hands-on experiences for students in partnership with the Nevada Department of Education, Teach for America and local institutions.

Below Left: Mariachi Sinfónico album cover features Mexico's popular Quetzal bird. Photo by YAO/Liliana Tejo Vanegas

Below Right: Yunior Lopez conducts the Día de los Muertos concert. Photo by YAO/Liliana Tejo Vanegas



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NAVIGATING A PROFITABLE CAREER IN THE ART WORLD

A Conversation with Dr. Laura Henkel

By Ann Parenti

Chic Compass: We appreciate you, Dr. Laura Henkel, for coming to speak on "Creating Profits: Artists, Galleries & Museums" and "Breaking Into the Art World on a Budget: A Practical Guide for Emerging Artists." First of all, introduce yourself and the inspiration behind publishing these books.

Dr. Laura Henkel: I've been recognized as a visionary leader in the arts and culture industry for over two decades. I've traveled the globe to launch and direct museums and founded and managed Sin City Gallery. I created 12 Inches of Sin, an international art exhibition and festival that attracted participants from 27 countries due to compelling programming, marketing and community outreach. Since 2013, my consulting agency, ArtCulture PR, has provided bespoke services, guiding numerous arts and cultural organizations and international projects through the complex interplay between art and commerce. I've helped cultivate and establish many artists' careers to international



acclaim. Through ArtCulture PR, I specialize in art advisory and management, business growth consulting, cultural engagement and operations transformation by creating strategies that deliver results. These experiences inspired me to share my knowledge to help others succeed. I'm so delighted to share information about these publications with you today.

Chic Compass: Your books cover many topics connected to the art world. "Creating Profits" offers

valuable insights for creatives and commercial and nonprofit entities. Can you elaborate on what readers can expect from this book?

Dr. Laura Henkel: Absolutely! "Creating Profits" unveils the secrets to blending creativity with business acumen for outstanding success. This book has proven strategies and inspiring real-world examples focusing on the three success pillars—people, processes and profit. Readers will discover how these strategies can transform their efforts,



ensuring that 20% of their work effort results in 80% of their success.

"Creating Profits" provides insights into streamlining operations, crafting impeccable marketing initiatives and forging long-lasting relationships with patrons that drive sustainable growth. The book is designed to help build vibrant, sustainable businesses that support the creative economy and enrich cultural landscapes. Whether they're established entities looking to optimize operations or emerging artists seeking to navigate the complexities of the art world, "Creating Profits" offers the tools and knowledge to elevate their practice. This book is essential for anyone looking to revolutionize their approach and achieve remarkable success in the arts and cultural sector.

Chic Compass: You advocate for a blend of creativity and strategy. How do you balance these two elements in your work?

Dr. Laura Henkel: Balancing creativity and strategy is indeed essential. Creativity fuels innovation and uniqueness, which is vital for our creative economy to flourish. However, without strategic planning

and execution, creative efforts will not reach their full potential. My approach involves using strategic frameworks to guide creative processes, ensuring creative endeavors are inspiring and commercially viable. Central to this approach is education—not only educating the reader on how to implement new strategies for their business but also understanding the needs of their customers so that they may educate them to their unique offerings. By aligning business practices with these insights, we can create offerings that customers find irresistible. In both publications, I provide actionable steps to help readers integrate creativity with strategic business practices, enabling them to achieve their goals and sustain long-term success.

Chic Compass: Let's shift to your other book, "Breaking Into the Art World on a Budget." Why did you create it, as it seems similar to "Creating Profits?"

Dr. Laura Henkel: "Breaking Into the Art World on a Budget" is not just a guide—it's a lifeline. Consider it the CliffNotes version of "Creating Profits." I don't refer to it as a book

but as a guide to navigating a path to success. It's packed with practical advice on creating a recognizable brand, networking and leveraging social media to market and sell art. The guide also offers insights on budgeting, presenting art portfolios and maintaining inspiration and motivation. It's about giving artists the resources to be successful without breaking the bank. I priced the e-book edition at only \$0.99 on Amazon because I wanted young entrepreneurs to have access to this valuable information and experience success. I'm happy art teachers and professors have discovered and shared the guide with their students. I plan to revise the guide yearly to keep it current with new trends, tools, resources and exhibition opportunities.

I'm also receiving feedback from well-established creatives who say this guide is a beautiful reminder of what to do and what not to do. It's helping them realign their efforts to reach goals that are important to them. Because of their feedback, I created a paperback edition for readers to write notes directly into the guide and create to-do lists for success.

Chic Compass: One of the guide's chapters focuses on "discovering your voice." Why is this crucial for aspiring artists?

Dr. Laura Henkel: Finding one's voice is essential for all artists. It involves reflecting on life experiences, cultural background and personally significant subjects. This approach helps artists establish a unique style and specific objectives for their artistic careers. Artists with distinctive voices can attract attention and connect with the right audience. It's about staying true to yourself and expressing yourself honestly through art.

Chic Compass: These publications offer a plethora of information and tactics. What will they ultimately accomplish for readers?

Dr. Laura Henkel: Art galleries, cultural institutions and museums face significant challenges. Many institutions' traditional methodologies need to be updated. The status quo is making it difficult for them to stand out in an increasingly competitive world. Funding options are also becoming scarcer, which adds to the struggle to maintain operations and relevance within the community. Additionally, the pandemic has accelerated the need for digital transformation and innovative engagement and revenue generation approaches.

"Creating Profits" and "Breaking Into the Art World on a Budget" are designed to address these plights head-on. These books are not just about providing information but about equipping readers with actionable strategies to navigate and thrive in these challenging times. A fundamental principle in both books is the importance of putting people first, then processes and finally enjoying the profits. Galleries and museums can build solid and loyal communities by focusing on people—whether they're artists, staff or patrons. Effective processes ensure that operations run smoothly and profits follow as a natural outcome of a well-managed organization.

"Creating Profits" delves into 10 strategic areas for success, such as using social media effectively, generating leads, maximizing conversions and forming strategic alliances. These areas are crucial for galleries and museums looking to boost their ROI, enhance stakeholder engagement and drive sustainable growth. The book also offers insights into cost-cutting and business process optimization,

helping institutions streamline operations and increase profitability. The ultimate goal is to create solid business foundations while always maintaining the ability to reassess, realign and revamp to stay current with market demands.

"Breaking Into the Art World on a Budget" focuses on providing artists—especially those just starting—with the practical tools and strategies they need to succeed. The guide covers essential topics like branding, networking and leveraging social media, all aimed at helping artists market and sell their art effectively. I'm glad it has received praise from emerging artists and established creatives who find the advice helpful for realigning their practices and staying motivated.

Chic Compass: While your books are for artists, creatives and cultural institutions, can other industries benefit from the strategies you present?

Dr. Laura Henkel: Absolutely. Any industry can utilize these strategies to enhance its business. Before publishing these resources, I interviewed hundreds of people, from CEOs to entrepreneurs, from across diverse sectors to receive their feedback on the strategies presented. In every instance, they had an "a-ha" moment and could utilize the strategies for their needs. I love receiving feedback from those interviewees who say that the strategies implemented had a tremendous positive impact on their business.

Ultimately, these publications empower businesses to thrive and be sustainable, fulfilling and financially profitable. As most of us spend more time "at the job," wouldn't it be fantastic to have a work culture that promotes a healthy environment for everyone involved—be it your contractors, employees, executives,



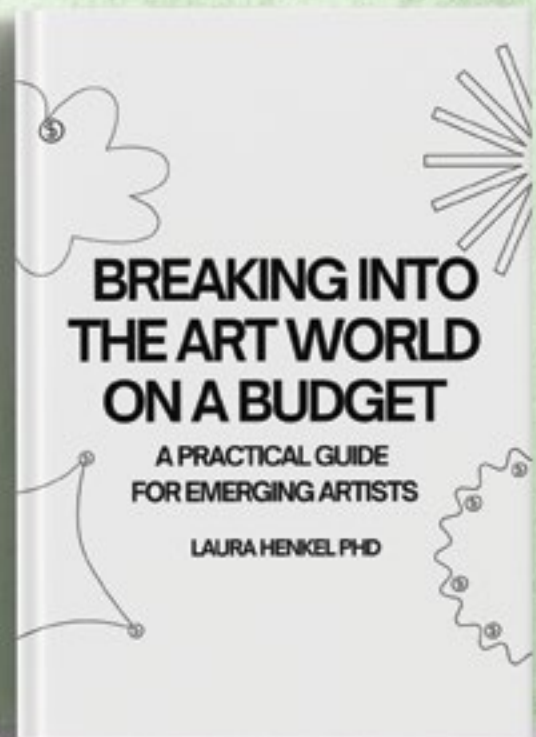
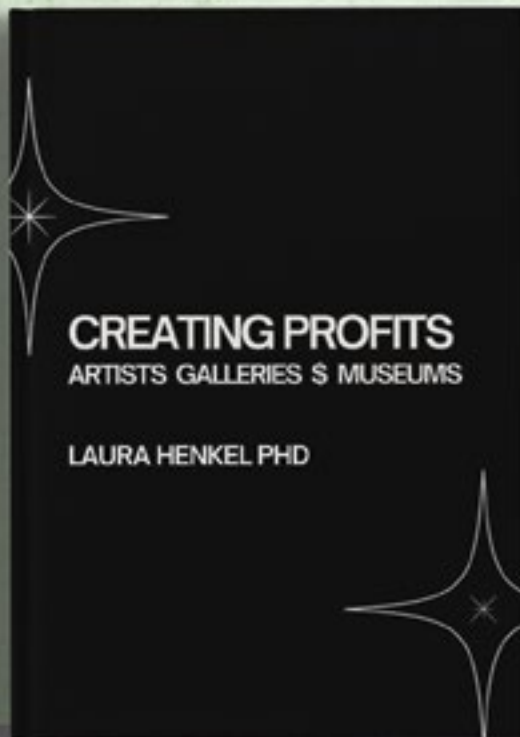
Laura Henkel wearing necklaces designed by artist Laura Kimpton.

patrons or even you? By addressing current challenges and offering practical solutions, these publications are invaluable resources for all businesses to be better and happier. The goal is to streamline work so that it doesn't rule you; instead, you rule it and enjoy life.

Chic Compass: Dr. Henkel, your passion for the arts and strategic insights are truly inspiring. Thank you for sharing your expertise with us today. For our readers, I highly recommend "Creating Profits" and "Breaking Into the Art World on a Budget." These books are invaluable resources for anyone looking to succeed in the dynamic world of art. To connect with Dr. Henkel and learn more, visit www.artculturepr.com. Both publications are available on Amazon.

Dr. Laura Henkel: Thank you. It's been an honor to share these insights. I'm genuinely excited about the potential of these publications to empower artists, creatives and cultural institutions to thrive and succeed.

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A LOOK BACK AT THE 2024 CANNES FILM FESTIVAL

By Janet Susan R. Nepales

Going to Cannes has always been one of the highlights of my journalism career, and I am blessed to have covered the prestigious film festival for the past 12 years.

Watching award-winning films, interviewing the actors and filmmakers, walking the exciting red carpet with the stars and attending the after-parties and other events at the La Croisette always made me wide-eyed with joy and wonder, as if it were my first time all over again.

This year's 77th Cannes Film Festival was extra special because 80 filmmakers, actors and producers from the Philippines attended, representing the country in various areas and categories of the festival, from the Directors Fortnight to the Cannes Classics. Budding directors, writers and actors showcased their films and even attended sessions and workshops with veteran filmmakers. They were also allowed to pitch their stories to potential distributors and producers. Some were also very grateful since it was their first time at the world-renowned festival.

Sean Baker's Love for Lino Brocka

I also felt very proud to see the restored classic Lino Brocka film "Bona," starring superstar Nora Aunor,



Screening of the Nora Aunor restored classic movie "Bona" at the 77th Cannes Film Festival Photo by Ruben V. Nepales.

showcased at the Cannes Classics division with no less than Palme d'Or award-winning director-writer Sean Baker in attendance. "I am a big fan of the late Lino Brocka," Baker revealed.

He added, "This is my first time seeing this Lino Brocka film, and I was blown away. I'm so happy that this is the way I'm first seeing it because this restoration is glowing. It's incredible. It's like one of those ideal situations in which I've been told that they thought that the negative might be lost, but no, the negative was safe and sound in Paris in a

lab. Obviously, it was placed there by Pierre Rissient, and thank God he did that because now we have this classic that has been preserved and the restoration has now made it something that people can enjoy for generations. And it's a powerful film. It's a very powerful film. The lead, Nora (Aunor), is incredible in it. So, I'm really happy that it'll be getting a new life and because it really deserves an audience."

The charming and boyish-looking Baker, who has seen such classic Brocka films like "Insiang," "Manila in the Claws of Light" and "Cain



Josh Yugen, Janet Susan R. Nepales, Michael Cinco, Miss Universe New Zealand Franki Russell, Aaron Pelegrino and Brian de Gracia in Cannes. Photo by Ruben V. Nepales.



The author with filmmaker Sean Baker of "Anora" and his wife/producer Samantha Quan. Baker won the Palme d'Or award at Cannes for his film. Photo by Ruben V. Nepales.



Some of the Filipino filmmakers who attended the 77th Cannes Film Festival. Photo by Janet Susan R. Nepales.



Sean Baker and the cast of "Anora" at the 77th Cannes Film Festival. Photo by Janet Susan R. Nepales.

at Abel," said of Brocka, "I've seen those because of the new restorations, but of course, I've always known about him being the most renowned Filipino director and the first to play Cannes in competition. So, I'm really glad that I'm gonna be able to continue to explore his work. I have 62 films to watch. (laughs) But why I'm drawn to him is because we both work in social realism and tackling the subject matter with this craft is right up my alley."

Baker won for his dark romantic comedy "Anora," which tells the story of Anora (ably portrayed by Mikey Madison), a sex worker from Brooklyn who meets and marries the son of an oligarch. Her Cinderella story, however, is threatened as the parents of her new Russian husband go to New York to get the marriage annulled.

Meryl Streep Receives the Palme d'Or Award

Multi-talented Meryl Streep became emotional as she received the honorary Palme d'Or award from actress Juliette Binoche, who turned teary-eyed. "You're an international treasure who has changed the way we look at women in the cinema world," Binoche said. "And also, you helped us look at ourselves differently."

Streep, 74, also got emotional and said, "Thirty-five years ago, when I was here for the first time, I was already a mother of three. I was about to turn 40, and I thought that my career was over. And that wasn't an unrealistic expectation for actresses at that time. But my mother, who was usually right about everything, said to me, 'Meryl, darling, you'll see it all goes so fast. So fast.' And it does. Except for my speech, which is too long."



Meryl Streep, recipient of an honorary Palme d'Or award at the 77th Cannes Film Festival. Photo by Earl Gibson III.

Big Film Premieres

Several big films premiered at the 77th Cannes Film Festival, including:

- Francis Ford Coppola's epic science fiction drama "Megalopolis," starring Adam Driver and Shia LaBeouf
- George Miller's post-apocalyptic action film "Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga," starring Anya Taylor-Joy and Chris Hemsworth
- Kevin Costner's Western epic film "Horizon: An American Saga," starring Costner himself and Sienna Miller
- Sean Baker's award-winning "Anora"
- Paul Schrader's drama "Oh, Canada," starring Richard Gere and Uma Thurman
- Yorgos Lanthimos' absurdist black comedy "Kinds of Kindness," starring Emma Stone, Jesse Plemons and Willem Dafoe
- "Rumours," a black comedy film starring Cate Blanchett and Alicia Vikander
- Jacques Audiard's Spanish

language musical drama "Emilia Pérez," starring Selena Gomez, Zoë Saldaña, Adriana Paz and Karla Sofía Gascón

- "The Substance," a horror film starring Demi Moore
- Lorcan Finnegan's "The Surfer" starring Nicolas Cage

Greta Gerwig Leads the Jury

Greta Gerwig, writer and director for "Barbie," was a welcome addition to the Cannes Film Festival jury.

In addition to being the first female American director to be named president of the jury, Gerwig, 40, is the youngest person to assume the role since Sofia Loren, at 31 years old, did so in 1966. After actress Olivia de Havilland became the first female jury president in 1965, Gerwig is the second American woman and the second female director to hold the position, following Jane Campion in 2014.

Lily Gladstone, 37, the first Native



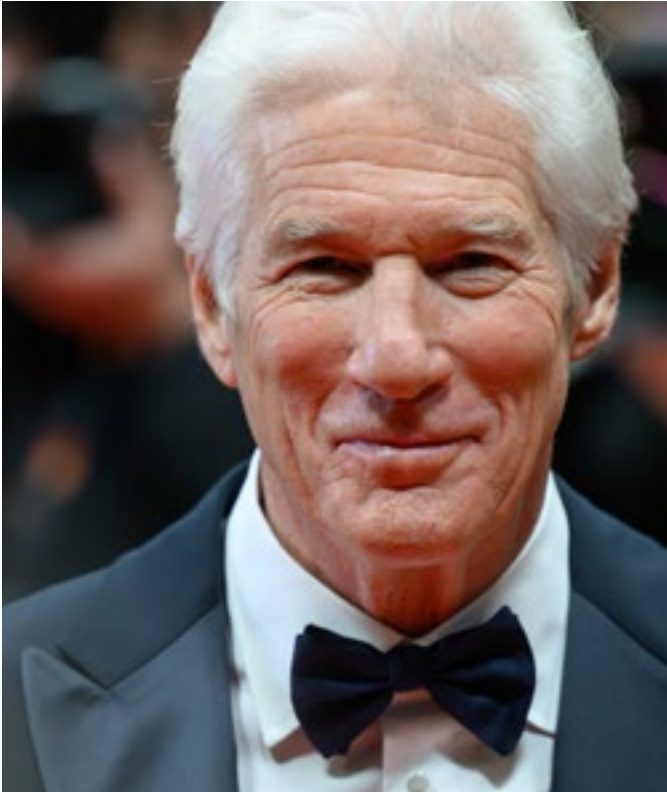
Legendary filmmaker Francis Ford Coppola with his "Megalopolis" actor Adam Driver at the 77th Cannes Film Festival. Photo by Earl Gibson III.



Chris Hemsworth, director George Miller and Anya Taylor-Joy in Cannes for "Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga." Photo by Earl Gibson III.



Kevin Costner of "Horizon: An American Saga" at the 77th Cannes Film Festival. Photo by Earl Gibson III.



Richard Gere of "Oh, Canada" at the 77th Cannes Film Festival. Photo by Earl Gibson III.



Demi Moore at the 77th Cannes Film Festival. Photo by Earl Gibson III.



Jane Fonda at the 77th Cannes Film Festival. Photo by Earl Gibson III.



Juror actress Eva Green at the 77th Cannes Film Festival. Photo by Earl Gibson III.



Kirsten Dunst and Jesse Plemons. Plemons won Best Actor award for his performance in "Kinds of Kindness" at the 77th Cannes Film Festival. Photo by Earl Gibson III.



Emma Stone at the 77th Cannes Film Festival. Photo by Earl Gibson III.



Michelle Yeoh at the 77th Cannes Film Festival. Photo by Earl Gibson III.



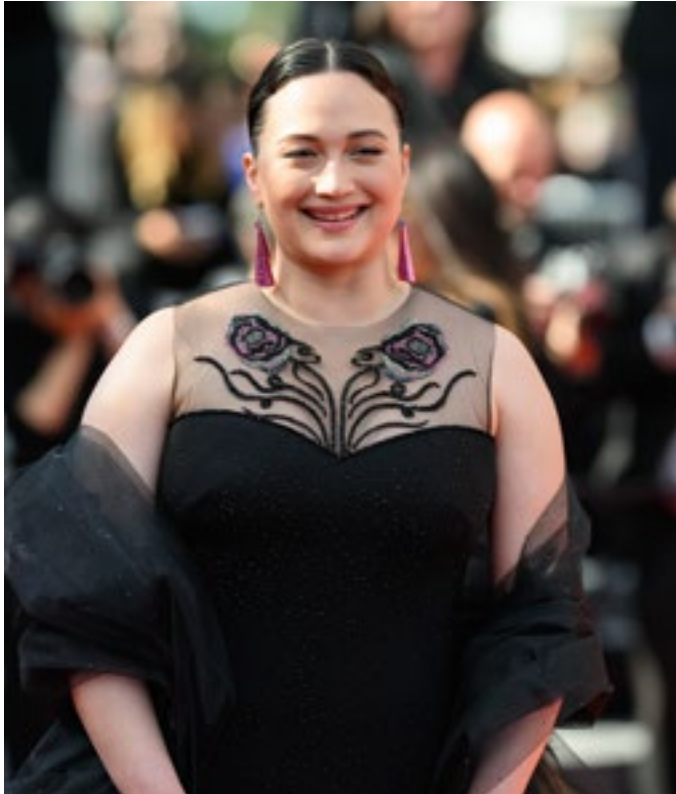
The cast of "Kinds of Kindness" at the 77th Cannes Film Festival. Photo by Earl Gibson III.



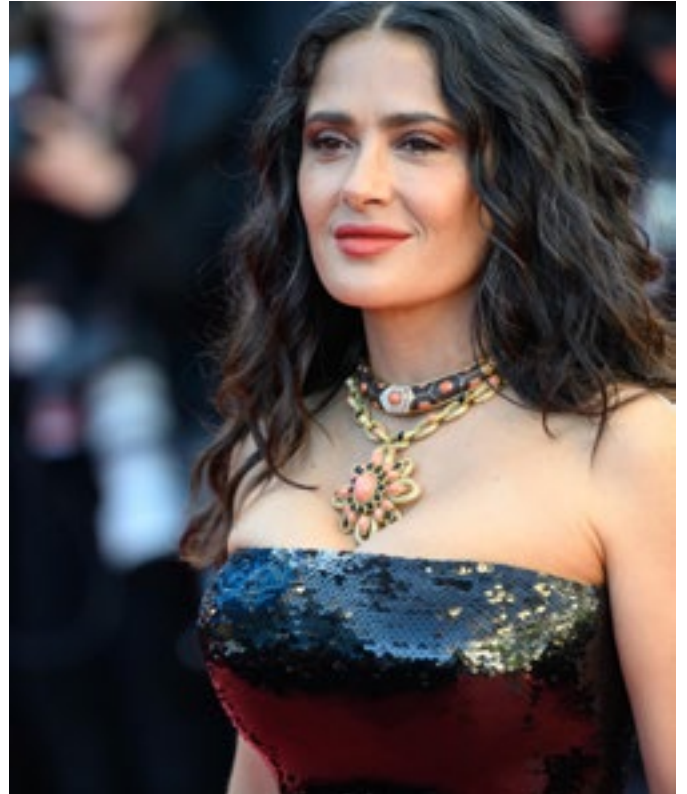
Selena Gomez at the 77th Cannes Film Festival. Photo by Earl Gibson III.



Catherine Deneuve at the 77th Cannes Film Festival. Photo by Earl Gibson III.



Juror actress Lily Gladstone at the 77th Cannes Film Festival. Photo by Earl Gibson III.



Salma Hayek at the 77th Cannes Film Festival. Photo by Earl Gibson III.



Greta Gerwig president of the jury at the 77th Cannes Film Festival. Photo by Earl Gibson III.

American to win the Golden Globe Award for Best Actress in a Motion Picture – Drama and nominated for the Academy Award for Best Actress for "Killers of the Flower Moon," was also a jury member.

On their choice of "Anora" as the best of the crop in a very competitive year, Gerwig said in an interview,

"We really led with our hearts for everything we watched. It was an embarrassment of riches this year in terms of cinema. We (the jury) could have been talking into next week. We chose "Anora" because there was something that reminded us of a classic. There were structures of Lubitsch and Howard Hawks. It did something truthful and unexpected.

Every single performance we loved. Their faces we felt. We were invited to be on a journey. It was heart-forward in terms of choosing."

The jury also awarded the Best Actress to the female ensemble of "Emilia Pérez." Gerwig explained their unique choice in an interview: "Women together – that's something we wanted to honor when we made this award. Each of them is a stand-out, but together transcendent."

Other members of the jury included French actress Eva Green, Lebanese director and screenwriter Nadine Labaki, Spanish director and screenwriter Juan Antonio Bayona, Turkish screenwriter and photographer Ebru Ceylan, Italian actor Pierfrancesco Favino, Japanese director Hirokazu Kore-eda and French actor and producer Omar Sy.

Other Highlights and Notable Attendees

Catherine Deneuve, last year's festival poster girl, attended the 77th Cannes Film Festival with her daughter Chiara Mastroianni and was seen at the premiere of Christophe Honoré's comedy "Marcello Mio."

Deneuve also attended Kering's Women in Motion Awards night, where NBCUniversal Studios Group chairperson and chief content officer Donna Langley, DBE, received the coveted award. Last year's recipient, Michelle Yeoh, also attended the event, which recognized women who made breakthroughs in film.

Held at Place de la Castre in Cannes, other past Women in Motion Award recipients are Jane Fonda, Isabelle Huppert, Patty Jenkins, Gong Li, Salma Hayek, Viola Davis, Geena Davis and Susan Sarandon.



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STEPPING UP AND STEPPING OUT AT THE NEVADA BALLET THEATRE

By Kendall Hardin

M meet Don Bellamy, the new man at Nevada Ballet Theatre (NBT).

Bellamy studied dance at Duke Ellington School of the Arts in his hometown of Washington, D.C. He began his career in 1988 as a corps dancer at Capital Ballet in the nation's capital under the direction of Doris Jones and Billy Wilson. Bellamy subsequently joined the renowned Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater under the direction of founder Alvin Ailey.

He has been a part of prestigious companies such as the Dance Theatre of Harlem, Complexions Contemporary Ballet, Lar Lubovitch Dance Company, Donald Byrd/The Group and Elisa Monte Dance, and was a part of a collaboration between the Dance Theatre of Harlem and New York City Ballet.

He has also enjoyed appearing in numerous Broadway productions, including *The Red Shoes*, *The Lion King*, *Porgy and Bess* and *The Phantom of the Opera*, both in Las Vegas and on the third U.S. national tour.

Bellamy has worked with many internationally renowned artists and



Photo of Don Bellamy by Virginia Trudeau



Photo of Don Bellamy with NBT II dancer courtesy of NBT

entertainers, including Michael Jackson, Aretha Franklin and Celine Dion. He previously served as the ballet master/coach for Contemporary West Dance Theatre and Studio 702 Dance. Today, he is the force behind NBT II and an important part of NBT's affiliated school.

Chic Compass: How are you building a new generation of dancers at Nevada Ballet Theatre?

Don Bellamy: NBT II is our "second company" that shapes young dancers for a future professional career. Artists receive an array of opportunities to train, rehearse and perform alongside the professional company of NBT while being exposed to some of the country's leading choreographers, guest artists and master teachers. We offer career coaching, a diverse curriculum of classical pointe and modern variations, and the ability to learn and perform exciting repertoire, including newly commissioned works. Our goal is to create today's well-rounded professional dancer.

The company's four-week Summer

Intensive has flourished in its third season, providing more than 35 dancers with world-class training and coaching, professional networking, performance opportunities and an introduction to NBT's state-of-the-art facilities and the rich cultural and natural environment of Las Vegas. Here, young dancers hone their technique, athleticism and expressive style in a demanding regime that is challenging and inspirational. This intensive "training bridge" successfully prepares and places many "next-gen" dancers with NBT and other national ballet companies.

Chic Compass: What special challenges and opportunities have you discovered?

Don Bellamy: Even though NBT II is enjoying major expansion this year, I want more people to know about this unique program. We just launched a new outreach program at the Summerlin Library, *The Evolution of Ballet*, which showcased our students in the Summer Intensive and NBT II. I want to increase access for the community, not only in the concert hall but throughout Las Vegas, in innovative venues and locales. I want to open doors to the future of dance in all its forms.

Chic Compass: What key experiences from your career do you share with young dancers?

Don Bellamy: I encourage our talented dancers to experience all kinds of creative productions from other national and international companies. Dancers need to be open and listen to feedback and criticism while putting themselves in the forefront. As a dancer, I worked hard and was always ready to step into roles whenever there was an opportunity. I try to share my infinite passion and love for the art form through my teaching and mentoring experiences. Dance is alive and dynamic, changing every moment in the studio and during rehearsals "until the dancer gives it away on stage." It's a beautiful experience for both the audience and the artist.

Chic Compass: To you, how is the future of dance evolving in Las Vegas?

Don Bellamy: Wherever it's going, I want to be there. I want to play a part in the evolution of dance, even as it changes. I came to Las Vegas in 2002 to work with Celine Dion. I've been fortunate to work with brilliant dance titans like Alvin Ailey while performing in numerous Broadway shows and productions with superstars like Michael Jackson and Aretha Franklin. I'm jazzed about the future of dance. Ballet is no longer an elite art form, especially with the diversity of today's choreographers, new technology and state-of-the-art stagecraft and production values. Outrageous creativity is calling. I'm ready to step up and step out whenever and whenever I hear the call!



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DISTILLED WITH DIGNITY

By Brian G. Thornton / Photography courtesy of Old Hillside Bourbon Company

As a beverage, bourbon takes me back to my childhood growing up on a college campus with my parents in the mid-1960s. The memories sprang from the thought-provoking get-togethers, the meticulous cleaning of the crystal highball glasses, the serving trays, and my father breaking open the freezer ice trays just before the doorbell rang. I saw hours of spirited conversation between professors and staff when guests arrived; this became a regular learning experience. The next day, while cleaning, I was assisting my mom in gathering party garbage and glasses that lingered with the melted ice and the distinct fragrance of bourbon. The impression was that bourbon was the house's favorite.

I was influenced by college as an adult, starting with what was reasonably priced and distinct from what my parents would purchase. Finding out that our home's top-shelf liquors were just slightly out of reach for me opened my eyes. Having taken note of responsible drinking practices, I'm always willing to learn anything new.



Above: The high-quality tier of the brand is expressed in the labels.

Now introduce yourself to Old Hillside Bourbon Company, a fine spirit created and crafted by four astute East Coast businessmen. I wanted to learn more when I got to know one of its creators, Courtney Tucker, through a friend. I was intrigued by the brand's history, so I got a bottle and had a bourbon tasting with

some friends. It tasted considerably better because of its limited availability. We were pleased with the taste and traditional branding. Here is a fascinating tale about the founders, their distinctive brand and how they created a bourbon bromance.

Origins and Inspiration

While Sparta, Kentucky, is the current home of the brand's distillery, Old Hillside Bourbon Company's origins were in Durham, North Carolina, where Tucker, Jesse Carpenter and Brian Burton met during high school. Carpenter and Burton were at Old Hillside, America's oldest historically Black high school. Tucker attended another school but occasionally met up with the other friends. Sometimes, the universe finds us in the right place at a unique moment. It may have been Carpenter's interest in a German brewery while in the Air Force and a later move back home to Lexington, Kentucky, around 2014. Around the same time, Burton's social media post attracted Carpenter's attention, leading to a mutual passion for distillery tours.

Among the many exciting aspects that make Lexington unique is its lengthy history of thoroughbred horse racing, best experienced at the Keeneland Racetrack. Combine that with the best distilleries and tours in the country, and you will see the confluence of friends and a fortuitous rekindling of friendship.

"Tucker posted his first bourbon picture on his Instagram talking about how much he loved it and cigars. Two days later, Brian and I started our company," Carpenter said. This reacquaintance began in 2019, just ahead of the pandemic. That led to a bright idea of interest in brewing bourbon. Carpenter had managerial skills and Burton had an extensive IT background, but they still needed something. Days later, that declaration of "I want to make bourbon" led Tucker to Los Angeles and to Emmanuel Waters, his cousin, who was the final piece with his expertise in scripting and negotiating contracts.



History Heritage Homage

Old Hillside Bourbon Company was formed and built on the tenets of history, heritage and homage. These elements drew from the history of the high school they met at, the heritage of Kentucky's not-so-well-known black jockeys and racehorse owners and the homage to the vast distillery roots.

When developing the product, the founders prioritized taste above all, believing that the quality of their bourbon should speak for itself. As Tucker put it, "Though we're black-owned, we want you to say, 'That's good bourbon,' and, by the way, they're black-owned." This commitment to quality led to a six-month development process, during which they meticulously crafted their logo and bottle design to tell their unique story.

The logo features a bourbon barrel, symbolizing Kentucky's deep bourbon heritage. A black Friesian

Old Hillside Bourbon Company founders Courtney Tucker, Brian Burton, Jesse Carpenter and Emmanuel Waters.

racehorse and jockey on the left pay homage to the black racehorse jockeys who were instrumental in making Kentucky famous. On the right, a bull represents Durham, acknowledging the founders' hometown and rich history, including Black Wall Street. The bottle shape was designed for easy recognition and optimal shelf placement. At the same time, the label incorporates ridges reminiscent of a Kentucky Derby ticket and copper foil lettering to catch the light. Every element of Old Hillside Bourbon Company's branding reflects its dedication to quality, heritage and unique storytelling, ensuring its product stands out in retail and hospitality settings.

The Brand, Bourbon and Gaming

Bourbon and horse racing is to Lexington, as gaming and

entertainment is to Las Vegas. Each state has its bespoke historical connection. Tucker responded when asked how Old Hillside Bourbon Company envisioned bridging this heritage with Nevada's rich gaming culture, particularly in Las Vegas, as the brand is already distributed in Kentucky, North Carolina, California and Hawaii.

"We believe that Nevada would be the next destination, and here are a few key reasons," he said. "Millions of tourists come to experience the vibrant nightlife. The state's entertainment sector includes casinos, hotels and nightclubs. The significant population growth increases the potential customer base for product sales. We could partner with casinos and horse racing tracks to feature our product and create themed cocktails, limited edition bottles and special labels, come up with exclusive deals and sponsorship opportunities to increase brand awareness and visibility, and invest in advertising with casinos to create branded banners, billboards and digital ads."

Targeting the Affluent Market

Las Vegas is known for its luxury and affluence. Old Hillside Bourbon Company caters to the sophisticated tastes of southern Nevada's high-end clientele. A related product by Old Hillside is bespoke cigars. Bourbon and spirit aficionados know that the brown liquids often pair with cigars. A brief website tour assures that the quality drink is associated with its branded Mazcodellos smokes. Many cigar fanatics seek and attend cigar herfs, a casual gathering of cigar enthusiasts to smoke, trade and socialize.

"We would host private invite-only events and tastings displaying our products," Tucker said. "Partnering



with exclusive hotels and clubs to create memorable experiences is a goal. We would offer personalized services, including custom-blended spirits created by expert mixologists, and collaborate with fashion, watches, and car co-branded events and promotions."

Challenges in Distribution

"Having done this a few times in recent years, the brand is aware of the challenges of distilling your product and expanding its distribution to states like Nevada," Tucker said. "Complex liquor laws and regulations can be challenging. Adhering to state-specific distribution laws, complying with different tax policies, etc. The spirit market is competitive. Coming in as a new brand would require strategic marketing, ensuring a steady supply of products to meet demand, especially during peak tourist season."

Luxury Branding and Marketing

Old Hillside Bourbon Company, entering a competitive market like Las Vegas requires extra care and strategic planning. Recent and upcoming sports expansions in Las Vegas, such as the Vegas Golden Knights, NFL



Top: The bottle shape was chosen for easy recognition on back bars. The carefully designed label has ridges on the top that resemble a Kentucky Derby ticket, while the paper texture mirrors the texture of money. The copper foil outlining the lettering was chosen to capture light.

Above: Oliver Lewis - born enslaved in 1856, Lewis won the inaugural Kentucky Derby in 1875, and placed in the top two in eight of his nine starts riding four Thoroughbreds from McGrathiana Stable. He set the record for the 1.5-mile race in 2 minutes and 37.75 seconds. Photo courtesy of Historical photography provided by the Keeneland Library Collection and Keeneland Library Hemment Collection



Left: The Last Rye'd, a cleverly named spirit that pays homage to the black riders, has flavors of caramel, vanilla, mint and florals. It honors historic black jockeys Isaac Murphy, Alonzo Clayton, Oliver Lewis and James "Soup" Perkins. Black jockeys once dominated the sport of horse racing from the first Kentucky Derby in 1875 through 1903 winning 15 of the first 28 Derby races.

Las Vegas Raiders, and the 2024 Formula One Races, Old Hillside Bourbon Company, will align with these events.

"We would seek sponsorship agreements with teams and events, create exclusive partnerships to become the official spirits provider, host fan engagement events, plan parties, including pre-and post-game celebrations, offer tastings including promo and giveaways and develop co-branded merchandise and bottle packing," Tucker said.

He also mentioned targeting luxury hotels, clubs and venues and collaborating on exclusive events.

"Engaging with celebrities and influencers who resonate with our target audience is also key to telling our brand's story," he added.

Vision for the Southwest Market

When asked about the long-term vision for Old Hillside Bourbon Company in the Southwest market, Tucker had this to say: "[We] would establish our brand as a top-tier quality spirit company to ensure widespread availability in the market, target high-end retail outlets, create and enhance loyalty programs that identify and reward repeat customers and build a sense of community

using the three-tier system of digital and print marketing, social media and events."

The story of Old Hillside Bourbon Company emerges as a testament to resilience, creativity and a deep-rooted passion for craft. Their journey has been nothing short of remarkable. Old Hillside Bourbon Company captures the essence of tradition and embraces the spirit of innovation. Now poised to enter the vibrant Nevada market, the founders weave a narrative that resonates with the state's history of gaming, entertainment and fine spirits.

What began as a bourbon bro-mance among high school friends has blossomed into a thriving enterprise, where each bottle embodies a blend of history, heritage and the pursuit of excellence. As they embark on this new chapter, their success story inspires entrepreneurs everywhere, proving that any challenge can be overcome with determination and a bold vision.

In raising a glass to Old Hillside Bourbon Company, we celebrate their achievements and the enduring spirit driving their journey forward. Here's to new beginnings in the Silver State and the promise of many more chapters yet to be written. Cheers to the taste of history, crafted anew!

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ICONICA RECORDING STUDIO

ELEVATING MUSIC PRODUCTION IN LAS VEGAS

By Joseph Amato

Nestled in the heart of Las Vegas, where entertainment meets innovation, a new business enterprise exists that will truly resonate with musicians and artists alike. Iconica Vegas, a state-of-the-art facility, has become a beacon of creativity and excellence in the bustling city known for its vibrant nightlife and world-class entertainment.

Iconica offers a sanctuary where artists and groups can bring their musical vision to life. The studio features cutting-edge technology in an acoustically perfected room designed to capture every nuance of sound with pristine clarity. Whether it's a group recording, solo vocal tracking, or mixing and mastering, Iconica provides the tools and expertise to ensure the highest-quality production.

The studio boasts a meticulously crafted environment that caters to the needs of seasoned professionals and emerging talents. From the moment artists step into this musical nirvana, they're greeted by experienced sound engineers and producers dedicated to realizing their artistic aspirations. The control room features top-tier equipment from industry-leading brands, allowing for precise audio monitoring and production.

What sets this business apart is its commitment to fostering a collaborative atmosphere. Beyond its technical prowess, the studio prides itself on creating a supportive environment where creativity can flourish. Artists have the opportunity to work closely with skilled producers who understand the nuances of different musical genres and styles, helping

to shape and refine their musical projects.

Founded by Tyler Humphrey, a music enthusiast passionate about perfection, Iconica seeks to earn a reputation for excellence within the Las Vegas music scene—something he has already accomplished in the Los Angeles music recording scene. Its Las Vegas target clientele will include diverse artists spanning genres, such as rock, pop, hip-hop, electronic, country and beyond. The studio's dedication to quality and attention to detail have made it a preferred choice for both local talents and international acts looking to record in Las Vegas.

Humphrey has been in the music recording industry for more than 10 years. As an accomplished musician since high school, Humphrey's



a highly skilled drummer, touring for many years supporting various solo acts. He also had significant success as an established YouTuber, playing drum covers of different mainstream songs and garnering hundreds of thousands of followers while living in New Castle, Indiana. When he realized that the studio opportunities were very limited in Indiana, he planned a strategic move to Los Angeles in 2013. Humphrey interned at several existing recording studios and took advantage of free studio time while learning and growing within the Los Angeles studio recording industry.

In 2014, he assembled a group of individuals he found on Craigslist and started a small recording studio in Hollywood. For the next three years, the group learned, expanded and grew the small studio into a second location on Seward Street in

Los Angeles as recording time and availability became extremely limited with nonstop recording sessions at the first location.

He also got more involved in studio design and developing innovative material choices to create a more distinct studio environment. Frank Lloyd Wright and Frank Gehry inspired him in his design ideas and techniques. Within a year, the second location was also wholly booked, and a third location was opened on Western Avenue in Los Angeles. The third location's sound, acoustic quality and design choices set a new standard for recording studios throughout the Los Angeles marketplace. A fourth location on Westwood Avenue followed soon after that.

Iconica Studios became a trendsetter in the recording studio industry

in many ways. The sound quality, acoustics and design elements were now considered second to none in the Los Angeles recording industry. To garner a more significant foothold in the Los Angeles music scene, the company decided to help everyone, from struggling artists to established musical groups, with the ability to gain access to their facilities in an exceptional way. Consequently, the company launched a membership program for musical artists, producers and agents, allowing everyone to manage their time in the studio better and more efficiently. It also helped to control the cost for everyone utilizing their different studio locations.

After experiencing much success in meeting the recording studio needs of the Los Angeles marketplace, Humphrey searched for a location outside of California. The high

occupancy costs in Los Angeles, traffic and ever-expanding taxes greatly influenced a potential move. After a year-long search, he settled on Las Vegas as a target location. The fact that some major motion picture and television studios were also looking at Las Vegas was a huge incentive. He began designing a marquee location once they found one that met all their future studio needs.

Humphrey stated, "We wanted to create a recording studio with the look and feel of Las Vegas. The beautiful tile floors, the intricate woodwork, customized furniture, and state-of-the-art studio equipment." He also shared, "Iconica Las Vegas was designed and built to reflect all of the glamour of Las Vegas." Anyone who visits the newest studio location will experience the aspirations and intent of its founder.

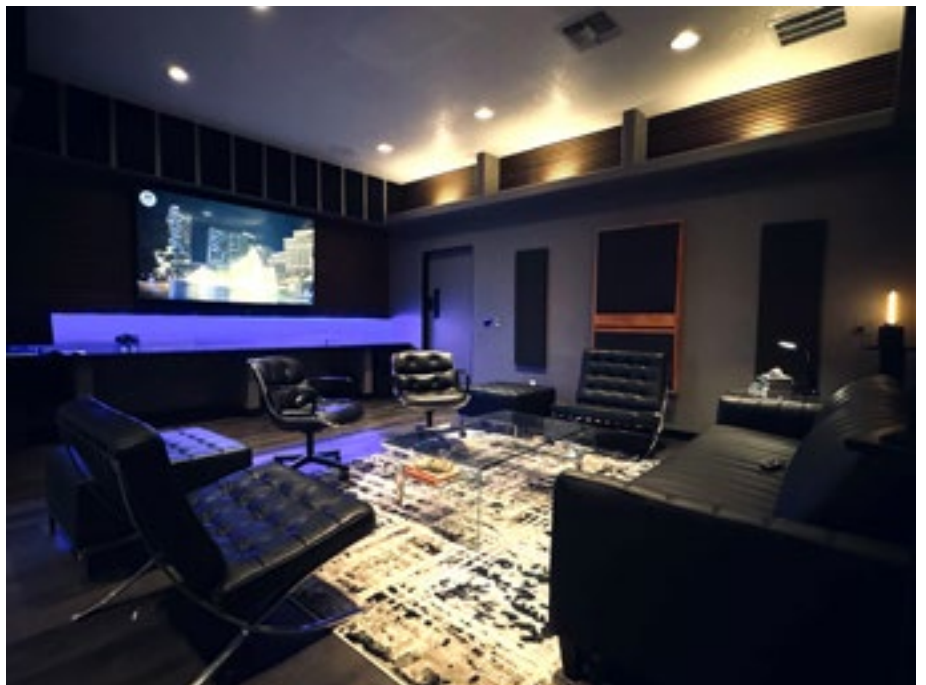
Iconica enters the Las Vegas marketplace, offering more than just recording services. It's a creative hub where artists can explore new sonic landscapes and experiment with different musical techniques. The studio plans to host workshops, networking events and showcases that foster community engagement and collaboration among musical agents, artists, producers and industry professionals.

In an industry that constantly evolves, Iconica plans to stay ahead by embracing the latest advancements in audio technology and production techniques. The studio continually invests in upgrading its equipment and facilities to ensure that artists have access to the best tools available for their creative endeavors.

Iconica represents the epitome of musical craftsmanship and innovation in Las Vegas. It's a testament to the city's vibrant musical tapestry, offering a haven where

musical dreams transform into reality. Whether you're a local artist looking to make your mark or a touring band seeking a world-class recording experience, Iconica is poised to

deliver unparalleled service and exceptional results. Discover the magic of Iconica, where every note counts, and every sound resonates with passion and precision.



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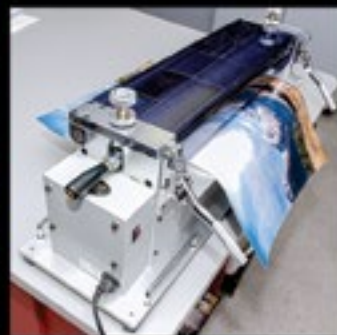
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ART OF THE MEAL

RESTAURANT ROUNDUP OF PALATE, AQUA SEAFOOD & CAVIAR RESTAURANT AND SOCIAL STATION

By Stacey Gualandi

From Painting to Plating, Palate is a Masterpiece

How many of you remember being told as a kid, "Don't play with your food?" Sterling Buckley, executive chef for Palate Las Vegas, is lucky. He never got that message.

"The plate is your canvas, so I like to have a little fun with it," Chef Buckley says. "I always say my food is playful, like my kids, and sexy, like my wife."

After a decade in Las Vegas, mastering the art of the meal under many of the culinary world's most famous chefs—including Kim Canteenwalla (Honey Salt), Gordon Ramsay (Gordon Ramsay Steak) and David Chang (Momofuku)—Buckley is now at the helm of the kitchen inside Palate.

"I've worked for all these celebrity chefs, but this is the first project where it's all me," Buckley says. "I think the whole off-Strip scene from Chefs Roy Ellamar and Jennifer Murphy to Brian Howard and James

Trees, we're all trying to show that, 'Hey, we've all worked for the big guys, but we're somebody special.'"

Bar-Kada Hospitality owners (and good friends) Marisa Martino and Rudy Aguas say their concept for Palate was to seamlessly combine art and food in the heart of the downtown Las Vegas Arts District. Martino lives by the philosophy, "Food is art." "When Marisa said that, I was hooked," Buckley says.

Above: Palate interior. Photo courtesy of Palate



Above: Palate interior. Photo courtesy of Palate

After an unpreventable pandemic pause in 2022, Bar-Kada finally unveiled its minority, woman and locally owned masterpiece this June with a huge grand opening party that celebrated the artist in all of us.

Palate is part exhibit and eatery. The walls surrounding the studio-like space—filled with royal red and purple velvet-colored furniture, a

massive chandelier and floor-to-ceiling trees—are covered with works on display by local artists (including Martino's mom).

"Our staff bought into what we're doing here, and we're doing something very unique," Buckley boasts. "I don't know any restaurants doing what we do right now, especially here in Las Vegas."

The menu is modern Southern cuisine mixed with multicultural influences. It

reflects Buckley's own abstract and romantic style and, with one swift brush stroke, he has already made a lasting impression.

I recommend you clean your palate first with The Rose signature craft cocktail. For me, the tiger-style scallops and shrimp gnocchi were the perfect prelude to dishes like the soy-charred short ribs. His signature banana bread-filled dessert is also a true work of art.

"I've already thought about doing some new creative things, like putting octopus on the menu, cooking it in squid ink so it's like jet black and calling it the Kraken," Buckley says. "I think of crazy stuff like that, and Palate has given me the ability to do that."

The Los Angeles transplant and Le Cordon Bleu Las Vegas alum first had dreams of being a performer and songwriter. "I was signed, sealed, delivered and headed for a music career and you couldn't tell me anything else," Buckley admits. He came by performing naturally—his mom Hazel Payne gave us "Boogie Oogie Oogie" as a founding member of the musical group A Taste of Honey—but ultimately, at 18, he went from writing music to writing menus.

"Martin Heierling [at Silk Road] was the first chef to teach me about creative cuisine and multiple cultures," Buckley says. "I loved him. He is such a great chef. Big energy. Great dude. I still hear his voice in the back of my head. I would love to see Martin again. I'd love to thank him."

After appearing on TV shows like "Chopped" and "Beating Bobby Flay" and working his way up to his first executive chef job at 27, Buckley only recently learned just



how deeply food runs in his family. "My grandfather was high up at a bank in Little Rock and would entertain all their major accounts at his house by making this beef tenderloin dish," Buckley explains. "My aunt was also a popular pastry chef in Little Rock known for her apple pie... My [landscaper] grandfather on my mom's side owned a quick service restaurant in Compton and decorated cakes on the side."

Buckley, whose brother is also a local Wolfgang Puck sous chef, credits his ascension to his inspirational idols, Kobe Bryant, Chef Michael Mina and Chef Marcus Samuelsson.

"Marcus Samuelsson, of course, because I'm African American. There's not a lot of African American celebrity chefs out there," Buckley says. "Marcus Samuelsson was the first one from whom I wanted to learn more."

But the best advice he says he ever got came from his father. "It's something that I remember all the time. He said, 'Aim for the stars. You might just hit the roof.'"



(Well, his biscuits are certainly selling through the roof!)

It's advice well-taken, and Buckley says he'll continue to follow his God-given talent wherever it takes him. After all, as American artist John McNeill Whistler once said, "An artist is not paid for his labor but for his vision."

"This is thoughtful cooking," Buckley emphasizes. "I don't just put things on a plate just to put things on a

Above Left: Palate Chef Sterling Buckley. Above Right: Palate's Southern Hospitality.

Bottom Right: Palate's classic cocktails. All photos courtesy of Palate.

plate. I think about it...and at the end of the day, I think my vision as a chef is to make great food that's always very well balanced."

To learn more, visit www.palately.com.



Aqua Seafood & Caviar Restaurant Offers World Class Delights at Resorts World Las Vegas

When Shaun Hergatt, executive chef for Aqua Seafood & Caviar at Resorts World Las Vegas, is not collecting Michelin stars, "Best Of" honors and almost perfect Zagat reviews, the one-time rugby player collects belts in jiu jitsu. Blue, to be exact.

"I avidly work out," Hergatt says. "It's about mental health, and especially for me, the reason why I continue to do it is not necessarily just for aesthetics... It's about maintaining a very sound mind."

"Sound mind, sound body" is the belief that people are happier when they push themselves, and no one exemplifies that better than this world-renowned chef. With a well-earned reputation for "technically precise cooking" and seasonally driven premier dining destinations, Hergatt continues reinventing.

"I don't replicate; that's not what I do. I look at [my restaurants] as my children," Hergatt says. "I try to come up with concepts that the market needs, that I'm going to have some fun with, and that people will enjoy. It's all creative, and I think that's the part I love the most."

Hergatt learned classical French culinary skills as a teen in Queensland, Australia. He perfected them in New York (SHO, Juni, and now Vestry and REN) and then transported them to Las Vegas, his first West Coast location.

"[That] taught me how not to remotely run a business, but how to set up a new market, a new hotel, all that sort of good stuff," Hergatt says. "It was quite rewarding."



Top: Make every day a celebration with world-class delicacies at the Aqua Seafood & Caviar Restaurant. Photo by Mike Perez.
Above: Photo of Chef Shaun Hergatt by Mike Perez.

In fact, Aqua (and Hergatt's Caspy Caviar) is celebrating its third anniversary at Resorts World Las Vegas by introducing a new "Evening Kickoff" menu exclusively for hotel guests and a twist on new dinner selections including shellfish, seafood and steak!

"This started as a caviar restaurant, and then I opened it up a bit more with a new brand because Aqua is a seafood restaurant," Hergatt says. "I was serving a lot more than just champagne and caviar." I'm sure it has been said, but my champagne wishes, and caviar dreams came true on my first visit.

It began with a smoking display of Kaluga, followed by bluefin toro and salmon tartare, continued with Alaskan black cod and Kataifi scallops, and ended with a Basque cheesecake soufflé. This pescatarian was in seafood heaven inside the boutique-sized space, and I quickly learned how to appreciate (not avoid) caviar from the chef himself.

"I think many people think it's very expensive and very affluent, but it's not. It's something you can have regularly," Hergatt emphasizes. "I've been passionate about caviar for the last 25 years. It's a unique, specific thing, and eating it is just one of life's great pleasures."

Hergatt loves expanding as much as he loves caviar. He has new concepts in the works in Atlanta and Miami and teases "a lot of stuff happening for Aqua" by the end of the year. (Sorry folks, that's all he'd say!)

"I'm in this business for the people," Hergatt says. "From my perspective, I owe a lot to my partners, staff, clients and the people in my life. You have to work every day to maintain some sort of integrity."

But if the restaurant world gave out belts for success, Hergatt would be a black belt. "When I'm successful, I'll let you know."

To learn more, visit www.aqualv.com.

Buy Local: Social Station is a Hit in Henderson

Social Station in Henderson, Nevada, is a restaurant locals didn't know they needed. It offers an intimate space, elevated comfort food

and al fresco dining in a convenient location. As an added twist, the menu features specialty craft cocktails named after nearby communities like Inspirada and Seven Hills.

For owner Kelley Jones, his concept was simple. "We want to make it for those hundreds of thousands of people who live within a two-mile radius," Jones says. We want it to be a place—hence the name Social Station—where people could come over and over again. It's the modern-day "Cheers," if you will, where



Above: Photos from Social Station courtesy of Social Station.

everybody knows your name."

With a rich background as a former chef, restaurateur and consultant, Jones has significantly impacted the hospitality industry. He's also the founding partner of Leverage Hospitality Group, which opened Emmitt's Vegas on the Las Vegas Strip earlier this year with Hall of Fame running back Emmitt Smith.

Social Station is his 109th restaurant opening. "Our unofficial tagline is 'For Locals by Locals' because we wanted to create a space that we wanted to go to," he says. "We" refers to Jones and his Leverage Hospitality Group friends and partners, Steve Mannino and Todd Parmelee, who live nearby. Like a good neighbor, Jones made his latest venue accessible, affordable and approachable.

Jones is very conscious of the price point. He wanted a Strip-level menu without the Strip-level prices. "We talk about the Strip all the time, where you go out to eat and have a great experience, and you're like, 'That was really good.' Then you get the check, and you're like, 'Ah, that was not that good,' Jones says. "We want to make sure that whether you walk out of Social Station or out of Emmitt's Vegas, you feel good about spending money with us."

So, with 109 restaurant openings under his belt, is Jones ready to relax and dine locally? He says no; retirement isn't on the menu. "I hope at the end of our careers we can be known for a quality product and making people feel good," Jones says. "That's what we do. We sell an experience."

To learn more, visit www.socialstationlv.com.



Above: Photos from Social Station courtesy of Social Station.

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CLIFF SEGERBLOM

THE ARTISTIC CHRONICLER OF A DISAPPEARING NEVADA

By Laura Henkel

Imagine standing on the edge of the Nevada desert, the sun setting in a blaze of colors and seeing the landscape through the eyes of Cliff Segerblom. As one of Nevada's most prolific and versatile artists, Segerblom's boundless love for the state propelled its breathtaking landscapes and rich history onto the national and international stage. His stunning photography and vivid paintings captured the essence of the Silver State and elevated it to a place of prominence in the art world. Through his multifaceted career, he brilliantly combined artistry with historical documentation, creating a legacy that inspires and educates future generations. His work is a testament to the power of art in preserving the natural beauty and cultural heritage of Nevada while showcasing it to the world.

The Photography of Cliff Segerblom: A Visual Chronicle

Upon his graduation in 1938, Segerblom relocated to Boulder City. He was offered a job as a photographer with the Bureau of Reclamation to document the construction of the Hoover Dam. Despite having yet to take a picture, Segerblom quickly proved his talent. He was given an 8x10 view camera, which he recalled "must have weighed 50 pounds and the tripod at least 100 more." This cumbersome



equipment required great physical effort and precision, especially in the challenging terrain and harsh conditions surrounding the construction site. With these tools, he captured timeless moments that solidified him as a distinguished photographer in American culture.

While photographing the Hoover Dam, he worked alongside and observed legendary photographers such as Margaret Bourke-White, Ansel Adams, George Strock, Edward Weston, Bill Belknap and

*Above: Fremont Street, Las Vegas, NV
[Sept 1957] Cliff Segerblom*

Alfred Eisenstaedt. The most valuable mentorship during this time came from Charles Sheeler, who did a series of covers for Fortune Magazine. Sheeler taught Segerblom how to use the camera for painting, emphasizing techniques to shoot without distortion and capture subjects with a truer perspective, mirroring how a person sees rather than how the camera sees.



*Left: Hoover Dam Needle Test c1940s
Cliff Segerblom*



*Bottom Left: Hoover Dam Workers
c1940s Cliff Segerblom*

At the time, Nevada's population was only 90,000, and in the pre-internet era, magazines were the primary source of information for people near and far. His photos, which spoke volumes, have appeared in prestigious national and regional magazines such as *Life*, *Time*, *National Geographic* and *Sports Illustrated*. His iconic photo depicting the needle test, with valves spouting water

into the Black Canyon, was even exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Segerblom's photographic dexterity catapulted him into the international spotlight, showcasing his extraordinary insight. Yet he remained humble, devoid of celebrity flair, just a man of pure heart.

In 1941, Segerblom married Genevieve "Gene" Wines, a

fourth-generation Nevadan from Ruby Valley, who also became renowned for her contributions to the arts, politics and advocacy for social causes. Together, they moved to Panama, where Segerblom was assigned to photograph the Third Locks Project on the Panama Canal. However, Pearl Harbor occurred shortly after arriving in Panama, which canceled the project. Instead, Segerblom ran the photography lab at the army base in the canal zone. During World War II, Segerblom was a civilian employee for the Sixth Air Force, teaching soldiers film techniques for reconnaissance work. After the war, Segerblom returned to Boulder City, where he first formed a photography company and then went on to do freelance work independently. In a 2010 *Las Vegas Review-Journal* article, Gene reminisced, "We toured every inch of the state. These little villages were wonderful and such fun. Some had nowhere to stay, so we'd sleep in our car." As an accomplished writer, she provided over 200 stories accompanying his evocative depictions for *Nevada Magazine*, *Nevada Highways and Parks*, *Arizona Highway* and numerous regional publications.

Segerblom's photographic legacy is largely preserved at the Las Vegas News Bureau and the Nevada State Museum. His photographic portfolio includes:

- **Construction of Hoover Dam:** As previously mentioned, his black-and-white photographs of the Hoover Dam project are iconic. They capture the technical prowess and sheer scale

of the construction, highlighting the human element involved. Images like the "Workers at the Dam" series reveal the grit and determination of the laborers, offering a powerful narrative of human endeavor and engineering triumph.

- **Las Vegas Glitz, Glamour and Everyday Life:** From the 1950s to the 1980s, he chronicled the glitz, glamour and local culture as a freelancer for the Las Vegas News Bureau. His photographs from this period capture the vibrant nightlife, iconic entertainers and the city's dynamic growth, providing a vivid record of an era that shaped Las Vegas into the entertainment capital it is today.
- **Colorado River:** Over his lifetime, Segerblom photographed the Colorado River from the Supai Indian Reservation in

the Grand Canyon all the way to the Gulf of Mexico -- some 1500 miles.

- **Rural Nevada:** Segerblom focused on the quieter, more personal aspects of Nevada life. His series on rural homesteads and small-town life captures the simplicity and resilience of rural communities, providing a poignant commentary on the effects of urbanization and modernization. Many of these photographs inspired future paintings.

A Master of Mediums: Paintings of the American West

Segerblom's paintings vividly reflect his deep appreciation for the natural beauty of the American West. His studies with prominent Nevada artists Robert Caples and Hans Meyer-Kassel profoundly influenced

his work. Their mentorship helped shape his unique artistic vision and approach to capturing the landscapes and culture of Nevada. Working in watercolor, block printing, sketching, oils and acrylics, he explored different aspects of his subjects, bringing out unique textures, colors and emotions. In 1969, the Navy commissioned Segerblom to record the Apollo 12 splashdown in the South Pacific. The National Aeronautics and Space Museum currently displays six watercolors from this project.

Segerblom's watercolor paintings, celebrated for their delicate yet expressive quality, capture the essence of Nevada's towns and landscapes. An excellent example is his depiction of the Gem Theater in Pioche,

*Below: Vegas Valley 1986 Acrylic Cliff
Segerblom*





Nevada. This 1985 painting portrays the historic theater against rugged hills and a small town's architecture. The muted tones and careful brushwork bring out the scene's nostalgic charm, reflecting the location's cultural and historical significance. The Gem Theater, with its distinct signage and surrounding buildings, offers a glimpse into the everyday life and evolving history of small-town Nevada. Efforts by local advocate Melissa Clary to revitalize the Gem Theater highlight its importance to the community, ensuring that this cultural landmark continues to be a focal point for residents and visitors alike. A short film featuring his watercolors by Mercedes Maharis can be enjoyed on the Cliff Segerblom Art website, offering a dynamic visual journey through his impressive body of work.

His use of acrylics to create richer textures and deeper intensity is incredibly inviting. "Political Circus" (1986) stands out for its portrayal of a deserted station on the old Las Vegas - Salt Lake Highway. The juxtaposition of political signage and commercial advertisements like Coca-Cola against a desolate backdrop offers a poignant commentary on the transient nature of political campaigns and the passage of time. In contrast, "Vegas Valley" (1986) presents Sunrise Mountain in the early light with a more abstract, modern approach. The bold colors and simplified forms in this painting highlight the serene beauty of the Nevada desert at dawn. The contrast between these works underscores his versatility.

*Above: Gem Theater 1985 Watercolor
Cliff Segerblom*

Comparisons to Contemporary Artists

Segerblom's work stands out when compared to his contemporaries. While many artists of his time focused solely on either painting or photography, Segerblom masterfully navigated both mediums. This unique ability places him in the company of internationally renowned artists like Ansel Adams, known for his black-and-white landscape photographs of the American West, who share Segerblom's dedication to capturing the beauty of natural environments. Adams' meticulous attention to detail and his ability to evoke emotional responses through his images resonate with Segerblom's work. Similarly,

David Hockney's vibrant multi-medium explorations of his surroundings echo Segerblom's versatility and impact. With his use of painting, photography and digital art, Hockney demonstrates a kindred spirit in Segerblom's multifaceted approach and his passion for depicting the world around him.

Like Georgia O'Keeffe, whose works are known for her paintings of the American Southwest, capturing the essence of its vast landscapes, distinctive architecture and unique flora, Segerblom's work immortalizes a region and its changing environment. His contemporary and colleague at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) College of Fine Arts, Rita Deanin Abbey, was also a prolific multidisciplinary artist who shared this passion. Abbey's work in various mediums and her ability to interpret the Southwestern landscape through art further enriched the cultural tapestry of Nevada, fostering a deep respect for the state's exquisite natural beauty amidst its urbanization.

Educational Impact and Continued Relevance

Segerblom's legacy extends into education. He founded the UNLV Photography Department, where he taught part-time for 20 years, setting up the first darkroom. His work is used in academic settings to teach students about Nevada's history and the importance of documenting cultural and environmental changes. His contributions are a cornerstone in the curriculum of art and history departments, providing a rich resource for research and learning. Segerblom's words encapsulate his philosophy and approach to painting and photography. In the 1985 issue of Nevada Magazine, he remarked, "When I teach photography, I encourage students to take art classes even if they feel they don't have any

talent because there is so much they can get from it. Anyone can learn to take pictures, but you should go beyond that. People assume that everything they point their camera at will be a great picture, but there's much more in a picture than what they thought they were getting. Artists are more selective. They pick what goes in and put the other stuff out of focus."

The Legacy of Cliff Segerblom

Segerblom's work has been widely recognized and celebrated. He received numerous accolades throughout his career, notably the Nevada Governor's Art Award in 1984 for his masterfully executed photographs and paintings. In 2010, the Nevada State Museum showcased "The Modern Desert: Photographs by Cliff Segerblom," featuring almost four decades of his work, underscoring his enduring impact on documenting Nevada's evolving landscape. Aaron Mayes, curator for visual materials at UNLV Libraries, aptly summarizes Segerblom's contributions: "Through the decades, Cliff carved a remarkable path, leaving photographs and paintings in his wake while capturing a disappearing Nevada. Not many can navigate through a career in public relations work and still land solid artistic relevance. Doing so in genres of photography and painting is almost unheard of."

The Cliff Segerblom Legacy Project encourages collectors to share his art, magazines and other ephemera to establish a comprehensive portfolio of his work for future generations. Significant collections of Segerblom's art and ephemera are available at the Las Vegas News Bureau, Nevada State Museum and UNLV Special Collections, serving academic, licensing and research purposes. Tick Segerblom states,

"The legacy project is dedicated to preserving and sharing the remarkable body of work my father created. Through his photographs and paintings, he captured the spirit and transformation of Nevada in a way that continues to inspire and educate. This project ensures that future generations can appreciate and learn from his unique perspective on our state's rich history and natural beauty."

The Enduring Influence of Cliff Segerblom

Reflecting on Segerblom's career, one cannot help but admire his dedication to documenting a rapidly changing world. His photographs and paintings offer a vivid window into Nevada's past, providing invaluable insights into the state's history and development. Exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum and numerous galleries throughout the Southwest, his pieces are increasingly sought after for their artistic value and historical significance. Collecting Segerblom's art means joining a community of discerning collectors and historians who recognize the profound impact of his legacy. His work underscores the importance of preserving our cultural and natural heritage and will inspire future artists and historians to continue this vital work.

At the time of his death on Sept. 8, 1990, Nevada's population had surged to over 1.2 million. Today, with the population exceeding 3.2 million, this growth has significantly changed the cities and landscapes of the state he cherished. As urbanization expands into our precious high desert, owning a work by Segerblom honors Nevada's history and highlights the need to appreciate and preserve our lands. His influence endures, leaving an indelible mark on the art and history of Nevada.



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BOCUSE D'OR - THE OLYMPICS OF GASTRONOMY

By Elaine & Scott Harris

The prestigious Bocuse d'Or chose the United States to host Americas selection in New Orleans in June. Then, in January 2025, it is off to Lyon, France.

The exceptional Bocuse d'Or is known as the Olympics of cuisine and the World Cup for chefs. "It is one of the most prestigious culinary competitions touring the world," said Florent Suplisson, director of GL Exhibitions and Gastronomic Events and Bocuse d'Or. The idea is that gastronomy is about diversity. There are as many ways of cooking as there are cultures, so touring around highlights different gastronomies, cultures, terroirs, products and different eco-systems of chefs."

This highly esteemed international culinary competition pays tribute to the legendary French chef Paul Bocuse, one of the most influential figures in the history of French gastronomy. Founded in 1987 by Bocuse and Albert Romain, the competition has since become a celebrated event in the culinary world, attracting top chefs from around the globe to showcase their skills, creativity and culinary artistry.



It all culminates in two years in Lyon, France, the home of Bocuse. The best chefs compete against each other to create intricate dishes under strict time constraints. The competition strongly emphasizes craftsmanship, innovation and precision in culinary techniques and presentation. The competing chefs must work with specific ingredients that reflect their particular region. Expert judges will rate the dishes on various criteria such as taste, presentation, creativity, technical skill and cleanliness.

(L-R) Team USA Commis Bradley Waddle, Head Chef Stefani De Palma, Head Coach Sebastian Gibrand and President Chef Devin Knell hold an All-Clad pan. Photo by The French Studio

For chefs, participating is a life-changing opportunity to demonstrate their talent globally. Winning the Bocuse d'Or is a career-defining achievement that elevates their reputation and testament to their dedication and mastery of the culinary arts. It is the Olympics of the gastronomy world. The selection process begins



Team USA group. Photo by Ken Goodman

with teams competing before making it to the prestigious final competition in Lyon. This year, the team selections are in Europe, the Americas, Africa and Asia.

The Bocuse d'Or organization chose the United States to host the event for the first time. Teams from Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Mexico, Columbia, Canada and Team USA converged on the iconic culinary city of New Orleans for this prestigious global culinary event. New Orleans was the perfect city to hold Bocuse d'Or Americas, as it has been recognized globally for its unique blend of flavors and techniques for hundreds of years. "Being in New Orleans meant being in a world-class destination with a rich gastronomic culture and many cultural influences," Suplisson said.

We were familiar with the process after attending the Team USA selection in 2017, headed by legendary Chef Thomas Keller. Walking into the enormous Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, we knew this was a massive undertaking with

global culinary implications. In the corner of the auditorium were numerous monitors featuring every morning show in the country talking about Bocuse d'Or, covering all time zones from New York to Los Angeles. We also saw a massive studio kitchen, the main attraction, with brightly lit stations for every participating country. The excited audience dressed in their country's colors and flags, waving, clanging cowbells and shouting enthusiastic support to their beloved



Team USA theme on platter. Photo by Ken Goodman

teams as they competed in the culinary Olympics.

We found E.J. Lagasse, Emeril Lagasse's son, in a sea of toques (those tall chef hats). "I was in the kitchen from a very young age peeling carrots for soup, so I knew I would be a chef from the beginning," he said with a laugh and vibrant smile. His face lit up when asked about Bocuse being in his home city. "This is a tremendous honor for the United States and my city."

Many renowned host city celebrity chefs choose authentic ingredients, reflecting the unique culinary traditions of New Orleans. Nina Compton, Alon Shaya, Frank Brigtsen and Susan Spicer were among the many esteemed New Orleans chefs who worked together to uphold this epic competition's integrity and importance. "It has been really rewarding to have so many of our most prominent chefs and restaurants in our city rally around to be on the host committee away from their kitchens," said Walt Leger III, president and CEO of New Orleans & Company and host of Bocuse d'Or Americas and World Pastry Cup.

The teams completed the two iconic Bocuse d'Or tests: the theme on a plate and the platter theme. Both featured the region's local and emblematic products, which include wild boar rack, grits, alligator sausage, whole white shrimp, Murder Point oysters and jumbo lump crab meat.

The culinary battle began over two days. Ten countries from North, Central and South America were battling to continue on their road to Lyon. Emotions ran high, and as we walked from station to station, we observed these talented chefs creating culinary works of art while being cheered on by their fellow citizens.

On the day of the final competition, everyone knew this was it! By day's end, which team will take home the win and continue their journey to Lyon in January? Flags were waving and compatriots were cheering on their team with every plating and every bite from the respected judging panel. One could feel the tension throughout the convention center as teams cleaned their stations and prepared to hear the results. It was time!



Fans cheering on Team USA. Photo by Ken Goodman

Each team took the stage like an Olympic opening ceremony. The flag bearers lead their teams onto the stage with thunderous applause. The worldwide press corps in attendance had cameras and microphones ready. The opening of the first envelope reveals the winner of the bronze medal. It was team Mexico! Supporters went crazy with singing and flag waving. Next up, with similar fanfare, was the silver medal awarded to Team Canada. Then, finally, a hush fell over the room. The gold medal and continuing the road to Lyon was Team USA! The noise was deafening as Team USA took the top spot on the podium for the gold medal.

Once again, the room was quiet as the national anthem was played. Participants expressed tears of gratitude and relief to a respectful crowd. When they reach Lyon, Team USA will again face these finalists from the Americas selection, alongside finalists from Africa, Asia and Europe—a total of 24 teams from around the world are vying for the gold medal. To secure their final spot, Team USA prepared a dish entitled California's Celebration of Louisiana Shellfish and a Golden State Soul: California Meets the Bayou platter.

Team USA Head Chef Stefani De Palma and Commis Bradley Waddle stated, "I'm so proud to represent the United States. It's rewarding to see all of our training lead to this result. I'm the type of person focused on one goal at a time, and now my eyes are set on what we need to accomplish in Lyon," said De Palma, who has spent many months training with Waddle in preparation for the Americas selection. "We're so impressed by the final plates and platters presented by the other teams and admire the craft and professionalism they showed throughout the competition. Our victory in the Americas selection results from dedication and commitment. Team USA showcased their innovative ideas



(L-R) Team USA Commis Bradley Waddle, President Chef Devin Knell, Head Chef Stefani De Palma, and Head Coach Sebastian Gibrand. Photo by Ken Goodman.



Team USA Head Chef Stefani De Palma, Commis Bradley Waddle and Head Coach Sebastian Gibrand. Photo by Ken Goodman.

for presentation at the highest level. Acknowledging the coaches, chefs, mentors, and supporters is important. We're very proud of Chef De Palma and Waddle and look forward to the finals in Lyon," Chef Keller said.

Who is Team USA? Head Chef De Palma is a force of nature. This Southern California native from Arcadia, California, is most well-known for her nearly 15-year tenure at Addison, San Diego's only three-star Michelin restaurant. She assumed the position of chef de cuisine at Addison in 2016, at age 27, after holding roles on both the sweet and savory sides of the kitchen.

Her contributions and those of her mentor, Executive Chef William Bradley, helped shepherd the restaurant to its award-winning status. De Palma studied at Le Cordon Bleu in Pasadena, California. She took an externship in Italy before joining the Addison team, where she was committed to strengthening the team and helping the restaurant achieve its Michelin star status.

Waddle is also a California native. Hailing from Redding, California,

he has memories of cooking in his parents' kitchen dating back to age nine. Now, the 22-year-old chef represents the U.S. internationally as a commis for Team USA. His hands-on culinary training started at age 17 as a line cook. He quickly progressed to more advanced kitchens after moving to Napa Valley to work at Regis Ova Caviar & Champagne lounge under Chef Keller. He then spent a 10-month stint with one of England's most well-known chefs, Michael Caines, at the one Michelin star restaurant at Lymptone Manor and a commis position at Chef Keller's Ad Hoc restaurant.

In the past, competitors representing Team USA have regularly finished within the Top 10 and have secured both the gold and silver medals at the finals in Lyon. The organization's mission was and continues to be focused on inspiring culinary excellence and supporting the next generation of young professionals as they elevate American cuisine.

Over the years, the Bocuse d'Or has played a significant role in advancing the culinary profession, inspiring culinary excellence and fostering a

spirit of camaraderie and competition among chefs worldwide. Now it is off to Lyon to see who takes home the best in the world. Speaking of even more of the best, the day before the Bocuse d'Or, Coupe du Monde de la Pâtisserie also added sweetness on an Olympic scale in New Orleans. Eight countries from North and South America participated in the Americas selection of the World Pastry Cup. These extravagant works of art showed the world the artistry and the patience it takes to rise to the very top of the profession. After an artistic battle for the ages, Team Argentina won gold, and Team Paraguay and Colombia won silver and bronze. Argentina is heading to the Grand Finale, which will occur during Sirha Lyon in January. "It is our duty to give meaning to the life of future generations by sharing our knowledge and experience; by teaching an appreciation of work well done and a respect for nature, the source of all life; by encouraging the young to venture off the beaten path and avoid complacency by challenging their emotions," Bocuse said.

ABOUT TOWN



Sherry Gordy's Birthday Celebration

(Photography by Sherman Alford/
Sasaphotos)

Right: (L-R) Sheryl Aronson, Sherry Gordy,
Ann Parenti

Below: (L-R) Sherry Gordy and Lankston
Carter (on-air host) at the Stone Soul Picnic



Sherry Gordy's Birthday Celebration (Continued)

Left: (L-R) Dexter Jasper, Sherry Gordy, Dr. Marshal Thompson of the Chi Lites, Jacqueline Helm, Kevin Jones

Lankston Carter's Stone Soul Picnic (Photo by Sasaphotos)

Above: (L-R) Tony Exum, Jr. and Sherry Gordy



Network of Executive Women in Hospitality, Inc. (NEWH) Scholarship/Panelist Luncheon (Photography courtesy of NEWH)

Above: NEWH Las Vegas Expert Panelists (L-R) Lorine Hanson, Vice President of Interior Design, Steelman Partners; Eileen Madigan, Senior Vice President Global Interior Design, Las Vegas Sands Corp.; Joyce Lynn Lagula, Associate Principal, JCJ Architecture

Below: Honored Scholarship Recipients (L-R) Han Bui, Jacquai Szucs, Crystal Ji, Alex Blake, Seyedeh Rezazdeh, Landri Luca, Aluna Perry, Alysa Huang





Jubilee Celebration (Photography by Bradley Hamm/Cashman Photo)

Above: (L-R) Diana Sullivan, Cocho Arbe

Left: Clint Holmes

Left Middle: Marlene Ricci

Left Bottom: (L-R) Gary Fowler, Toscha Comeaux

Below: (L-R) Sherry Gordy, Anna Billings





Above Left: Laura Henkel, David Tupaz

Above Middle: Clint Holmes

Above Right: (L-R) Mike Candito, Durette Candito

Below: Stephanie Bolton, Cary Vogel, Stacey Gualandi, Lance Robins, Brian G. Thornton



Above: (L-R) Allan Rich, Stacey Gualandi

Below Left: (L-R) Robert & Shirley Kramer, Cheryl Waites

Below Right: (L-R) Shakeh Ghoukasian, Kendall Hardin





Above: Gloria Cunningham, Richard Sapperstein, Liz Poltronieri, Diana Della lacono

Top Left: Phil Wigfall

Left: (L-R Back Row) Nathan Tanouye, Curt Miller. (Front Row) Wayne de Silva

Bottom Left: (L-R) Daniel Falcone, Sonny Hernandez, Wes Marshall, Glenn Colby

Below: Toscha Comeaux, Marlene Ricci

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