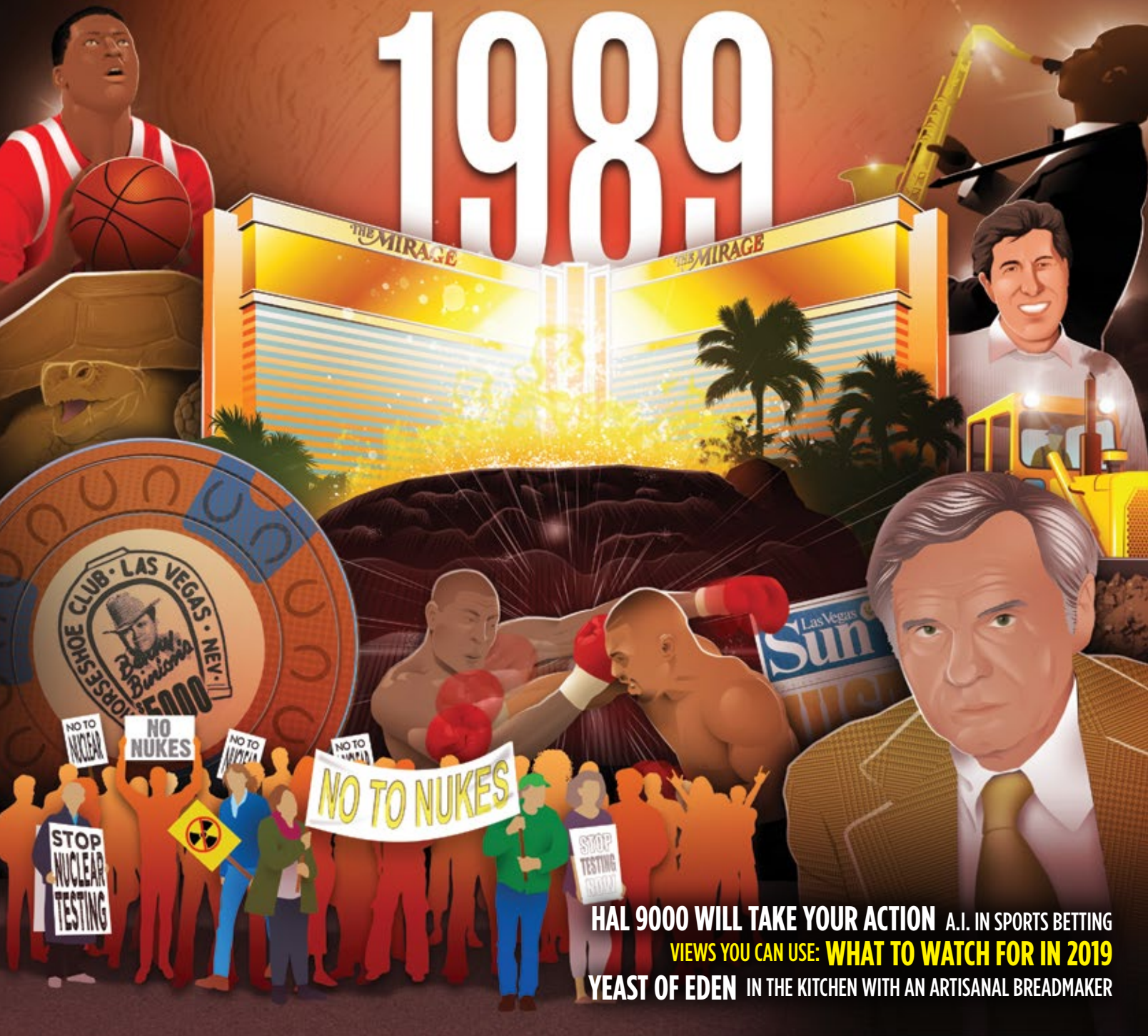
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1989



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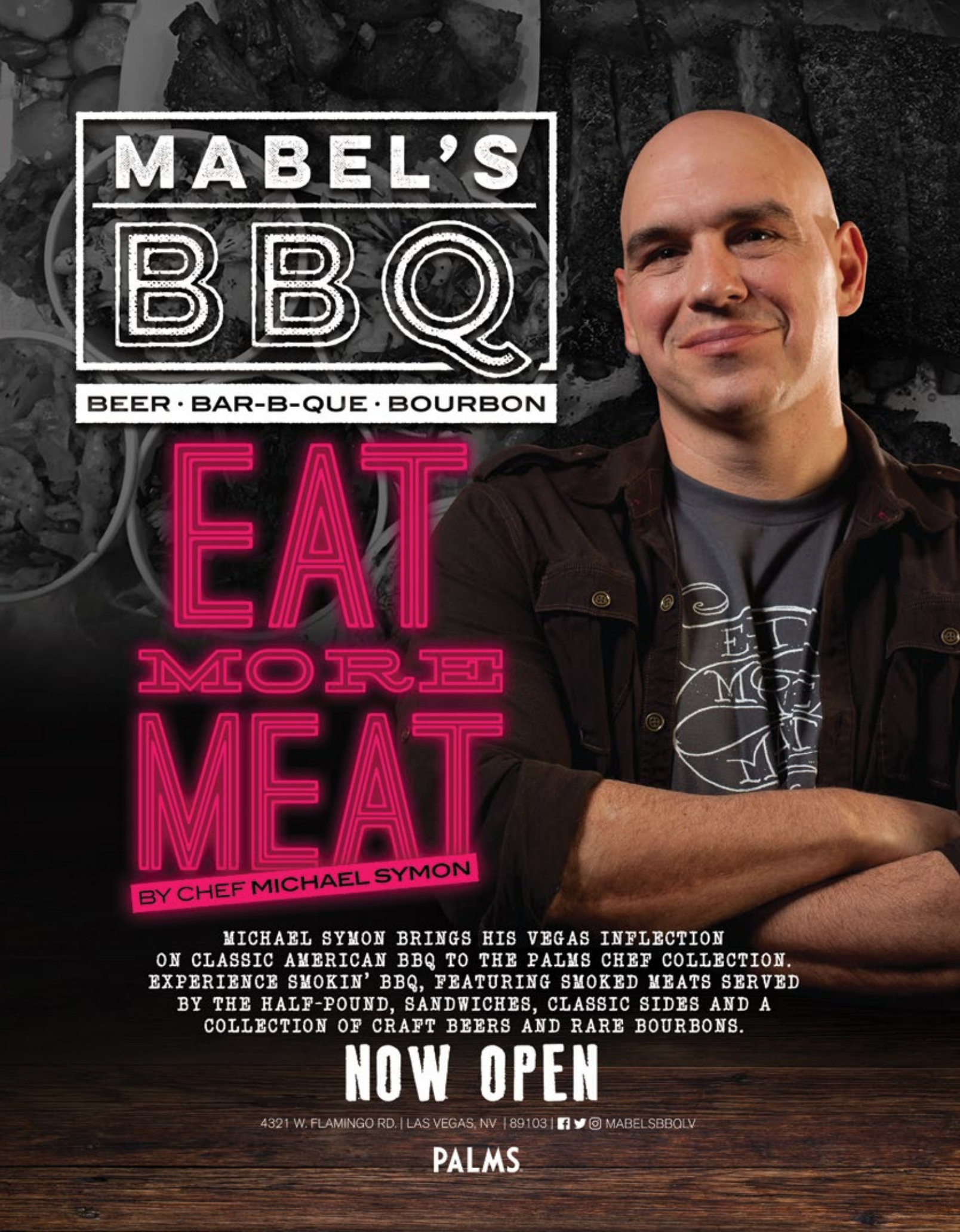
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VOLUME 17 ISSUE 1
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January



FEATURE

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1989

It was a milestone year for Las Vegas in which three deaths and one birth — that of a game-changing megaresort — marked the indelible transition to a new Las Vegas

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MIRAGE: LAS VEGAS NEWS BUREAU; TOAST: BRENT HOLMES; BOOK WORKSHOP: CHRISTOPHER SMITH

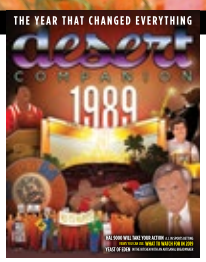


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Here we are now, entertain us — exhibits, concerts, shows, events, and miscellaneous hoo-ha to fill your calendar

COVER



1989
ILLUSTRATION
Craig Schaffer

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BROADWAY



COME FROM AWAY
FEBRUARY 19-24



HELLO, DOLLY!
MARCH 19 - 24

TROESH STUDIO THEATER



SPAMILTON:
AN AMERICAN PARODY
JANUARY 22 - FEBRUARY 10

HEADLINERS

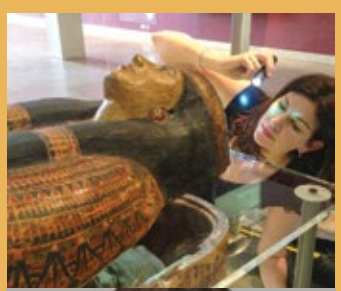


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JANUARY 26



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JANUARY 31

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"WHEN WOMEN RULED THE WORLD"
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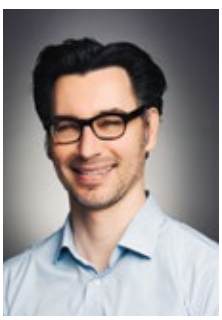
Editor's Note

LIKE IT'S 1989

My strongest memory of 1989 is from my Las Vegas High School graduation ceremony. There's actually a photo of the very moment: A mortarboard-topped me accepting my diploma from some Important Education Personage with a standard grip 'n' grin.

But I'm not grinning. I've got this worried, gulpy, close-mouthed crimp of a smile on my face. Because it was at that very moment the paralyzing thought struck: *What the hellz am I gonna do with the rest of my life?* I hadn't exactly prepared for The Future. I'd spent most of high school skateboarding in drainage ditches and printing ratty skate and punk 'zines on the down-low at whatever copy shop would hire me. (Pour one out for graveyard shift at Kinko's.) 1989 was the pivotal year I answered that big life question with a provisional but principled resolve to avoid real work for as long as possible — in other words, to become a writer. (Now, in this sentence, imagine an epic, quantum music montage that bridges 30 years and tells the story of how I fell in love with telling stories about Las Vegas and how being editor of *Desert Companion* reflects the dizzying and improbable zenith of that lifelong romance.)

Thirty years later feels like a good time to look back at this seminal year in Las Vegas history. 1989 ushered in the megaresort era; it saw the chapter-ending deaths of several Vegas titans who'd built gaming dynasties and community institutions. And while The Killers were still in middle school, Vegas would birth a platinum-selling breakout hard rock band named Slaughter. If you're a longtime local, enjoy the trip down memory lane. If you're a relative newcomer, you're sure to learn something new about the recent past that's shaped our restless city in so many ways — except, thankfully, for our hair.



Andrew Kiraly
EDITOR

NEXT MONTH Find your new besties in our Best of the City issue.

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Contact Tammy Willis for back issues, which are available for purchase for $7.95.

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ALL IN

11 PEOPLE, ISSUES, OBJECTS, EVENTS, IDEAS, AND CURIOSITIES YOU SHOULD BE AWARE OF THIS MONTH



ONE | **CRYSTAL BALLING**

2019, Predicted

... in a thematically fitting list of 19 items, no less! Here are the people, issues, and stories to keep an eye on in the coming year

ILLUSTRATION *Ryan Olbrysh*

2

MY TOTALLY REALISTIC NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

GET MY WEIGHT UNDER CONTROL
It'll be tough, but I resolve to gain no more than 10 pounds this year. Maybe 15.

MAKE NEW FRIENDS
Why yes, my new friend, I *would* like fries with that. Thanks, pal!

SAVE MORE MONEY
I just said that in case my wife scans this page

STOP SMOKING
I already don't smoke. 2019's off to a great start!

READ MORE
Searches "literary adaptations" on Netflix

SPEND LESS TIME ON MY SMARTPHONE
We wants it. We needs it. Must have the Precious ...



BE NICER TO PEOPLE
You be nicer to people, jerk

LIVE LIFE TO THE FULLEST
... "Fullest Extent Possible," I think that means. **Settles into Barcalounger**

EXERCISE MORE OFTEN
Joking! I've also resolved to be funnier this year

Scott Dickensheets

1 Steve Sisolak walks the tightrope: He'll be the first Democratic governor since Bob Miller left office in 1999. And he'll have the largest Democratic majority in the Legislature in memory. The pressure will be on to deliver on the Democratic agenda. But the moderate Sisolak also has one eye on the elections of 2020 that will determine who will draw new district boundaries after the 2021 census. So, he will not want to a) jeopardize his second term, and b) jeopardize Democratic majorities needed to pass Democrat-friendly redistricting maps. Watch for him to try to rein in the progressive wing of the party that believes it just hit the lottery.

2 Will Lake Mead hit 1,075 feet? It's currently at 1,078 feet, one of the lowest points in its history. If it drops just three more feet — likely, say hydrologists — it'll trigger rationing for the states that depend on the Colorado River. It won't affect us directly, since Nevada uses less than its allotment, but everyone in the system would feel the pain to some degree.

3 2018 was the year sports betting became legal nationwide. Seven states have already jumped into the game, and 22 more are in line. How will this affect Nevada? We'll likely start getting a clear answer this year, but it's worth noting that in September, Nevada took in $571 million in wagers and retained $56 million — both all-time records.

4 A blue Legislature: Democrats know that they might have a better chance of passing certain bills (buy-in to Medicaid, gun background checks, higher renewable portfolio standards) that were vetoed during Brian Sandoval's terms. But we should also watch for issues, such as energy choice, to return to the Legislature, as the just-defeated Question 3 backers try to wrest some control from NV Energy's monopoly even as more companies use a two-decades-old law to leave the utility and seek power elsewhere.

5 Will this year finally see a North Strip comeback? New operators are being sought for the shuttered Lucky Dragon, and SLS's new owners pledged $100 million for a revamp. The Fontainebleau and Echelon sites are becoming The Drew and Resorts World, slated for 2020. And the Convention Center's expansion will bring it onto Strip frontage in the footprint of the former Riviera.

6 The Las Vegas Aviators (formerly the Las Vegas 51s) play their home opener April 9 at Las Vegas Ballpark in Downtown Summerlin. The new suburban home suggests a promising new chapter for the Triple-A franchise: As of late November, the Aviators had already sold more than 2,000 season tickets.



7 Go Knights ... Go? The Knights' sophomore season got off to a rocky start, leaving VGK clinging to their playoff lives as the new year begins. We'll be biting our nails as the regular season winds down. Brace yourselves — we could be headed for a hockey-less spring.



8 Catherine Cortez Masto takes center stage: After two years of a freshman Senate term, the Nevada Democrat is now the senior senator from Nevada, and head of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee. It's a startling rise, but Cortez Masto's caution, discipline, and a fairly favorable Democratic map in 2020 will get a boost out of the two-year appointment, which starts in 2019.

9 If cryptocurrency millionaire Jeffrey Berns is for real, his proposed 67,000-acre Blockchains site in Northern Nevada will weave AI, nanotech, and 3-D printing with the public blockchain to create a techtopia — and join Tesla, Apple, and Google on the roster of companies transforming Nevada's desert and economy. Berns hopes to break ground in late 2019.

10 Virtual reality attractions will have a big year on the Strip. In August at Linq Promenade, Kind Heaven will use holographic mixed-reality with vibrant sets, sound, and smell to send guests to a fantastical Southeast Asia. At Bally's, Vegas VR just launched three VR experiences for groups: space saga The Arrival, whodunit The Poisoner, and action game MATCH.

11 Yes, the 2020 election is nearly two years away. But serious candidates will start seeding early-caucus Nevada with operatives and organizations in 2019. (Elizabeth Warren has reportedly already dispatched someone to the state to start setting up for her presidential run.) Watch for campaigns to heat up after the 2019 Legislature adjourns.

12 Watch for the return of both the vibey restaurant bar and the (dare we say it?) ultralounge. Setting the scene with a curated soundtrack (and the occasional DJ), trendy restaurant bars (NoMad, Cleaver) and a modern breed of posh cocktail lounges (Elektra, Rosina) offer a stylish alternative to nightclubs; expect the trend to grow in 2019.

13 All signs point to Vegas arts, culture, and entertainment continuing to level up in 2019. 2018 was itself noteworthy: The Bellagio Gallery of Fine Art landed Yayoi Kusama's installations — fresh from The Broad in Los Angeles. Life Is Beautiful's lineup was better than ever — smart, diverse, relevant. Even our residencies got hip — goodbye Cher, hello Lady Gaga. This year, there's the opening of the Lucy, a literary condo/bookstore/coffeeshop Downtown. There's the October 2019 opening of Area 15, a bazaar and "experiential mall" produced by New Mexico art and entertainment collective Meow Wolf on the old Scandia park on Rancho Drive and Sirius Avenue.



VEGAS GOLDEN KNIGHTS: ANDRES KUDACKI/AP PHOTO; CORTEZ MASTO: JACQUELYN MARTIN/AP PHOTO; LADY GAGA: JORDAN STRAUSS/INVISION/AP

14 But wait, there's more. Nearly three decades in the making, Chinatown has leapfrogged well beyond being a glorified strip mall. Today's Chinatown is a three-mile stretch of bars, coffee- and tea-houses, foodie haunts, live music, and gambling. And the Arts District Downtown is coming into its own, too: What was once a maze of traffic cones has emerged as an inviting place to park the car on a Friday night and while away several hours. 2019 will be its year.

15 UNLV at a crossroads: The awkward departure of Len Jessup in its rearview mirror, and an acting president at the wheel, UNLV drives into 2019 in search of permanent leadership. A nascent medical school, a new R1 ("very high research activity") designation from Carnegie, several campus building initiatives, and a mammoth stadium for a perpetually beleaguered football program await a new chief Rebel.

16 Speaking of the medical school: The Medical District will come into its own in 2019. The city is using infrastructure improvements to add some shine to what will (hopefully) be the home of the new UNLV Medical School. With schools come students, and with students comes housing and services.

17 What of Gov. Brian Sandoval, leaving office after two terms, warmly regarded by both parties? Could an academic position augment an already impressive résumé? His new wife is a Las Vegas gaming executive, so expect a bigger presence in the south and a steady gaze on the next chapter for the 55-year-old.

18 With longtime pot proponent Tick Segerblom moving from the Legislature to the Clark County Commission, how will the recreational marijuana industry grow in Southern Nevada? Gaming corporations want nothing to do with the industry, but it probably won't be long before lounges make their way to the Strip.

19 Project Neon should wrap by this summer, bringing smoother traffic flows, electronic signs, smarter on- and off-ramps, and a reconfigured Charleston Boulevard interchange. Carpoolers will be rewarded with bypass and flyover ramps, and the aesthetics of the project actually look pretty nice. Hooray, infrastructure! ✦

By Scott Dickensheets, Matt Jacob, Heidi Kyser, James P. Reza, Erin Ryan, Steve Sebelius, Paul Szydelko, and Kristy Totten

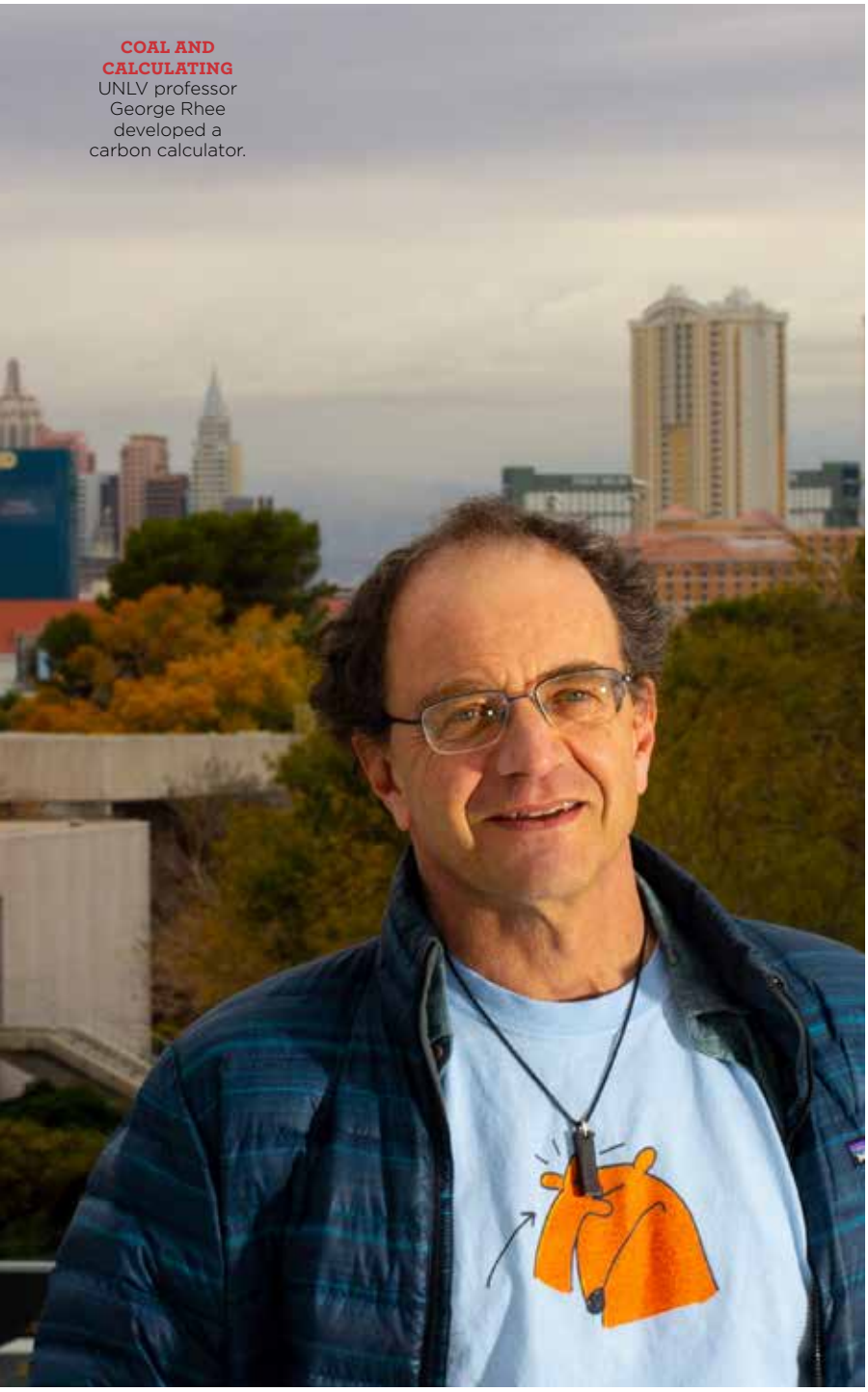
THREE



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2. Recharging stations for hobos who have shifted to hybrid bindlestiffs
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4. Regular *Mad Max: Fury Road* re-enactments. Wait, that's already happening.
5. Alert hipsters to area's gritty biker-bar scene just waiting to be Instagrammed to death
6. Brass plaques that explain road's rich history and dispense antibacterial gel

*The RTC wants citizen input on upgrades to the thoroughfare: surveymonkey.com/r/boulderconcept



COAL AND CALCULATING UNLV professor George Rhee developed a carbon calculator.

FOUR | **TECHNOLOGY + SOCIETY**

Do the Math

A UNLV professor quantifies the difference that a shift to renewables makes in a rapidly changing climate

BY ***Heidi Kyser***

In late November, citing potential disruption to aviation radar, mining claims, and natural vistas, the Bureau of Land Management turned down a Swedish company's offer to build a 200-turbine wind farm outside of Searchlight. Nearby residents and bird advocates hated the plan, too.

This is precisely the kind of situation for which UNLV astronomy and physics Professor George Rhee created his online climate-change calculator. It allows interested parties to measure how much various sustainable-energy technologies could cut the state's fossil-fuel use.

"When you go into this universe of renewable energy, people are very vocal about what they don't want," he says. "If you want to build a wind farm somewhere, they'll say no. A solar farm, no. Nuclear power plant? No. But if we want to solve the problem, we have to make plans that add up ... We've got to get off fossil fuels, because they're going to run out. How do we do that?"

In other words, Rhee's calculator is meant to help people get to "Yes" by setting aside the emotion and starting with the numbers. It's based on the simple idea of supply and demand, and focuses specifically on Nevada. How much does the state need to increase its renewable energy production and decrease its fossil fuel consumption to meet the goals set by the International Panel on Climate Change?

Anyone can toy with Rhee's calculator at NV2050.physics.unlv.edu. On the left is a column of supply choices — geothermal, hydroelectric, nuclear, wind energy, and a variety of solar options. Each one has a drop-down menu with four choices, from the status quo to the most radical potential change. In the case of rooftop solar, for instance, you can opt to keep it at 2015

PHOTOGRAPHY ***Brent Holmes***



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levels, use the entire available resource by 2050, or take one of the other two intermediate steps. Then, you do the same thing for the demand choices in the column on the right — from aviation and transportation, to commercial and residential heating, each with a similar selection of four drop-drown options.

Once you've picked all the changes you want to make, you click "submit," and a small table at the top shows the impact they'd have. For instance, I went through and selected the second-most conservative option for every item on both the supply and demand side, and found that it reduced the state's total fossil fuel demand to 7.2 gigawatts, well within the IPCC goals. There are also tabs to convert the information to energy graphs and flow charts.

British physicist David McKay's work inspired Rhee to create his calculator. In Ted Talks and YouTube videos, McKay uses easily graspable concepts to demonstrate that individual changes aren't enough to solve the problem of climate change — that we'll have to make sweeping changes, sometimes involving vast resources (say, thousands of acres of BLM land for a wind farm) to turn that ship around.

Rhee hopes that business leaders, government officials, and policy-makers will use his calculator to have serious conversations about renewable development. As a state with practically unlimited solar potential, he says, Nevada has the opportunity to show the rest of the world how smart renewable planning can make a measurable impact on climate change.

As for his motivation, Rhee says the calculator isn't for profit; it's purely a passion project. "It is up to us to make sense of our lives by living responsibly and caring for other human beings, our communities, and the environment," he says, "not just for us here today but also for future generations." ✦

FIVE | **Q&A**

Poetry in Vogue

A chat with the county's poet laureate as she looks toward the end of her term

BY ***Scott Dickensheets***

Vogue Robinson, Clark County's poet laureate for another few months, sneezed this afternoon. "And a booger got in my hair," she reports, laughing. If you're a poet, you know what her next thought was: "This is going to make a great f*cking poem!" More laughter. But she won't have time to write it just yet. A few hours after this interview, she'll be on the other side of the Q&A format, querying former two-time U.S. poet laureate Natasha Trethewey onstage during a reading at the Writer's Block — one of many impressive cultural figures she's met as a consequence of her volunteer gig, which has put her in a constant state of motion, arranging and attending readings, participating in literary festivals, and supporting the city's poets any way she can. Her two-year term wraps in April.

As she looks ahead from the precipice of the new year, she'd like to help outgoing County Commissioner Chris Giunchigliani, who, according to Robinson, is trying to get Nevada to reinstate its poet laureate position. "I'd love to see the state have a laureate, and" — she gestures to herself — "*duh*. Why not?" Indeed.

You've said that your art these days is focused more on facilitating the art of others.

I lived in San Diego before I lived here. There's a huge open-mic scene, awesome poets — and there are a couple of people who, at no point, do you feel as though you're not in their shadow. I was super-quiet, I read every once in a while, I wrote poems, but they were never good enough, to me; I never felt like I was part of the crowd.

So I said, When I go to Vegas, there's none of this hiding, there's no "not good enough"; it's just, here are these poems, and they're mine, and the people who like



PHOTOGRAPHY ***Jerry Metellus***



them are the people they're for.

I don't want anyone to feel alienated. I don't want anyone to feel like their poems aren't good enough. Even if I don't like their poems, even if I think their poems are weird, and I don't understand them, someone is going to connect to that, and it doesn't have to be me. We shouldn't have these barriers around poetry. It's tough enough being a writer and figuring out what that career looks like for you. I don't want anyone to feel outcast. I remember how much I hid, and if I can make sure no one does that, the community is better for it.

But as in any human endeavor, there's good poetry and bad poetry; is there any responsibility to offer tough love, to tell people perhaps they shouldn't quit their day job?

I think there's a lot of damage that can come from that. In the way that you might have a math class you hate because of one teacher, and, all of a sudden, it's I hate math, and you have an internal stigma about it. So I'm really careful about that. I'm not opposed to criticism. I'm the queen of, "I need detail here, there are no sounds, there are no smells." I push people toward detail. If someone's writing love poems and they're one-dimensional, I might hand 'em a book of sonnets. My way of editing is to tell people to study more. If I were to tell someone to stop writing poems, who does that help?

What's the most frequent advice you offer to poets who seek out your guidance?

It's always "Read more." I'm getting better about being specific about who they should read. And that gives me more of a reason to read, too. You wish there was a magical thing that could help you edit your work and make it better, but you learn by doing. And the more you do it as you're reading, you see that writers steal, teachers steal, everybody steals from everybody, to find the best recipe. And how do you learn a recipe? You experiment. And I always put a Post-It with the five senses on the upper right-hand corner of the page (to remind herself to include sensory details in her poetry). So I tell them to do that. Those are my go-tos.

How do you feel about the end of your term?

Singing in the rain. Dancing in the street. (Laughs) Every Janet Jackson video. What I mean is, I'd like more time to sit down and write. I've been focused a lot on facilitating things for others and organizing events. I just want to do two things less, and get more sleep.

(Being the laureate has) pushed me in ways I didn't expect. Many people believe it's a stand-and-look-pretty position. But sometimes I think it's like the women's-suffrage women — they couldn't sit and look pretty, they had to find a way to work. It's like, who works this hard to be allowed to work? (Laughs) Bruce (Isaacson, her predecessor) was a working laureate, and I'm a working laureate. I like that aspect of it. It's taught me some things about myself as a leader and also allowed me to bring more people together. I think when they created this position, it wasn't just to elevate one person as the "best poet." It's about who will be the best leader and bring everyone else up. There's an African proverb, "Lift as you climb." And there's a community of people here who aren't afraid to turn around and reach back, or link elbows because we're walking in the same direction.

I have a friend who asked, "Now that you're not going to be county poet laureate, what do you want next?" I want state. I want U.S. I want all of them! Grandma said I was the next Maya Angelou, and hopefully grandma's right. (Laughs) ✦

(Q&A has been edited for length and clarity.)

SIX | **SENSE OF PLACE**

My Outlet

When I needed an anchor, I found it at an urban mall

BY ***Noah Cicero***

Sense of Place
In which writers find meaning in specific sites around town

When I first came to Las Vegas in 2013, I had no friends. This is a hard place to make friends. Las Vegas is like an airport — it is full of people, but no one knows each other. This airport feeling is overwhelming at times, when you are from an area of the Midwest where everyone knows each other. Las Vegas is the kind of place where you can have a passionate two-month romance with a person, and then never see them again. That can't happen in Ohio, you will run into them over and over.

I reached out on Facebook. (I have Facebook friends from all over America because of writing books.) I posted, "Does anybody want to be my friend?"

Rachel and BH, two Jewish sisters, responded. They have lived in Las Vegas their entire lives. They were true Vegas people. At that moment, I needed the true Vegas. As Jack Kerouac said, "I was halfway across America, at the dividing line between the East of my youth and the West of my future." Rachel and BH would give me the Western future I needed.

Rachel worked at American Apparel at the Las Vegas Premium Outlets. I would pick up her up when she finished work at 9 p.m. in the hot summer. At night, the Las Vegas Premium Outlets are empty, a peaceful place, the spritzers turned off, security guards making their rounds. Young service workers locking the doors, racing to a party or home to watch Netflix. I was overcome with the idea, I am out West. I have made it, I even have a Western friend named Rachel. For a boy from a small town in Ohio, this meant a lot. Now, I am established out West, you could say I am stuck here now. But back then, in 2014, I was still a pilgrim. A person looking for redemption, no different than Helen Stewart, Bugsy Siegel, or Benny Binion. I would sit outside waiting for Rachel, sometimes with BH. Eventually Rachel would come out, and we would drive to Crown and Anchor, or Ichiza in Chinatown.

I've only been in Las Vegas five years, but I have a nostalgia for those days. Usually nostalgia symbolizes an easier time in one's life, a time when we had hope, when we believed that our dreams would come true. It was not an easier time. It was a time that



PHOTOGRAPHY ***Brent Holmes***

involved a lot of patience and an abnormal amount of grit. Most of my dreams from those days have come true, I did what I needed to do, I showed up on time, and proved myself a thousand times.

Now my life is different. I am established in Las Vegas. I have a job, a car from Drivetime Auto on Sahara, and everyone at Starbucks on Lake Mead knows my name.

Sometimes, when I need a pair of Pumas or new polo shirts for work, I go to the Las Vegas Premium Outlets. I go to Auntie Anne's and get a pretzel, I sit on the bench and watch the international tourists walk by: Koreans, Japanese, Chinese, German, French, and Latin Americans. It is fun to see people from all over the world together in one place. At different times in history the French and Germans were killing each other, at other times the Koreans and Chinese and Japanese were killing each other, but here they all are, without weapons, sharing the Las Vegas Premium Outlets. I would like to build a time machine and go back to the horrible events of these countries, put up a giant IMAX screen, and show pictures and video from the Las Vegas Premium Outlets, and say "Hey, look, what you are doing right now is stupid, sad, and pointless, because it will all end with your descendants taking planes to the Western desert of the United States, you will all shop together, you will get great deals on Pumas, Van Heusen polo shirts, you will get a pretzel, and you will know all this war and cruelty was a terrible mistake. And that the truth is, we can all come together over great deals." ✦



LAS VEGAS PREMIUM OUTLETS NORTH AND SAGUARO CACTUS SCULPTURES: BRENT HOLMES



7

CACTICAL BLUNDER!

Why is this Mojave city embracing another desert's marquee plant?

I KNOW I HAVE A SLAM-DUNK CASE, but of course I must do my due diligence. I search "saguaro cactus." The second link leads me to a solid source: the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum in Tucson. The first line of the museum's "Saguaro Cactus Fact Sheet" makes my case: "The saguaro cactus (*Carnegiea gigantea*) is one of the defining plants of the Sonoran Desert." A few lines down the page, my case is authoritatively dunked: "Saguaros are found exclusively in the Sonoran Desert."

You now know that my case is fully supported by the facts, but perhaps you don't know why I'm making it. Here's why: Las Vegas is in the Mojave Desert! We don't grow saguaro cactus here! They are not, never have been, and never will be "one of the defining plants" of our region.

So, I ask, why am I seeing fake saguaro all over town? They are popping up on street medians, in commercial landscapes, even in my own neighborhood. Every day, as I leave for work in the morning and return home in the evening, I am confronted with a fake saguaro at the entrance to my neighborhood. It's outrageous!

Fake desert flora and fauna adorn many street medians in Las Vegas. There are wild horses, bighorn sheep, coyotes, tortoises, rabbits, scorpions, and quail. I have no problem with any of these creatures, which are commonly found in the Mojave Desert and are consistent with the character of our region. Occasionally, you also will see fake yucca and Joshua trees, which also make sense.

But then, for whatever insane reason, saguaro cactuses have been mixed into these median landscapes. Whose brilliant idea was this? What self-respecting landscape architect signed off on the purchase orders that included these abominations?

I recognize that, for some people, the Mojave is not the most beautiful desert on the planet. The Sonoran, for example, is more lush, supporting the saguaro and other plants that can't hack it in the bone-dry Mojave.

But we should take pride in the Mojave. The plants and animals that survive here are tough. They don't need no stinkin' water, or at least not much. I happen to like Joshua trees. We could have more of them on our street medians and in other landscapes. We don't need to pretty up our city with the flora of other regions.

Besides — this is just my personal opinion, and doesn't have anything to do with my main argument — I think saguaro cactuses are kind of ugly. Arizona can have them. ***Geoff Schumacher***

8

OUT OF CONTEXT

IF UNLV SAID THE SKY WAS BLUE, UNR WOULD CLAIM IT WAS PEA GREEN.

— UNLV Professor Michael Green, on Facebook, addressing a new report on Nevada's higher-ed system that, among other findings, criticized a funding disparity that favors UNR over UNLV

9

Poem

WHEN I SAY EVERYTHING IN THE WORLD CAN LOOK BEAUTIFUL,
I mean we don't. I mean the newlyweds on Fremont Street
are drunk on desert sweat and casino light, dancing from bar to bar
like a thousand gemstones rattling inside a cavern, while you and I barely
manage to glare across this cocktail table, having forgotten how to touch
without flinching. Inside our skin we're little more than towers of bone
and I don't know how to keep us stable without tenderness, the vow we made
to treat each other's wounds like faults in ceramic. Maybe we're cut too deep
for mending. Maybe we should try imploding like the Stardust—
wouldn't it be nice to unearth a boon of buried poker chips
and remarry at every neon chapel on the Strip? To collapse into something
bigger than ourselves for a change? Let's start small, like plumes
rising from an aftermath or pools of runoff leaching opals of lye from ash,
one black grain at a time. We can press the demolition between our palms
and call it a beginning. ***Samuel Piccone***

TEN | **OBIT**

Meeting Melvin

Melvin Dummar stuck to his bizarre Howard Hughes story until the end. That doesn't mean we should believe it

BY ***Geoff Schumacher***

When I heard last month that Melvin Dummar had died, at his home in Pahrump, the news immediately thrust me back to an evening almost 12 years ago in another Nye County town, Tonopah. On April 13, 2007, I drove the 200 miles from Las Vegas to Tonopah for a scheduled interview with Melvin. He was constantly on the road in those days, selling frozen meat at remote ranches and in small towns across rural Nevada and Utah. He stopped in Tonopah about every three weeks, and he always stayed at the Clown Motel, where he received a special rate of $25 per night and was allowed to run an extension cord from his room to his truck to keep the freezer going.

Melvin and I sat down in his room, and he told his story, my microcassette recorder positioned on the table between us. He told me about late December 1967, when he picked up an injured "bum" beside the highway between Tonopah and Las Vegas, and the guy told him he was Howard Hughes. He told me about the day in 1976 when someone left an envelope on his desk at his gas station in Willard, Utah, and that the envelope contained a handwritten will signed by Howard Hughes. He talked about delivering the will to the Mormon Church headquarters in Salt Lake City, and about the media frenzy after the news broke that, according to the will, he stood to receive one-sixteenth of the Hughes estate. He teared up while recalling how family, friends, and others shunned him after a Las Vegas jury, in 1978, ruled the "Mormon Will" a fake.

Melvin and I talked for about two and a half hours, and not once did I sense that he was putting on a show. He had told these stories to journalists, lawyers, and others hundreds of times by then, but his words did not feel rehearsed or polished to advance a particular agenda. I'm no expert at identifying whether people are telling the truth, but my impression was that Melvin was being honest — that he genuinely believed everything he told me.

His apparent candor in that Tonopah motel room does not, however, mean that his story holds up to scrutiny. It's possible that what he said was truthful as far as it went, but that he didn't tell me the whole story. It's possible that Melvin's memory of what happened was faulty, a challenge all of us deal with. And it's possible that Melvin was a con man who, although he never got rich from it, stuck to his story to avoid the shame of admitting it was made up.

I do not support the latter scenario. Melvin, I believe, picked up somebody on his fateful drive in 1967. It just wasn't Howard Hughes. The evidence overwhelmingly indicates that Hughes never left the penthouse floor of the Desert Inn during his stint in Las Vegas between 1966 and 1970. If Hughes had left the D.I., his coterie of personal aides would have known about it and been at his side the whole time. That's just how it was in Hughesworld.

The theories advanced years later to explain why Hughes would have ventured



AP PHOTO

THE ENIGMA

Was he a con man, a dupe, simply confused? It seems clear that Melvin Dummar, who claimed to have picked up an injured Howard Hughes in the remote Nevada desert in 1967, could not have; the evidence is against it. Yet many people want to believe he did.

into central Nevada are just not credible. The notion that he was flying over the area to look at his mining claims suggests he had a keen interest in this aspect of his Nevada operations. He did not. Consider that he purchased six casinos in Las Vegas and one in Reno without inspecting any of them. And the claim that Hughes traveled to the area for sessions with a prostitute at a rural brothel is even more far-fetched. Among other reasons, his severe germophobia surely would have deterred him from relations of this sort.

While I can believe that Melvin picked up somebody in the desert, his story about the will being dropped off at his Utah gas station is harder to digest. It's possible he was merely a pawn in a scheme to introduce the fake will. I'd like to believe that, because the man as I knew him seemed incapable of masterminding such an elaborate flimflam. But it's difficult to imagine Melvin being oblivious to such an elaborate enterprise unfolding around him. Still, the fact that he stuck to the story to his death — that he never ratted or confessed despite the hardships he suffered as a result — leaves open the option that he was, to borrow a word associated with another great conspiracy theory, a patsy.

One of the most interesting threads of the Melvin Dummar story is that he had many supporters, people who believed — who still believe — that he was screwed out of his rightful share of the Hughes fortune. Melvin was a gentle and friendly man. During his endless travels selling meat across the rural West, he befriended many people who had little trouble believing that larger forces had used their power to discredit him and deprive him of his windfall.

The Oscar-winning movie inspired by Melvin's story contributed to this. When *Melvin and Howard* was released in 1980, its screenwriter, Bo Goldman, summarized the story as "a meeting of one of the richest men in America and one of the poorest." The film helped transform Melvin from a fraud into a living folk hero, a regular guy who had a shot at the American dream but was thwarted by powerful forces. It's human nature to take Melvin's side — the side of the underdog, of FDR's forgotten man — in this story.

After Melvin died, people asked me whether his story was true, and I expressed my doubts. This didn't go over well with one friend, who commented, "I don't know why you want facts to ruin a good story." I understand the feeling, even as I recoil at its larger implications.

I don't know the whole story of Melvin Dummar, Howard Hughes, and the Mormon Will. Perhaps nobody does, or ever will, especially now that its protagonist has passed on. But I believe the more complicated version — the version that pokes holes in Melvin's story, that asks more questions than it answers — is more interesting than the unexamined legend. ✦

Geoff Schumacher, senior director of content for the Mob Museum, is the author of Howard Hughes: Power, Paranoia & Palace Intrigue.

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ELEVEN | **OPEN TOPIC**

'Trying Not to Fail Them'

Notes on the life of an adjunct instructor, and of her students

BY ***Stephanie Kutner***



I am an adjunct English instructor at College of Southern Nevada, and I write what follows knowing full well that I may be fired, and not just for putting my name on it. This week I, a Jew, was (politely) scolded by my supervisor for not being politically neutral in class following the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting, at the urging of a conservative student and his parents. That came after another incident the week before, when the administration asked for my teaching availability. After answering, I did one of the dumbest things I've ever done: I typed my qualifications in all caps and begged my supervisor to allow me to teach one creative writing class. Even though I go without a paycheck in February, June, July, August, and September; even though I manage four classes and 100 students for roughly $1,800 per month after taxes, I realize that my all-caps anger was not unjustified, just misdirected. I should have addressed you, society at large, which sees no problem with the working conditions of teachers in this country.

"It's not like you set her house on fire," my brother Max advised. "Just apologize." So I did. The only good that came out of my diva moment is that my supervisor did me the great service of elucidating my exact coordinates in the wilds of higher ed, which follow:

There are 67 full-time English instructors at the College of Southern Nevada. At least 10 of those instructors have doctorates. I am one of 25 adjuncts with an MFA degree, and there are at least 50 adjuncts with doctorates. Only about 10 full-time creative-writing teachers teach any creative writing courses because there is such a desperate need for composition instructors. More than 400 sections. The fact that I've published a bit and graduated from Emerson College means absolutely nothing in that context. I'm not telling you this to inspire pity; I'm just stating an objective fact I've only just recognized.

I say all this partly in response to a 2016 article which claimed that remedial students are often faced with the least-qualified professors. What it should say is "least-supported professors." Most of my students can't afford their textbooks, so I have to come up with my lectures on the fly, using media accessible to all. A few times, I've resorted to reading texts out loud. Most students were just punted from one of America's worst school systems straight into my class with little knowledge of the language they speak. But they are all trying as hard as the circumstances of their lives will allow. And I am trying my best not to fail them, in spite of being set up to fail them.

After my divorce, after having worked as a glassblower, hotel maid, special-needs boarding-school teacher, barista, Batwoman impersonator, and every other job (except stripping/hooking), teaching was the last thing I wanted to do. But once I returned to Vegas from Boston, and my fantasy of becoming an antiquarian bookseller a la Johnny Depp in *The Ninth Gate* fell flat on its ass, adjuncting was my only option. I knew it was going to be rough; I just did not know how impossibly rough. Last year, to make up for late paychecks, I took jobs as a legal secretary, a cashier at an orchard, and a telemarketer for Flowershopping.com, which, I assure you, was even worse than it sounds. I don't have a car, so I bum rides from my friend Amy to teach my classes. But Stephanie, what about Uber? Yes, but I don't get paid enough to not have to make decisions between Ubering and eating.

This is a nationwide problem, by the way. Search "adjunct professor poverty," and you'll find story after story of part-time faculty who live near homelessness, depend on payday loans, and have very little security.

I come from a family of artists. Except for six years when my mom was not addicted to prescription meds and was making good money as an aesthetician at Bellagio, I grew up poor. Poor, but cultured. Books were the currency of our house. After my mom was fired, we lived off her 401(k), and once that ran out, every day was a high-wire act. We bounced from eviction notice to eviction notice, and depending on others to survive. Believe me when I say that I know what it's like to grow up without a shot.

I do not, however, claim to know what it's like to grow up like some of my students.

Once upon a time, I sat where my students sat. I was a 19-year-old high-school dropout when a teacher, Lee Barnes, plucked me out of class, told me I had talent worth pursuing, and

changed my life. Perhaps this is why I didn't deter a student from writing a profile on Jesus Christ, because God is all he has and I refuse to take that from him. This same student does not even have access to his memoir assignment because his mother didn't like how she was portrayed and wouldn't let him submit it. My background is why I didn't fail the 60-year-old flat-earther who thought I was advocating violence against animals by introducing her to satire via David Thorne's "Missing Missy" (Google it). It's why I loan my only copy of my textbook to whatever student needs it, the latest being a girl who is trying to leave her boyfriend, struggling, as I have all my life, to find a space of her own to do the work being asked of her. It's why I don't take attendance — every student who shows up has fought to be there, just as fiercely as I fought to escape Vegas.

In academia, my siblings and I found support networks we did not know existed in high school, where everyone wrote us off as lost causes because of our severe anxiety and depression. Recently, things have come full circle. A teacher friend has invited me to sit in on her grad course in women's nonfiction, so that I don't completely lose my shit. Being a student again, I am, in spite of everything, still humbled by how sacrosanct the contract between teachers and students remains: the belief that someone can do something beyond their circumstance, the gifting of tools necessary for a person to contextualize themselves within the nation's many histories. These are the things that wrench lives like mine out of their doomed trajectories.

Because I can introduce my students to some things, but not everything, the only hope I can glean from my classes is the energy shift I'm witnessing in them. Before it was disproven by Louis Pasteur, the theory of "spontaneous generation" dominated the natural sciences. It was the belief that living creatures could arise from nonliving matter. My students are dead to the world — numbers, blank checks, debt investments — but they persevere anyway, creating their own tools to spark change, inventing the genre of memes to deal with the existential crisis that is being twenty-something in this country. Though they've been left behind in "the America," they are still becoming activists, to wrench third-wave feminism from the ivory tower and spread it to the masses, to bear witness to Rome as it burns, to generate the hope and ideas that will save what's left of the world. They cannot do so without support. We cannot support them if all we have to teach them with are leftovers from burning the candle at both ends. ✦

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DINING | ARTISANAL

Bread Head

Baker Brett Boyer on bringing a new kind of sourdough to town

BY ***Sonja Swanson***

I meet so many people who tell me they can't eat bread," Brett Boyer tells me while setting out two enormous loaves on his counter. "And I'm like, have you tried naturally fermented sourdough?"

We're sitting in Boyer's sunny kitchen, which doubles as the headquarters of Desert Bread, his cottage food operation. This is where he produces dozens of honey wheat, oat porridge, and sesame boules to sell at the Fresh52 farmers market in Henderson (fresh52.com). Over the next hour, I will consume my weight in bread, talk smack about California housing prices, and learn a lot about sourdough.

But first we talk starters, because that's where it all begins. The vast majority of bread consumed in America is baked with conventional yeast — those little packets of powder you get at the grocery store.

PHOTOGRAPHY ***Sabin Orr***

Yeasts are single-celled members of the fungus kingdom that eat up sugars and release gas for their (very) short lifetimes: It's essentially their happy, well-fed flatulence that helps our loaves rise. But for most of bread's history, humans cultivated wild yeast from the air and kept their yeast (plus bacteria) communities alive in goopy, bubbly mixes that required feeding and care like any pet or houseplant. You know, like Amish friendship bread. In the States, we typically call this starter-based bread "sourdough."

A sourdough starter is teeming with natural yeasts and bacteria, which come from the flour, the air, and even the baker's hands. The important category of microbe to remember here is the lactic acid bacteria, or "LAB" to fermentation fanatics. Some LAB give you more tart flavors, others give you milkier ones. Every starter has a different cocktail of microbes, giving them unique personalities.

Boyer's starter is a small one, just a few quiet tablespoonfuls of a beige flour and water mixture in a glass container. But don't let her demure appearance fool you — she's powerful. A small dollop is enough to multiply her microbial population and get fermentation going in a full batch of dough. Boyer, who brought his starter from the Bay Area, was worried about how our arid conditions and high elevation would affect her. "It took my starter six months to adjust," he says, but once he'd worked out the right feeding regimen, they were off. "There's so much more life in the desert than you'd expect," Boyer says, referring to the valley's microbial universe, and maybe also to something more.

Boyer and his husband, both veterans of the Bay Area fine-dining scene (Boyer interned at Chez Panisse), were regular visitors to Las Vegas. In 2016, they decided on a whim to look at homes off the Strip and fell in love with the open, light-filled, '70s-era houses of the southeast valley. "The kitchens here are so large," Boyer says, gesturing to his light-filled, expansive workspace. "And eventually, I'm going to expand it."

Here, Boyer finally has the space and time to launch his own passion project: Desert Bread (desertbreadlv.com), his line of sourdough loaves, croissants, and pastries, mostly leavened with his natural starter, made with organic, stone-ground wheat and slow-fermented.

Boyer is part of a new school of thought within the sourdough movement, whose most prominent names include Chad Robertson of Tartine fame; Richard Hart of Copenhagen's newest hit bakery, Hart Bageri; and Vanessa Kimbell, whose book *The Sourdough School* hit shelves in September (Boyer was one of her proofers and recipe testers). These bakers and their followers are obsessed with the world of microbes — Hart says that sourdough bakers are "yeast farmers." They've learned through scientific studies, ***continued on page 26***





DINING | CRUMB GET IT

We Propose a Toast

The open-faced sandwich craze began with avocado toast, but the next wave of toppings makes this more than a millennial trend

BY ***Greg Thilmont***

Poor millennials. Somehow, an entire demographic slice of society — people born between 1980 and 1996 — got paired with avocado toast in cultural critiques and social-media takedowns, which is about as fair as saying all octogenarians love liver and onions. (OK, it's still pretty funny.) But avocado toast and its cousins aren't just for millennials anymore. Generation Y youngsters feed their growing minds and Baby Boomers fuel their active retirements on them. Even sarcastic Gen Xers like me munch on them. Let's nosh on some of the Las Vegas Valley's finest toasts, which feature fresh ingredients from alligator pears to soft-boiled eggs, smoked salmon to nut butter, beet hummus to microgreens.







AVOCADO TOAST
AT VEGENATION

Vegans and carnivores alike flock to Downtown's VegeNation. Their epic yet simple toast is made with sprouted Ezekiel bread, mashed avocado, and piquant, bright pico de gallo. It makes for one of the healthiest snack attacks in town. 616 E. Carson Ave., 702-366-8515, vegenationlv.com

JUST BEET IT
AT TOAST SOCIETY

At Toast Society, the Just Beet It offers a Mediterranean take on toast. Garnet-hued roasted beet hummus makes for a flavorful base for emerald-green avocado slices with a sprinkling of feta cheese, olive oil, sea salt, and microgreens. 6005 S. Fort Apache Road, 702-538-8951, toastsocietycafe.com

SPICY AVOCADO TOAST
AT THE STOVE

In the past few years, Henderson has become breakfast central of Southern Nevada, especially now that the adventurous Stove crowns the lofty Seven Hills neighborhood. Its toast is a spicy, jaunty one: roasted garlic-infused avocado smash meets poached eggs, lime-cucumber vinaigrette, roasted tomatoes, and jalapeño slices on country bread. 11261 S. Eastern Ave., #200, 702-625-5216, thestovelv.com

SECRET GARDEN TOAST
AT CAFE LOLA

Switch it up #roseallday-style at neon-lit, flower-festooned Cafe Lola for the Secret Garden toast: Crispy whole wheat slices are schmeared with rich white bean spread and topped with vegetables like carrots, radishes, tomatoes, and arugula. 4280 S. Hualapai Way, 702-766-5652, ilovecafelola.com

BOUGEE BUTTER TOAST
AT COLDPRESS EXPRESS

At ColdPress Express in Downtown Summerlin, go for an uptown, protein-packed selection with the Bougee Butter toast: nut butter, banana slices, raspberry-chia jam, and almonds on activated charcoal toast. Yep, the chewy, 9-grain whole wheat bread is black as night, inside and out, even before it's popped in a toaster at this offshoot of the local SkinnyFATS chain. 2010 Festival Plaza Drive, coldpressexpress.com

AVOCADO TOAST
AT PUBLICUS

The avocado toast movement quite possibly started in Southern Nevada at this quintessentially hip Downtown eatery. There, beside art-filled walls and floor-to-ceiling windows on gentrifying Fremont East, the recipe is classic: Smashed avocado is smeared on sourdough and topped with a soft-boiled egg, *guajillo* pepper spread, cherry tomatoes and yuzu dressing. Bump it up with some bacon for two bucks more. 1126 Fremont St., 702-331-5500, facebook.com/PublicUsLV

SMOKED SALMON TOAST
AT VESTA COFFEE ROASTERS

Sit down in the bright, airy, and very cool Vesta Coffee Roasters in the Arts District with a book or a laptop and dig into the substantial smoked salmon toast. The succulent fish is backed with *fromage blanc*, crispy capers, pickled onions, fennel fronds, and a dusting of rosemary ash for good measure. Snap an insta, by all means, and include a cappuccino decorated with an intricate foam bird. 1114 S. Casino Center Blvd., 702-685-1777, vestacoffee.com



historical research, and trial and error that sourdough bread is fundamentally better for your body. The microbes break down the flour, making it more digestible and nutritious.

Kimbell notes in her book that slow-fermented sourdough breads actually break down residual gluten, making it more digestible for those with gluten sensitivities or digestive issues. And Boyer, though hesitant to make any medically related claims, does share anecdotes of customers with gluten sensitivity who've tried his bread and come back for more.

Before we go in for round two of bread-tasting, Boyer wants to show me something. He goes into a pantry and hauls out an enormous container of flour — but not just any flour. "This is the real deal; this is stone-ground wheat," he says. "And what that does is, you're preserving as much of that grain as you can." He reaches in and shows me how the flour clumps more readily, reflecting its freshness.

For bakers like Boyer who care about the microscopic worlds within their bread, using stone-ground flour is a must, because most flour is made using roller-milled wheat, which heats up the grain and kills off a significant proportion of the wild yeasts and LAB in the flour. The industrialization of bread required that loaves come out quickly and consistently within a controlled, replicable system. That meant using very specific strains of wheat and factory-grown yeast — meaning that farmers stopped growing smaller, heritage varietals of wheat.

With bakers like Boyer, this is starting to change. He sources his flour from growers in all of the states bordering Nevada (we don't have our own source of organic wheat yet, he notes), and has it stone-ground. This is why you might actually notice that his sourdough isn't very sour: "I want you to taste the grain because the grain is so delicious. Why would I want to cover up the grain?" he asks. "If I brought the sour flavor, all those notes that the grain have are going to go to the background."

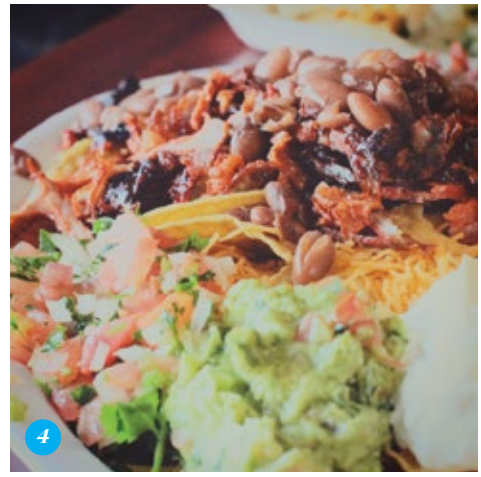
Boyer brings out yet another loaf, this time an oat porridge, and rips it open to show me the ripples of oat that run through it like striations in a rock face. He toasts a few more pieces and we slather them with generous scoops of butter that melt into the bubbles, nooks, and crannies. With each tender, chewy bite, you start to feel like bread is something wholesome again. Forget the diets and the bun-less burgers and carb-haters. Bread is one of our earliest inventions, and eating it brings us back to something essentially human. Especially bread like this. ✦

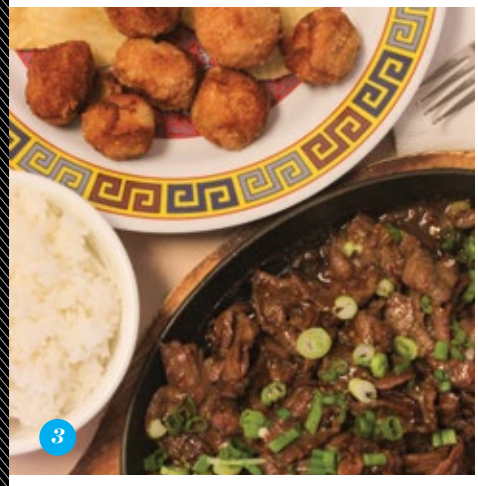
Street Foodie

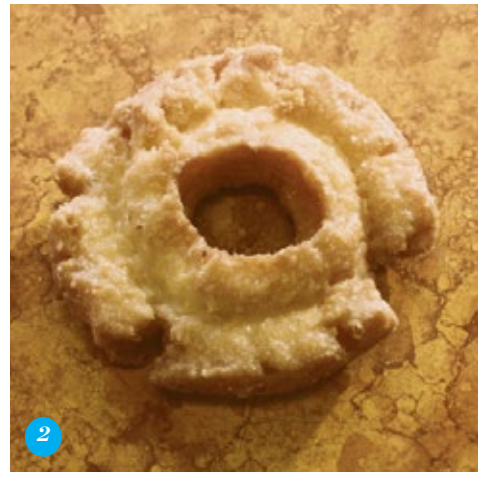
NOTHING FANCY

In North Las Vegas, eating real food made for real people

PHOTOS & CAPTIONS BY ***Brent Holmes***


4


3


2


1

HAMBURGER HUT (1)

This North Las Vegas fixture proves simplicity can equal elegance. The reliable menu of fries, chicken wings, onion rings, and fingers is highlighted by — in Street Foodie's opinion — the platonic ideal of the cheeseburger. The essential thing, perfectly done. (This is the taste I often associate with North Las Vegas.) If the bustling room is any indication, I'm not the only one who thinks so.

2512 E. Cheyenne Ave., hamburgerhutlv.com

REAL DONUTS AND SUBS (2)

This year, Street Foodie resolves to eat more donuts. Nothing says living your best life like an old-fashioned and a cup of coffee. I'll level with you: I haven't even tried the subs here. After the donuts, there's never any room in the Street Belly. ***2212 E. Cheyenne Ave., 702-649-6357***

USS FISH N CHIPS (3)

The presence of a military base has resulted in a dining hybrid that Street Foodie and Dr. Moreau can't help but love: semi-authentic, delicious Korean flavors mashed-up with a standard fish-fry joint. Try a plate of *bulgogi* in tandem with the fried scallops, and you'll see. The chip-style fries fit neither culinary tradition but meld beautifully with both. ***3297 Las Vegas Blvd. N., 702-643-7251***

TAQUERIA EL TIZON GRILL (4)

The "super" in super nachos typically has no bearing on the quality of the dish. Well, we may have found an exception. Street Foodie — no lightweight when it comes to nachos — finished about a quarter of these massively sized, massively delicious, very super nachos. Tip: Pile on the al pastor, which is top-notch. ***3266 Las Vegas Blvd. N. #9, 702-878-4966***

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*– Renewal by Andersen Customer, **Shawn H., Las Vegas, Nevada***

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FITNESS | NICHE GYMS

All Together Now

Tired of regular old fitness clubs? Maybe a focused group workout is just what your New Year's resolution needs

BY ***Kristy Totten***

You know the standard self-directed gym grind: Work your way around the equipment at your own pace, maybe consult with a trainer now and then. It works for many, but apparently not for everyone, judging by the number and variety of gym alternatives popping up in Las Vegas: group workouts, often focused on a single activity. Let's do a circuit of the options out there!

Name: Orangetheory
What it is: A 60-minute workout that monitors your heart by wristband device while using rowing machines, free weights, and either a bike, treadmill, or strider.
How it works: The goal is to stay in the "orange zone," where your heart is pumping at 84 percent of its maximum, for at least 12 minutes. Doing so, says founder Ellen Latham, keeps your body burning calories well after the workout is over. Your stats are displayed on a screen during class, but all levels are welcome. Your real competition, the coaches say, is yourself.
Need to know: First class free; monthly membership packages include four, eight, or unlimited classes
Contact: Seven Las Vegas Valley locations, orangetheoryfitness.com

Name: PureBarre
What it is: A 45 to 50-minute class inspired by ballet, yoga, and Pilates that pairs low-impact micromovements with light equipment and a barre.
How it works: By aiming for fast results. Although small, isometric movements may not sound challenging, barre works the

whole body, muscle group by muscle group, to improve weight loss, flexibility, and build long, lean muscles.
Need to know: $79 for unlimited first month, $169 per month after; wear pants or leggings and a T-shirt or tank (no shorts) with sticky socks
Contact: Locations in Henderson and Downtown Summerlin, purebarre.com

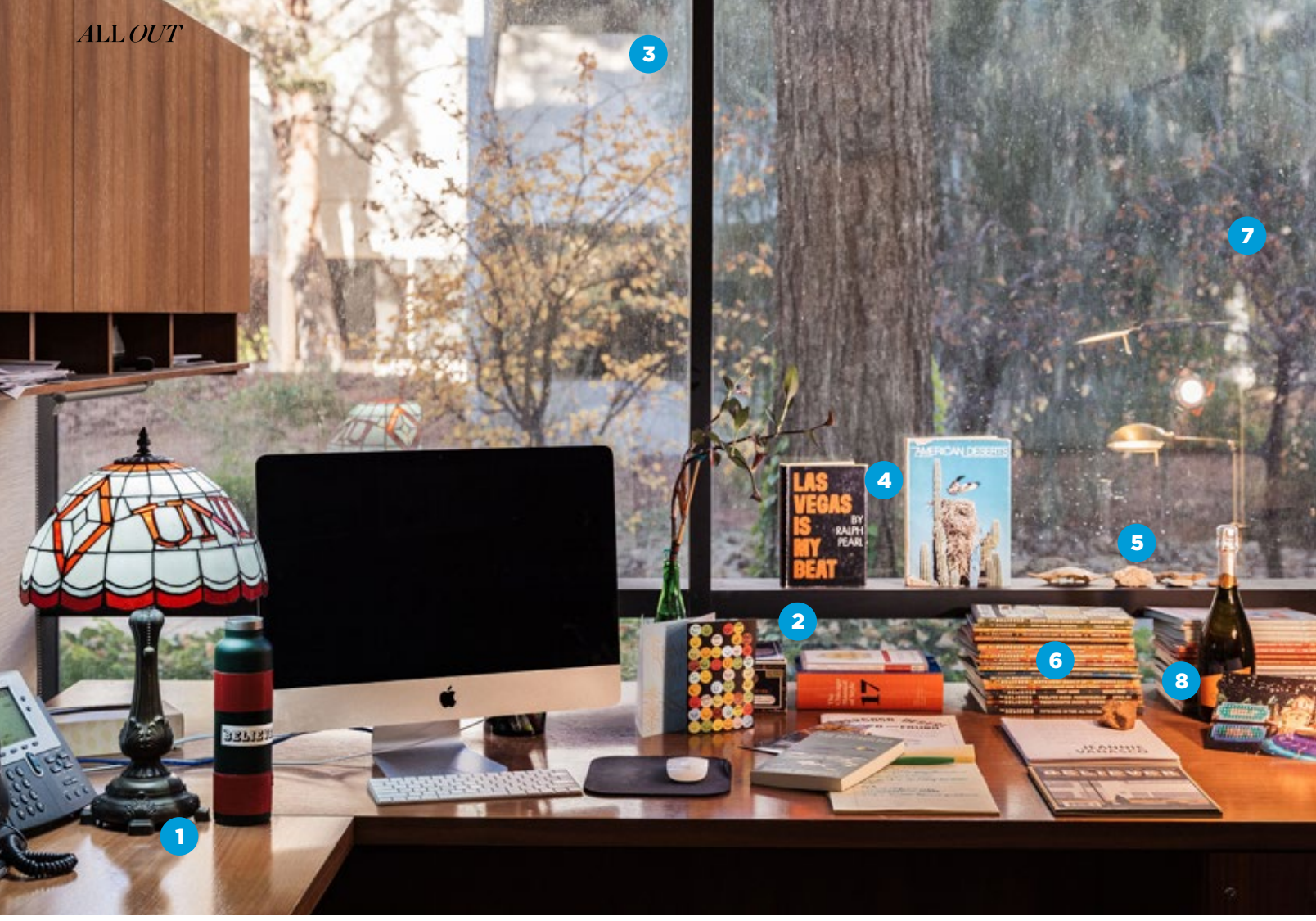
Name: Cyclebar
What it is: A series of 45-minute indoor cycling classes ranging from classic and competitive to themed rides like Broadway Smash Hits and "Britney B$#*!"
How it works: Cycling is low-impact, good for your muscles, and great for your heart. This isn't a stroll through the park, though, nor is it an old-fashioned stationary bike. Expect a high-intensity workout on an upright bike that leans, in a flashy Cycle Bar that plays energizing audio and videos.
Need to know: Drop-in classes for $35, packages starting at $99 for five rides, clip-in shoes included
Contact: 2280 Paseo Verde Parkway #160, henderson.cyclebar.com

Name: Raw Fitness
What it is: Hour-long small-group training and boot-camp classes geared toward weight-loss, strength-building, and camaraderie.
How it works: Raw Fitness says losing 20 pounds is easily doable during its 30-day weight-loss challenge. If you do, you get your money back, too. The high-intensity boot-camp classes vary day to day and include exercises such as running, pushups, burpees, and weight-lifting. For advanced clients, the studio offers weightlifting programs three days per week.
Need to know: First week free, monthly memberships available
Contact: Six valley locations, rawfitnesslv.com

Name: CrossFit
What it is: High-intensity, family-friendly workouts meant to develop strength and endurance through elements of gymnastics, weightlifting, running, rowing, and other activities.
How it works: CrossFit can challenge advanced athletes and be scaled back to suit beginners. The goal is improved performance over time — scores and times are kept on a whiteboard — and a perk is the community built between people who work out together.
Need to know: First classes are often free
Contact: Dozens of locations valleywide, crossfit.com

ILLUSTRATION: BRENT HOLMES





MY SPACE

Daniel Gumbiner

The novelist and *Believer* magazine editor surrounds himself with reminders of his past — and intimations of the future

BY ***Summer Thomad***

Daniel Gumbiner wore many hats before landing his most recent position as managing editor of *The Believer*, the literature magazine housed in UNLV's Beverly Rogers, Carol C. Harter Black Mountain Institute. He was a kale-chip salesman, a waiter for a fusion restaurant in Chile, an editor at McSweeney's Publishing in San Francisco, and a boatbuilder's apprentice in the Bay Area, where he's from. Gumbiner's eclectic resume informed his debut novel, *The Boatbuilder*, which was long-listed for the National Book Award, and ultimately led him here, to the desert.

"Even though it's such a new city, it's really drenched in history and story, so it's an interesting place for me to be as a writer; it's been a very exploratory phase for me," Gumbiner says. In his workspace, he strikes a healthy balance of both exploration and connection to his roots.

1 UNLV lamp. It may have come with the office, but its history is noteworthy. The lamp belonged to Carol C. Harter, UNLV's first female president and founder of BMI.

2 Cigar box. (Behind card.) It belonged to his grandfather, who was the last delivery milkman in Brooklyn. "He loved to chew cigars, and would chew them when he was, like, playing golf or hanging out at the house. I use it to keep little notes and things like memories that I want to hang onto."

3 Window. The highlight of Gumbiner's office is the floor-to-ceiling window with a view of one of UNLV's less-frequented trails. Outside, passersby can only see their reflection in the one-way glass; inside, Gumbiner can see everything they do. "I've seen break-ups, and a lot of people checking themselves out. There'll be a guy standing there, doing his hair, looking directly at me, and he can't see me." It's not just people: A desert hawk that lives in a nearby tree occasionally flies directly into his window.

4 Source material. Gumbiner's second book will be set in a fictionalized Las Vegas, so he's accumulating books on the city and the desert. "I take something that is related to the subject material but has nothing to do with it, and just see where my mind goes. It can be a way to free my mind."

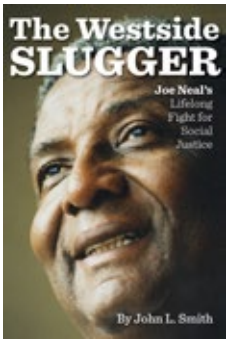
5 Beach mementos. "Home things" Gumbiner says, gesturing to a horseshoe crab shell, coral, driftwood, and assorted seashells scattered across the window sill — keepsakes from his life in the Bay Area. "My homeostasis is there; it's where I feel most comfortable. But that being said, it's also fraught with all the constraints that a home place can be fraught with. Coming here, it's very uncharted, there's a lot of freedom to it, which I think is what a lot of people experience when they come to Vegas."

6 Back issues of *The Believer*. These two stacks represent the magazine's two eras: One comprises old issues from when it was based in San Francisco, displaying the classic, four-quadrant Charles Burns-illustrated covers that a longtime reader would recognize. The other stack includes every issue since the magazine moved here. Now, each cover is designed by a different artist.

7 Coworker Michael Ursell (not pictured). Because his cubicle walls don't meet the ceiling, Gumbiner has an unseen officemate with whom he often talks. "In the past we have listened to podcasts at the same time. We just speak to each other as disembodied voices, which people find very weird, but it's very natural to us at this point."

"Very natural!" Ursell says over the wall.

8 Champagne. The bottle of Ogio Prosecco was a gift from BMI fellows Claire Vaye Watkins and Derek Palacio after *The Boatbuilder* was long-listed for the National Book Award; he keeps it as a memory of that day. "It used to have this amazing unicorn balloon attached to it that was floating above the barrier here, and Michael could see it, so he would take these videos of the unicorn balloon. Then eventually it was dying, and we staged its death in a video."



OUT THIS MONTH *DC* contributor John L. Smith's *The Westside Slugger* (University of Nevada Press) tells the long-overdue story of iconic Nevada politician Joe Neal.







OSWALD'S MOMENT Fellow presidential assailants encourage Kennedy's killer in *Assassins*.

SONGS OF AMERICA Into this raw-nerve cultural moment — one boiling with political rancor and intimations of violence — comes **Las Vegas Little Theatre's *Assassins***, a Tony-winning Sondheim musical about, yes, presidential assassins. It's not political, says co-director Gillen Brey (with Walter Niejadlik), at least not in a current-events way; it does, however, investigate what America means, which imbues it with a kind of timeless timeliness. In a chronology-warping narrative, nine killers, from John Wilkes Booth to Lee Harvey Oswald, interact in various scenarios, including — so succulently metaphorical! — a carnival shooting gallery, all the while declaiming their grievances with the American Dream. Last year, a *New York Times* critic called it "the most shocking mainstream musical ever written." Slightly less so in this post-October 1 version: Gillen says no presidents will be shot onstage. "This is not a time when we need to be seeing that." There will be an emphasis on the show's humor, too. (Her gun inoperable, one assailant *throws* bullets at Gerald Ford.) The 16 actors and 14 musicians will make the most of a creatively bare-bones set as they explore "what brought (the assassins) to these extremes," Brey says. Connections to the current situation are there to be made — perhaps, according to the *Times*, when one character sings, "every now and then, the country goes a little wrong"? — but you'll have to make them yourself. ***Scott Dickensheets***
January 18-February 3, various times, $22-$25, 3920 Schiff Drive, lvlt.org

THEATER

ABSURD CITY

Cockroach Theatre brings a 49-year-old play to Las Vegas at just the right time

Because it's so pungently insightful, let's not bury Darren Weller's money quote: "If there's any place primed to see a play told by clowns, it's Las Vegas." *Yes!*

Now, the context: Weller is the artistic director of Cockroach Theatre, and the play he's talking about is Dario Fo's absurdist classic *The Accidental Death of an Anarchist* (opening January 23). It resists easy summary, but here are some key elements: an antic lead character known as The Maniac; an anarchist, dead after falling from a window of the police station; cops who may have pushed him; official corruption; impersonation; deceit.

Point is, this isn't just any old tale told by clowns. For one thing, Fo won the 1997 Nobel Prize for Literature. For another, it's loaded with social commentary and, though it debuted in 1970 in Italy, it's as ripe for America as this morning's headlines.

"It's about how corruption is the norm, not the exception," Weller says, then, with elegant understatement, adds, "it ties in nicely with the current moment." Political storytelling can be tricky, Weller knows. "But social commentary delivered from the mouths of clowns makes for good theater." As you may have surmised, this isn't some careful scrimshaw of subtle meanings from which the audience must tease out its messages. "This is big, bold, brash, bawdy theater," he promises.

Making it all work onstage will be the job of guest director Allegra Libonati, whose website describes her as "a lover of music, circus, magic, dance, masks, and puppets." Sounds like she's coming to the right place, at the right time, for the right show. ***Scott Dickensheets***

The Accidental Death of an Anarchist, by Cockroach Theatre, January 23-February 10, $20-$25, Art Square Theatre, 1025 S. Frist Street, cockroachtheatre.com



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Saturday, January 26, 9–1

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Green Valley 990-7300
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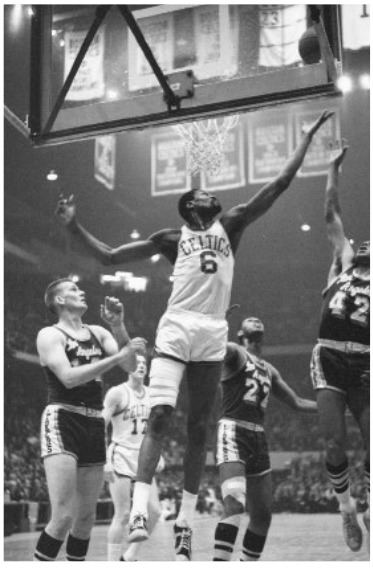
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VISUAL ART | PHOTOGRAPHY

Capturing the Struggle

Photos documenting the Civil Rights Movement retain their visual — and moral — impact

Photographs can transport you into, and out of, time. "Rev. King in Boston" funnels you straight back to the mid-'60s and everything we now associate with the face and gestures of Martin Luther King Jr.: the struggle for racial equality, nonviolent resistance, a reaching toward something. "Waiting" — showing African-Americans registering to vote in Mississippi in 1964 — is equally a document of that time, but there's something compellingly timeless about the look of determination on the face of the man in the white hat.

Both photos, as well as the action shot of basketball great Bill Russell, were taken by prolific photojournalist Ted Polumbaum. A selection of his work, some derived from *Time* magazine assignments to cover civil-rights events in 1964 and 1968 and augmented with other work, will be shown in the Summerlin Library, under the title *Lives on the Line: Civil Rights Images*, beginning January 17. It was curated by his daughter, Judy Polumbaum, a Las Vegan.

On February 7 there will be a reception for the exhibit, along with a panel discussion titled "Lives on the Line: The Civil Rights Legacy," featuring a law professor, minister, and local activists talking about the movement's past, present, and future.

Ted Polumbaum, who died in 2001, had an interesting history of his own. According to Judy Polumbaum's account, in the book *Juxtapositions: Images from the Newseum Ted Polumbaum Photo Collection*, his career in written journalism faltered when he defied the infamous House Committee on Un-American Activities and its demand that he name suspected communists in the news business. As writing jobs dried up, Polumbaum turned his photography hobby into a new freelance career, eventually snapping photographs around the world. His archive at the Newseum, in Washington, D.C., runs to some 250,000 images. ***Scott Dickensheets***

01/17 **LIVES ON THE LINE: CIVIL RIGHTS IMAGES** January 17-March 25, reception and panel talk February 7, 6p, Summerlin Library, lvccld.org



VISUAL ART | FIELD NOTES

Searching for Insight in the Bellagio Gallery's Room of Light

BY ***Veronica Klash***

Maybe I'll have an epiphany. I was hedging my bets, trying not to place an undue burden on Yayoi Kusama's *Infinity Room — Aftermath of Obliteration* in the Bellagio Gallery of Fine Art. But somewhere underneath that "maybe" was the expectation. The idea that, against all odds, I would be surprised and that 45 seconds in a room full of twinkling lights and mirrored walls would part the clouds of my mind, and clarity would emerge. Earlier, while getting in line inside the gallery, I ran into a friend I hadn't spoken to or seen in months. Her father had recently passed away. I embraced her tightly and held on for longer than is appropriate in polite society. Her sorrow exhaled into the atmosphere around our hug, or it's possible I squeezed the breath clean out of her lungs. As the queue shuffled forward steadily, in a single file around the gallery's perimeter, I offered her what I little I could. Our exchange imbued the exhibit with urgency — big (terrible) changes were afoot.

The exhibit comprises two separate installation pieces created by the unrivaled Kusama. Each ticketed one-hour session is limited to 75 guests. Before getting in line for my epiphany, I explored the second installation, *Narcissus Garden*. This has traveled widely in the United States and abroad. Kusama created the field of watermelon-sized, reflective ball-bearings for the 1966 Venice Biennale. It's a testament either to her vision or the unchanging nature of humanity that the installation remains wholly relevant today, and even takes on new meaning with each location. In New York, the derelict surroundings of a structure ravaged by Hurricane Sandy, still in disrepair, contrasted spectacularly with the high sheen of the globes. In Las Vegas, observing endless selfies being taken in a pool of shiny large balls seemed almost too on-the-nose. Middle-aged couples posed unironically, smiling, angling their phones to capture the sea of silver instead of the white walls emblazoned with the words, "My idea was to bring out the unknown parts in people by reflecting the mirror of time with my mirror." Millennials took pictures of each other, eerily intimate with their best side and most favorable angle, craning their heads low in order to capture their faces next to the balls. A soft breeze would've knocked them down into the installation. It's hard to tell whether they're in on the joke, or if they're the punchline.

The number of ball-bearings was reduced in order to fit in

NOW **INSTALLATIONS BY YAYOI KUSAMA**, through April 28, Bellagio Gallery of Fine Art, $15, *bellagio.com*

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the Bellagio Gallery, thus the Las Vegas installation presents only a fraction of the whole. Something we're used to in this town, whose tourist center relies on façades culled from elsewhere. A city of lights, neon, and LED, illuminating the desert. This place, then, with its groundbreaking displays of light, is the perfect spot for Kusama's *Infinity Room*. But grateful as I am for the Bellagio Gallery and its mission, I wish the exhibit could've happened in a different venue. A space more indicative of the true nature of Las Vegas, brought together by individual ambition and a desire to contribute something new. But even with certain strides forward, the Las Vegas art scene remains scattered, bereft of a beating heart that can pump blood to limbs tingling with sleep.

Before entering the *Infinity Room*, I decide not to photograph the experience, opting instead for a pure, undocumented moment. I don't regret that decision, even though my memory is subpar, at best. (This essay, of course, serves as a means of documentation.) Once the door closes behind me, I immediately feel alone. Outside noises are audible but distant, and I recall a memory of being in the dark, solitary in my room as a child, adult conversation carrying on just beyond my door. The lights suspended all around me glow in a mango-hued constellation. The faint scent of peach drifts in the air, probably from a previous guest's perfume. Perhaps I'm just craving fruit-salad. Determined not to waste my insight on a healthy dessert, I refocus and clear my mind. When staring straight ahead I'm faced with my gawking reflection, standing awkwardly. Still no epiphany. I turn to the right, and now my image is a footnote in a sprawling ocean of luminescence. It's the end of time and everything has ceased to exist. I'm weightless. I search for my epiphany in every angle of the space and discover nothing but beauty. The lights go on endlessly, and their delicate mid-air dance is entrancing. The door opens; the experience is over. Even primed by my friend's grief, I found no revelation in the dark, only the bloom of a splendid artistic landscape. And that is more than enough. Maybe there's a realization somewhere in there after all. Maybe not. ✦

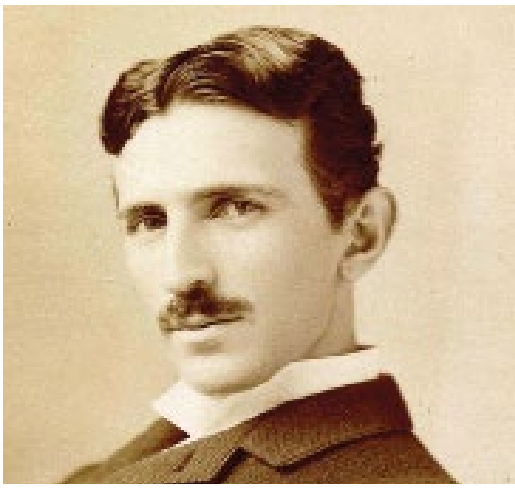
THE Hot Seat

Music

LAS VEGAS PHILHARMONIC

THE SMITH CENTER

If anyone could be said to have soundtracked the lives of a generation or two, it's movie-music composer John Williams. Boomers will revel in Williams' theme from *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, while the millennials can thrill to the theme music from *Harry Potter*. And everyone loves *Star Wars*. A pleasant beginning to the new year. **January 12, 7:30p, $30-$109, thesmithcenter.com**



Theater

TESLA EX MACHINA

WINDMILL LIBRARY

There was a time when the name Tesla wasn't naturally followed by the phrase "Gigafactory" — when it only referenced scientist Nikola Tesla, the Serbian émigré who powered the 1893 World's Fair with electricity generated by Niagara Falls. This one-man show takes you into his life. **January 26, 2p, free, lvccld.org**

Axis Mundo: Queer Networks in Chicano L.A. Important 50-artist exhibit that "excavates histories of experimental art practice." **Opening reception January 11, 5-9p, UNLV's Barrick Museum, unlv.edu/barrickmuseum**



Visual Art

USE OTHER DOOR

CORE CONTEMPORARY

For its first-ever juried exhibit, CORE adopted the theme "the other door," which "provides an opportunity for artists to use their creative skills in a way that maybe they haven't in the past," says CORE gallerist Nancy Good. The result is a range of interpretations from the literal to the metaphorical. **Opening reception January 11, 6:30p; through March 16, 900 E. Karen Ave. #D-222, corecontemporary.com**

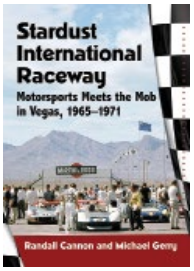
Literature

ELIZABETH MCCRACKEN

THE WRITER'S BLOCK

An enigmatic foundling, a bowling alley, a scandal, a dubious heir — if you can whip those plot points into a funny, profound work of fiction, then you could only be novelist Elizabeth McCracken, and you will read from your new book *Bowlaway* in Downtown's shiny new bookstore. Pleased to meet you, Elizabeth! **Jan. 31, 7p, free, blackmountaininstitute.org**





Lecture

MOTOR-SPORTS MEETS THE MOB

CLARK COUNTY LIBRARY

Author Randall Cannon talks about his new book, *Stardust international Raceway*, a look back at the 1965-1971 heyday of a race track operated in Southern Nevada by the mobbed-up bosses at the Stardust. If, like many of us, you've ever opined, "Auto racing was better when the mob ran it," this is the event for you. **January 15, 7p, free, lvccld.org**

Film

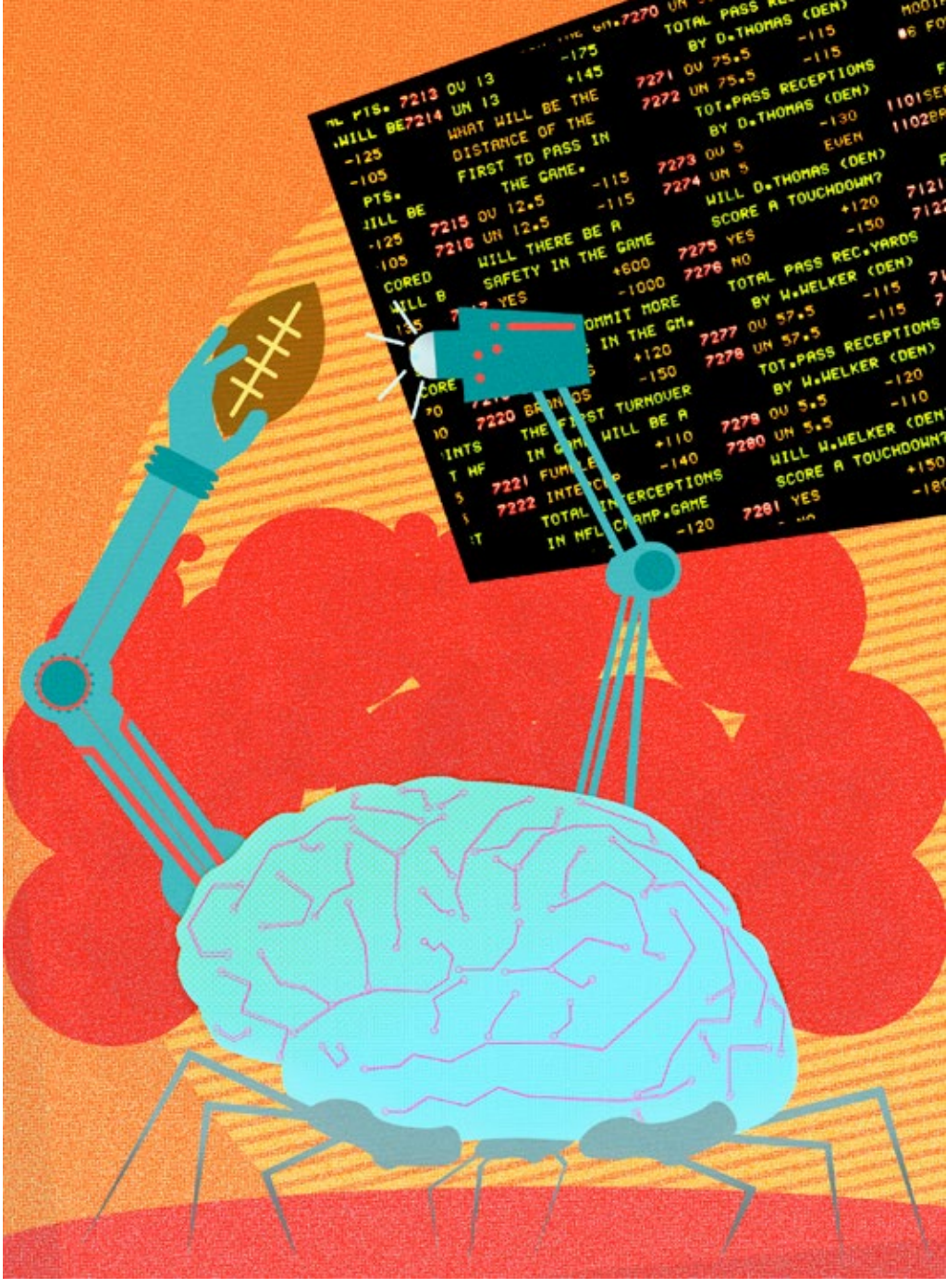
LAS VEGAS JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL

VARIOUS LOCATIONS

Nevada's longest-running film festival, this Joshua Abbey-curated event marks its 18th year with a strong schedule of films that examine Jewish life, the cinema of Israel, and more — including *Balabustas,* a new documentary spotlighting Jewish women who have shaped Southern Nevada. This year, all screenings are free, on a first-come, first-seated basis. **January 10-27, free, lvjff.org**







BUSINESS

RISE OF THE BET BOTS

There's an arms race brewing in the sportsbook as bettors and bookmakers adopt AI to give them an edge

BY ***Jason Scavone***

The machines are coming.

That sentence used to sound like some bit of techno-paranoia. Now it's just a statement of fact. Artificial intelligence is being heavily researched and developed by the leading Silicon Valley brains of our day.

"It's inevitable," Louis Rosenberg says. "Nature proves it's possible. If you connect networks of neurons together, you can build an intelligence. It's inevitable, and I think it's in the 25- to 75-year time range. It's not a thousand years out in the future." But before Skynet sends a bunch of Terminators to Earth, our new robot overlords might be more interested in your wallet.

Rosenberg is the CEO and chief scientist of Unanimous AI, a 4-year-old San Francisco company that champions "Swarm AI." Unanimous aims to replicate the way flocks of birds, schools of fish, and swarms of bees amplify their intelligence through participating in feedback loops, whether they're avoiding predators or choosing a new home. But in this case, the swarm is emergent software intelligence, and the goal is to help humans make better decisions. Swarm AI works by soliciting individual input, weighing each person's confidence in his decision, and running it through a neural network that processes those individual inputs into new insights that boost the intelligence of the group as a whole. The ability to adjust for feedback from participants in real time sets Swarm AI apart from mere crowdsourcing.

Unanimous garnered national attention in 2016, when the firm was challenged to pick the Kentucky Derby superfecta, or the first four finishers in a horse race, in order. Drawing on 20 experts for raw input, Unanimous predicted Nyquist, Exaggerator, Gun Runner, and Mohaymen. Those four horses hit the wire, in that order. It paid $542.10 on a $1 bet. Rosenberg made $11,000 on his $20 ticket.

Rosenberg uses sports betting as something of a test case for his technology, releasing picks regularly on the company's blog and publishing studies in full-season predictions. Last year, over the course of 200 NHL games, the swarm was able to pick winners at a 61 percent clip. Narrowing the field to the 20 games that represented the swarm's best of the week, it connected at 85 percent. Betting 15 percent of an initial $100 bankroll on the pick of the week yielded a $270 profit. Simply choosing sportsbook

ILLUSTRATION ***Brent Holmes***

moneyline favorites in those games would have ended in a $28 loss.

Unanimous isn't the only AI company experimenting with sports betting, either. There are multiple European companies that are going full-steam ahead with offering AI-assisted picks to the public. London-based Stratapro offers AI-driven soccer picks for a monthly subscription fee. Poland's AIbet covers everything from Japanese baseball to European handball. Based in Wellington, Washington, Sportsflare purports to be "a system to convert sports betting into a viable investment vehicle." (Which guys have been saying to their wives about their weekly trips to the bookie since about 1921.)

But this hardly means sportsbooks are going to stand around and be outsmarted by would-be cyborg bettors using smart software to get an edge. On the other side of the counter, casinos are gearing up to employ artificial intelligence as well, to protect and even increase their sportsbook profits. For casinos, the next AI-powered sports-betting trend is the advent of "in-play" wagers — that is, a constant cycle of new bets and odds generated in real time as the live game happens.

"Not the next football season, but the following football season, in-play (wagers) will be widely recognized," says John English, managing director of sports betting and technology at Global Market Advisors, a gaming consulting firm. He was previously with American Wagering Inc., the first company to develop a mobile sports betting app that received regulatory approval from Gaming Control.

"When we sold (American Wagering) to (United Kingdom-based) William Hill, I wanted them to see the sportsbook in full motion on a Sunday afternoon. They're looking at the boards, going, 'What the hell are you guys betting on? There's nothing to bet on. This is all you got?'"

That's because the Brits from William Hill were used to more sophisticated betting systems. Similar to what bettors can currently find on apps like those offered by Station Casinos, the Superbook and others, European bettors are accustomed to a dazzling array of wagers — all constantly updated by AI-backed algorithms — on live, in-play action during the course of a game. Operators trust AI to set all the lines, and adjust them on the fly.

With in-play betting, the menu of available bets can run a dozen or more, constantly updated as the clock ticks and plays develop. For example, in the third quarter of a college football game with the score at 24-16, you might get options on a point spread of 7.5, a point total of 61.5, game moneyline bets, the margin of victory, the first team to score 30 points, what type of play the next score will come on, and so on. As the seconds slip by and a drive for the team that's trailing stalls, that total slides down to 58.5. The spread jumps to 9.5. Bets are frozen as plays develop and odds shift. If regular betting is knocking in 15-foot putts, in-play wagering is hitting your driver from a surfboard during storm season. English estimates that the advent of AI-driven in-play wagering has expanded the U.K. market by 70 percent.

NEW BOT WITH AN OLD TRICK

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ISN'T the first technological breakthrough to alter the sports-betting landscape. In some ways, AI is a new dog with an old trick. Which is why some veteran bookmakers aren't fazed if squares or sharps have a new tool at their disposal.

Jay Kornegay, vice president of race and sportsbook operations at Westgate Resorts, was working at the Imperial Palace when the infamous Computer Group (famous sports bettor Billy Walters, now in prison for insider trading, was a partner) was revolutionizing betting by harnessing the power of algorithms in the '80s and '90s, long before the public caught on to the advantages of using burgeoning processing power to beat the books.

"These programs, what I found out over the years, is sometimes they go on these streaks," Kornegay says. "They don't seem to last. The game catches up to them, the lines adjust to certain trends or information. When we look at sharp play, they're always going to get respect from the bookmakers, meaning when they do play something, that line will be aggressively moved. Once that line goes from 4 to 5, that perceived value that's there may no longer exist after that first play."

In other words, if too much money in a betting pool is on one side or another, sportsbooks can adjust the point spread, narrowing it to encourage more action to flow to the favorite, or widening it to nudge bettors toward the underdog. Sophisticated bettors, or sharps, tend to look for "soft" lines where they think the books are vulnerable. If the Steelers are favored by three, and a sharp has calculated they'll win by seven, the money goes to Pittsburgh. If the sportsbooks adjust the line to eight, sharps will change their bet or stay away altogether.

There are two main weapons the books

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have to mitigate their exposure: adjusting moneylines and point spreads (to attract bets to both sides, thereby limiting their exposure to any one outcome), and limiting the action they'll take on certain wagers or from certain customers. Paradoxically, as the sophistication of bettors increases through AI-generated information or other means, the more the books will have to rely on savvy, educated humans to plug leaks.

It will require operators to have humans watching the machines to see where bets are coming from. Sharp play can be throttled down through limiting so that sportsbooks aren't vulnerable to bad lines. But it takes a wise hand at the wheel to also know the difference between when the money is coming in from someone truly sharp, or is just coming from someone on a hot streak. (Ask anyone who's lost their office fantasy football league to the 22-year-old receptionist who's never watched a single down in her life.)

Bad lines on in-play bets do leave operators vulnerable to the truly sharp, but it's a rich revenue stream by offering dozens of more options per game — and therefore dozens of more chances for the betting public to make mistakes.

"In in-play wagering, it's happening so fast, people don't have the time to handicap it or think it through," English says. "It's more of an impulse style of betting. It typically has a much higher hold."

THE FUTURE GETS WEIRD

AMERICAN SPORTSBOOKS ARE only a couple of years away from being run like their AI-enhanced European counterparts, but it also won't be long before AI becomes available on a mass consumer scale to sports bettors. That's when things could get weird.

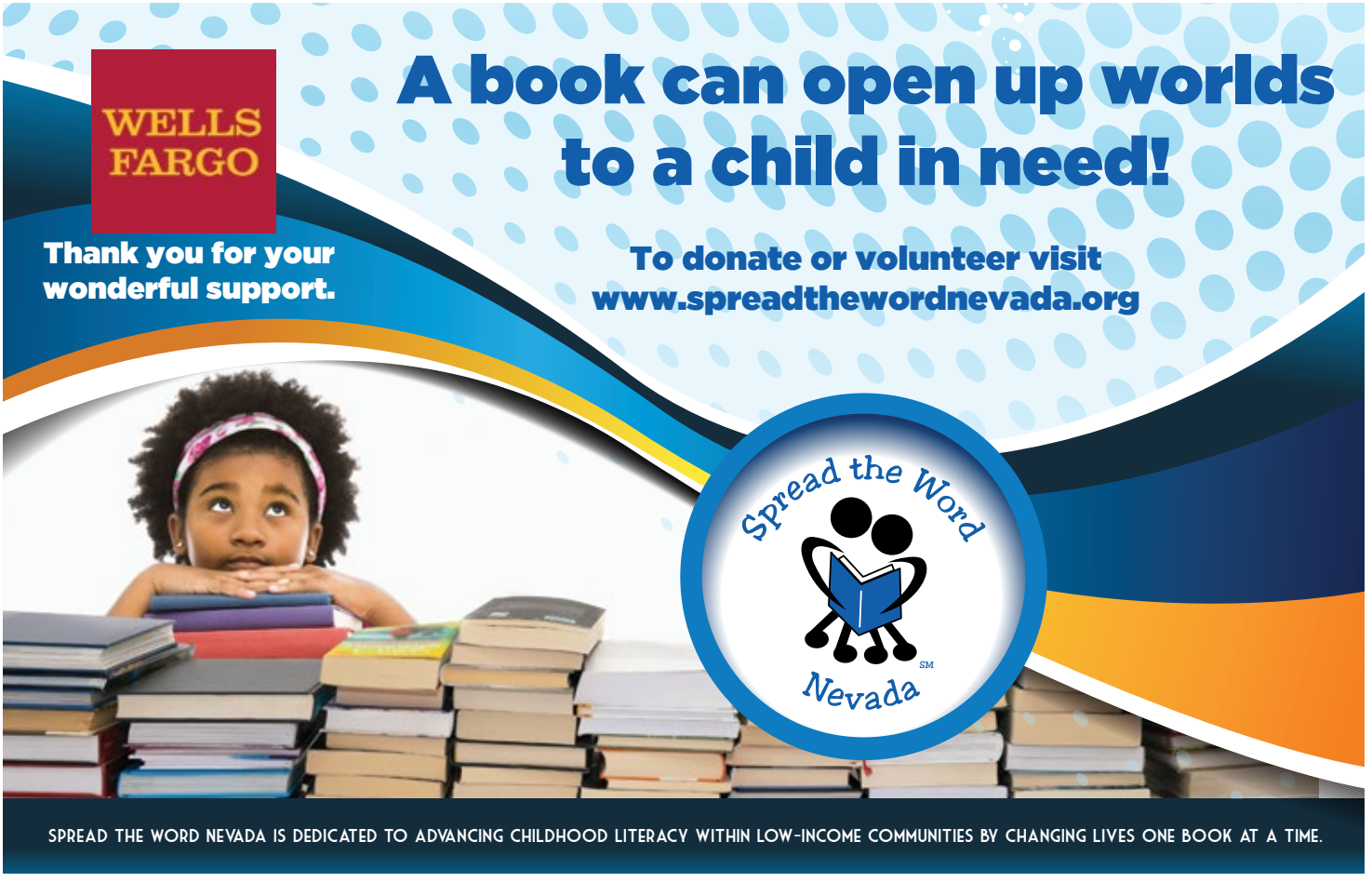
"As both sides have good information, it's like you and I *without* information," English says. "As much as their information increases, we need to make sure our technology from the bookmakers' side of the equation keeps up with the technology. Artificial intelligence is constantly updating its systems to be the best it can be. As long as you're doing that, for the most part it's kind of an equalizer. It goes back to when nobody had any information. You just had a hunch. If you have great information and I have great information, let's go at it and see whose is better."

The magic number is 52.38 percent. That's the hit rate a bettor must make in point-spread wagers like in football and basketball to break even against the built-in house edge that requires a $110 bet to win $100.

For Rosenberg's version of artificial intelligence, a 52.38 percent accuracy rate is small potatoes. "There is a maximum limit," he said. "I think it's different in every sport. It really just depends on what kind of random events can happen. But in terms of accuracy, it's probably somewhere north of 85 percent."

It's not a wild stretch to envision a day when bettors turn their AI systems loose to do battle with AI-enabled betting platforms, as alerts clue in operators that something is happening out there, and human adjustments might need to be made. If that kind of equilibrium is reached, English expects to see lines that stay more or less static over the course of a day or week before the game.

But those heights are still a way off. For a span from weeks nine to 12 in the NFL,



Unanimous' publicly listed predictions only identified 28 of 51 straight-up winners of the games (a 55 percent accuracy rate) and went just 16-26 against the point spread (38 percent accuracy).

"It's hard to put your head around this, that something could hit 85 percent," Kornegay says. "We would have to have a large sample of success for us to move (a spread) more than a point or two."

If betting matured with the advent of the Computer Group into the cat-and-mouse between bookmakers and bettors, artificial intelligence may accelerate that process. But whether it can fundamentally change it is another story.

Dick Carson is cut from the cloth of the great old-time road gamblers. He was a pool hustler, a freewheeling bookie who got shaken down by Anthony Spilotro in the late '70s, and a champion lowball poker player in the '80s. He used to set his lines by pencil and paper. He had to learn to adjust through the years as bettors became more educated with the advent of more and better public information, including information based on computer-driven predictive models. That initial awakening of the betting public in the '80s and '90s may be the closest example of a fundamental shift in how bettors wager to help frame the coming age of AI.

Carson told the *Thinking Poker* podcast, "You get the price right, you put the line up and you make them lay 11-to-10. What's the only thing that hasn't gone up in 119 years? Everything's gone up. Not 11-to-10 though. 11-to-10 must be okay. I don't know what Abraham Lincoln was booking, but I think 11-to-10. If you have the right number, 11-to-10 will overcome everything." In other words, the house will always get its cut.

English doesn't think that laying 11-to-10 will ever change. Books trying to force bettors to lay 12-to-10 (that is, betting $120 to win $100) will force them to turn to illegal, offshore competition. The margins for the house in sports betting are small relative to the pits and the slots. A generation ago, though, 3-to-2 for a blackjack seemed as eternal as the pyramids. In a world of 6-to-5, we're seeing that fundamental gambling maxims aren't as fundamental as we thought.

The days of savvy handicappers matching wits directly against seen-it-all bookmakers armed with nothing but box scores and a feel for the game are long behind us. The era of traditional bets on a total or a side as the main wagers of choice in Las Vegas and other American markets may be drawing to a close. What won't change — what keeps people coming back to sports betting, even in a theoretical future where the computers precisely predict which team will win every matchup — is exactly what will keep the house in business. The instruments might change, but there are only so many notes on the scale.

"People want to win. They want to get down," English says. "There's always been a guy that's got a system who feels he's going to win more than the other guy. In the end, as long as the house can keep that edge, you could have all the best information in the world, and you still can't always 100 percent predict the outcome of a sporting event. Nothing's going to stop (another player) from taking out Tom Brady's leg."

The machines are coming, but we random, capricious, unpredictable humans aren't going anywhere anytime soon. ✦





CULTURE

THE BINDS THAT TIE

Bound by a mutual love of old books, bookbinders Pat McCarty and Leo Behnke pursue their timeless craft in a digital era

BY ***Sonja Swanson***

When Pat McCarty and Leo Behnke pick up a book, they see things that normal people don't: the type of fibers used in the end papers, the way the publishers decided to finish the page edges, the choice of fabric used in the tiny, barely-perceptible strip of fabric up top called a "headband." That's because, to them, books are more than just a convenient way to transport the written word — the books themselves are precious objects, worthy of attention and care. Pat and Leo have been in the book repair business together for 24 years, running Ace of Books from their mad scientist-meets-bookbinder's lab in their home near Downtown, chock full of paper, glue, leather, and thread of all colors, fibers, and textures.

Pat began repairing books while working at the UNLV library in 1985. "The person who was doing repair for the library ... went on a cruise and decided not to come back," she chuckles. Pat's boss commissioned her instead, and she eventually developed and ran the UNLV library's preservation lab for 13 years.

Leo, meanwhile, is a magician by trade (he worked at Disneyland back in its early days), with a particular interest in historical magic books. In 1993, David Copperfield purchased an enormous magic library to add to his collection and hired Leo as his curator. With a new shipment of books coming in from England, Leo decided to visit the UNLV library preservation lab for some advice. He still remembers the moment he first saw Pat: "I got out of the elevator and turned left. And there was a very large window into a room with lots of tables and books

PHOTOGRAPHY ***Christopher Smith***

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ANATOMY OF A BOOK

Headband: the little horizontal ribbon at the top of the spine

Text block: the entirety of the pages

Signature: a section of pages that are folded together for binding; the text block is made up of several signatures

Fore-edge: the side of the book you'd see if the book was on a shelf spine-in

End papers: the paper that's glued between the cover and the text block in the front and back

Deckled edge: when the edge of the paper is rough and doesn't line up: a lot of high-end hardcovers today have deckled edges, but they were originally a cheaper bookbinding option

Gilded edge: a gold leaf applied to the edge of the text block; this helps seal the pages and keep out dust

Silverfish: *Lepisma saccharina* — these tiny wingless bugs like the clay coating on large photographic pages, so you'll sometimes see their crooked trails inside coffee table art books

Bookworm: a larva that chews through books. They're an issue for older books, because they like the proteins in the glue used in older books









PAGE TURNERS Clockwise from top left: Supplies of the trade; paring leather for a book cover; Pat and Leo's workshop; removing tape from the binding during restoration

piled on it. At that moment a lady walked from right to left, and I thought, 'That's nice.'" They got to talking about books, "and we've been talking ever since." When they married, their reception was in Lance Burton's lobby at the Monte Carlo.

Over the course of their years running Ace of Books, they've handled a variety of texts, from an incredibly rare 16th century Vulgate Bible to a latex-coated horror movie book prop. They've repaired valuable collector's tomes, and books whose value are measured more in sentiment than eBay resale prices. A couple who'd been robbed abroad commissioned them to build a book with a secret chamber for a cell phone and cash inside the spine (the title, laughably dull: *Polynomials in Composite Gradients*). But the majority of their book repairs are actually Bibles: Bibles tend to be heirloom objects with irreplaceable family histories written inside.

When Pat and Leo receive a book, they'll triage and provide an estimate: Does the text need to be reprinted? Pages replicated? Does the book need to be entirely unbound and restitched? From there, they work with the client to determine the best course of action. Pat is the primary repairer: Her work is both surgical and archaeological. "There are a thousand different ways of sewing a book," Leo says. "For someone like Pat, who knows, she can take the spine off the book — and looking at this sewing, can tell usually what country and about what date it was sewn, because they change." While some jobs can be handled in a day, the more painstaking restorations can take weeks.

Pat says she enjoys the challenge of putting a book back together. "The actual binding of the book itself — the principle is still the same as it was back when the monks were binding." She shows a sample page from an old dictionary that she'd ripped to shreds and reassembled for a class she was teaching. With a little glue and some featherweight Japanese paper, the page looked remarkably intact, a tiny shift in the word *alligator* the only sign of its injury.

When a book is beyond repair, or if the cost of repair outweighs its value, they'll suggest a clamshell or a chemise (a folder-like cover). This is Leo's domain: He designs these cases and coverings to fit and protect the books. Sometimes, in a playful turn, he'll include secret pockets for memorabilia that came with the books: One of his clients has ancestors who were officers, one on each side of the Civil War. Their libraries are encased in their respective red and blue clamshells, with two of the clamshells featuring a recessed pocket for miniature portraits.

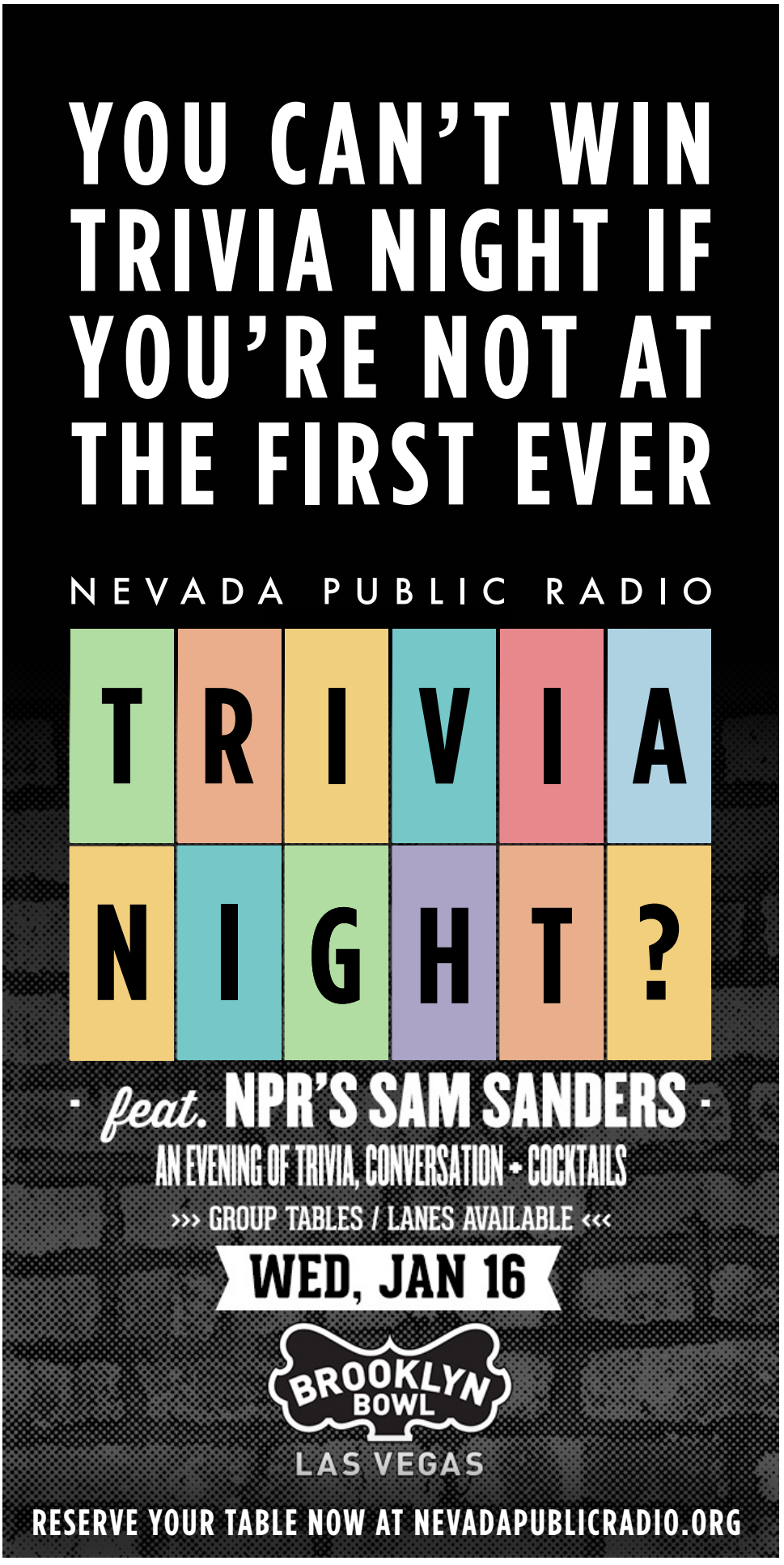
"We always make sure to ask what you want us to do, and what you don't want us to do," Pat says. Leo cites the story of a collector who brought an old magic book to a bookbinder they know. "The binder thought he was doing a really good thing, and he erased all the pencil marks that were throughout the whole book." He laughs. "Unfortunately, those were all pencil marks written in there by Houdini." The book's value dropped from $5,000 to $20.

It can be awkward asking people who work with books about the digital future: Are you afraid of obsolescence? Are ebooks the enemy? The questions are too broad but feel unavoidable all the same. Thankfully, Pat brings it up herself, pointing out how digitization can help preserve old books: After being scanned, "the original gets sewn back together again, put in its original case, and is now preserved back on a shelf, but nobody's handling it."

Still, despite their convenience, reading digitized books means that you miss something from the experience of those original texts, the smell and heft of old paper. "That's why we want to look at a book from 1750 rather than a digital copy," Leo says, "because people have written in the margin, they've written inside the front cover. They have a letter that's stuck between a couple of pages. Those things tell us as much information as the book does."

Pat sighs. "You've got to realize today a lot of your bigger research libraries no longer have the funding. So they have to be very selective about what they hang on to." It's a Catch-22, she says — do they spend money on book preservation or digital editions? "There are thousands of books being thrown away every year by libraries," Leo adds.

But while the long-term future of book repair might be tenuous, the pair seem content and optimistic about their work. Leo describes Pat's work by citing an old client: "He said, 'Pat saves the memory of the world,' and it's true." ✦





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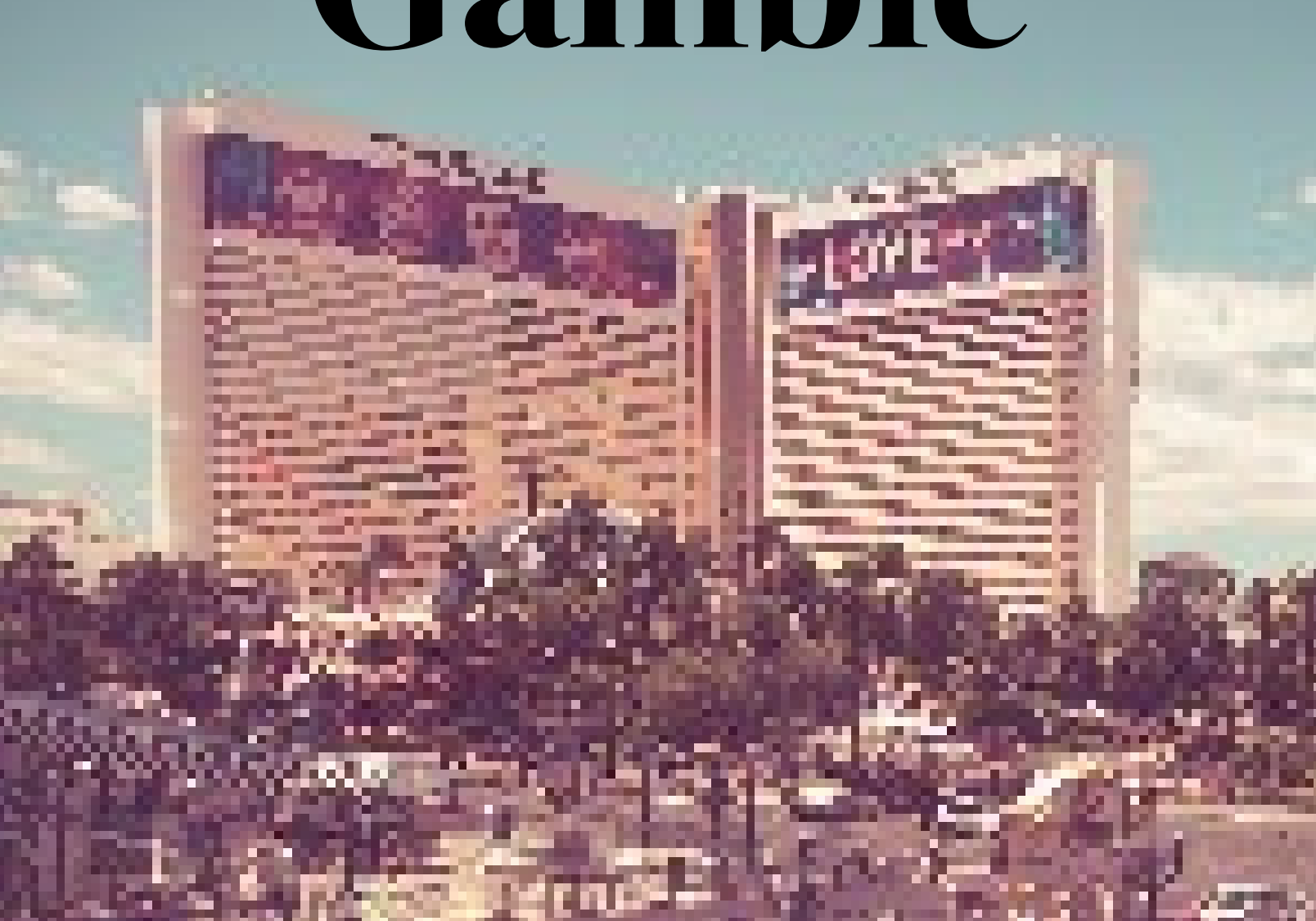
The Year That Changed Everything

1989

Don't worry, you're not in a time warp. You're in a substantive yet whimsical history feature package. 1989 was a pivotal year in the story of Las Vegas. It was the year that marked the megaresort era, our "family-friendly" phase (ugh), an explosion of suburban growth, our most intoxicating taste of team spirit (*Reeebels!*), and many other developments in politics, business, and culture.

You could say modern Las Vegas was born in 1989. Thirty years later, we take a look back at this benchmark year — and consider its countless ripples that we still feel today.

THE BIG Gamble



When the Mirage opened in 1989 — a collage of the best ideas in resort tourism — it transformed the Strip, the gaming business, and Las Vegas

BY DAVID G. SCHWARTZ

Elmer Sherwin, as usual, didn't have enough money on him. The 76-year-old retiree — who had left Cleveland for Las Vegas five years earlier — had played through $80 on the slot machines and wasn't quite ready to call it a night. So he asked his ex-wife Florence for help. She obliged him with $20. Sherwin went back to his Megabucks machine and lined up four Wild 7s, winning a neat $4,652,177.29, a then record-setting slot jackpot.

With the pull of a handle, Sherwin's life changed, in ways he might not have appreciated at the time (at a news conference the following day, he declared his biggest ambition was to take his motor home to his favorite Arizona campground). But the destiny of Las Vegas itself changed, perhaps not as dramatically but just as profoundly, on that day. Not because of Sherwin's jackpot, but because of where he hit it: in Steve Wynn's Mirage resort, which had opened a mere nine-and-a-half hours earlier.

The Mirage's opening on November 22, 1989, is an exclamation point in the evolution of the casino industry and, by extension, Las Vegas itself. Over the next decade, the city would grow astronomically, in part due to the booming growth of the Strip. The success of the Mirage wasn't the only factor in that transformation, but it was a major one. As big a gamble as Las Vegas has ever seen, the Mirage paid off in ways that are still being felt 30 years later.

Las Vegas, 1989

Even before the Mirage was conceived, Las Vegas casinos were in the midst of profound transformations on several levels. The first was ownership: The Mob was out, and corporate America was in. Not that casinos had been wholly owned subsidiaries of La Cosa Nostra LLC in the past, but it's undeniable that, with mainstream financial avenues closed, the only sure way to get capital to build casinos was to borrow it from people who knew firsthand the potential profits of gambling — people who, if not "organized" in their business themselves, were on a first-name basis with those who were.

The aging-out of the former bootleggers who had built the Strip in the 1940s and 1950s and the advent of corporate ownership (starting in 1962 with Del Webb's purchase of the Sahara, and accelerating with the 1967 and 1969 legislative acts that okayed ownership by publicly traded companies) led to a changing of the guard. It's difficult to say exactly when the last owner with less-than-reputable associates surrendered his or her shares, but the purchase of the Stardust, site of a skimming operation masterminded by the infamous Frank "Lefty" Rosenthal, by the Boyd Group in 1985 is as good a date as any to choose as an anchor point.

The second change already apparent before the Mirage was the size and nature of Strip resorts. Once relatively intimate, with 500 rooms or so, Strip hotels had grown larger than 3,000 rooms. Also changing were the casinos, which once had centered on craps and blackjack, with slots ringed around the main action as an afterthought. But thanks to a series of technological innovations, slot machines were offering bigger jackpots — and therefore more entertainment — than before, and had come to dominate both casino floors and balance sheets.

The bigger size of hotels and importance of slot machines, combined with the 1978-1982 recession, led to the third change: the shift towards middle-market visitors. From 1983 to 1989, the number of quarter slot machines on the Strip more than doubled. Casinos built more hotel rooms and focused on provide a friendly, safe environment for slot players who, individually, might not be high rollers, but who collectively were a force to be reckoned with. A quarter at a time, Las Vegas casinos not only clawed their way back to prosperity, but found a viable new business model.





Previous page: Thirty years later, the Mirage stands on the Strip it helped transform; above: the Mirage near completion in October 1989; right, Mirage mastermind Steve Wynn

By the end of the decade, Las Vegas was booming as it never had before. Total visitation, which was 11.6 million and dropping in 1982, had risen to 18.1 million by 1989. Clark County gaming win grew even more impressively, doubling from $1.7 billion in 1982 to $3.4 billion in 1989. It wasn't just that more people were coming to Las Vegas; they were gambling more. Casino owners had very little to be unsatisfied with in 1989. Still, Steve Wynn saw something no one else did.

There were big casino hotels on the Strip: The Hilton and Bally's, among others, had already crossed the 3,000-room mark. There were also resorts that catered to affluent clients: Caesars Palace had been the city's reigning high-roller roost since it opened in 1966. Some resorts, like the Flamingo, catered mostly to slot players. Others had a large convention component, like the Hilton. What Wynn conceived was one resort that combined all of these elements in one white-and-gold-wrapped building. Never before had anyone attempted to unveil a resort of this size and ambition in one fell swoop. Wynn's design team found their endurance pushed to the limit in keeping up with his constantly evolving vision of what the resort would be (iconic elements like the exploding Strip-side volcano were relatively late additions to the project), and the prospect of recruiting and training the staff for the resort led to the creation of new human resources systems.

The real accomplishment of the Mirage's builders, though, might not be the creative vision or the operational feat, but the financial savvy that paid for it.

Paying for Paradise

Financing casinos used to be relatively straightforward: Find big gamblers or other "connected" friends and convince them to invest. Sure, they might demand the right to place an associate in a position to skim a little, but this was how the business worked. The rise of corporate ownership and mainstream financing, as well as more intense vetting of investors by regulators, made gathering capital for new casino projects a bit more complicated.

In the late 1970s, it became apparent that speaking the language of Wall Street and institutional investors was necessary to any casino company. Hilton Hotels' purchase of Kirk Kerkorian's International and Flamingo was one step in the process. A 1977 loan from Aetna to Caesars World marked the first major ($60 million, in this case) investment by an institutional lender of that size in the gaming industry. After Circus Circus Enterprises went public in 1983, majority shareholder Bill Bennett realized he needed a Wall Street maven to negotiate the straits of high finance and brought on former stockbroker Glenn Schaeffer, who ultimately became the company's leader.

Wynn, by the time of the Mirage, was a known quantity on Wall Street. The key to raising the money for the Mirage wasn't Las Vegas, but Atlantic City, which had just legalized casino gaming when Wynn bought a property

MODERN MIRAGE: ISTOCK/LITTLENY; 1989 MIRAGE: LAS VEGAS NEWS BUREAU; WYNN: UNLV SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

there. Needing to raise $100 million to build a hotel there, Wynn — whose Downtown Las Vegas Golden Nugget casino was, generously, perhaps worth $5 million — was introduced to Michael Milken, then a 32-year-old financial wunderkind at investment bank Drexel Burnham Lambert. After listening to Wynn's pitch for the Atlantic City project, Milken explained how, by setting modest goals for his projects and meeting them, Wynn would one day be able to receive a billion dollars from investors. Milken was able to raise $160 million for the Golden Nugget Atlantic City.

The key to the Atlantic City financing was Milken's specialty, high-yield bonds. Less charitably known as junk bonds, these financial instruments were perfectly suited for capitalizing a casino: While they offered the promise of higher yields than more traditional bonds, these bigger payoffs came at a price — the bonds had a higher risk of default than was typical. High-yield bonds were a gamble, but an acceptable one — if you had faith in the borrower.

The Mirage demanded that kind of trust from investors. It was a resort with a budget of $650 million in what Wynn called "a $200 million town." And while Wynn had done much to earn the confidence of investors with his moves in Atlantic City and on Fremont Street, Wall Street was decidedly skittish after 1987's Black Friday stock market bust. It was only after a mid-construction field trip, combined with the personal persuasion of Wynn and his operations chief, Bobby Baldwin, that the project's financing was completely secure.

The large scale and polish of the Mirage meant that it would need to pull in substantial sums every day to remain solvent: Baldwin calculated that the property's daily nut was $1.1 million. For this reason, the design process emphasized efficiency, making the Mirage not only the most lavish resort the Strip had yet seen, but the tightest ship to sail the Mojave.

The Mirage Difference

When it finally opened, the Mirage exceeded even its builders' expectations: The slot department, for example, briefly shut down because the change banks hadn't been stocked with enough coins — the demand was that high. By the end of the following year, even the most skeptical of parties had to admit Wynn's ambitions had paid off. The Mirage was not only making more money than any Las Vegas resort had before; it was pulling in a mix of gaming and nongaming dollars that changed the way operators thought about casinos. Previous projects (as well as the Excalibur, which opened six months after the Mirage and was the last casino built on the Strip not to be influenced by it) had made money, but almost all of it was from the casino. The Mirage not only had giant investments in areas that produced no immediate revenue (the exploding volcano is the most obvious but not the only one) but it relied on substantial nongaming revenues to stay in business. Once loss leaders, entertainment, dining, and lodging became revenue centers in the own right.

The ability of the Mirage to consistently earn more than the necessary $1.1 million each day sparked the megaresort revolution of the 1990s, and the broader focus on nongaming

AS A NEW LAS VEGAS TOOK SHAPE IN 1989, THE SAME DYNAMIC — OLD ORDERS GIVING WAY TO THE NEW — WAS AT WORK AROUND THE GLOBE IN WAYS LARGE AND SMALL

FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL
November 9

TIANANMEN SQUARE
April 15-June 4

FIRST OF 24 GPS SATELLITES LAUNCHED
February 14

SUPREME COURT PROTECTS FLAG BURNING IN TEXAS V. JOHNSON
June 21

AMERICAN INVASION OF PANAMA
December 20

SOLIDARITY ELECTED IN POLAND
June

VACLAV HAVEL ELECTED IN CZECHOSLAVAKIA
December 29

***SEINFELD* DEBUTS**
July 5

EXXON VALDEZ OIL SPILL IN ALASKA
March 24

IRAN ISSUES FATWA ON SALMAN RUSHDIE
February 15

NICOLAE CEAUSESCU DEPOSED IN ROMANIA
December 22

TIME INC. AND WARNER COMMUNICATIONS MERGE TO FORM WORLD'S LARGEST MEDIA COMPANY
Spring









From left, Roy Horn, Gov. Bob Miller, Siegfried Fischbacher, and Steve Wynn at the grand opening of the Mirage Nov. 22, 1989.

DON KNEPP/LAS VEGAS NEWS BUREAU

that dominates the Strip today. The conventional wisdom of the Nevada casino business going back to the 1930s held that gambling was where resorts made their money; everything else, from theater seats to beds, existed only to drive customers into the casino. Investing more money in restaurants and expecting patrons to spend more on dining was foolhardy, since any player worth their salt was comped anyway. But the Mirage showed that, when run correctly, entertainment, dining, and lodging did not have to be loss leaders, but could be revenue centers in their own right. Or, in Wynn's words, the Mirage was a hotel with a casino attached, rather than a casino with a hotel attached. Every subsequent resort followed this model.

In 1990, the first full year of the Mirage's operation, visitation to Las Vegas increased 16 percent, the second biggest bump, percentage-wise, in Las Vegas history (only 1994's 20 percent jump, triggered by the openings of Treasure Island, Luxor, and MGM Grand, beats it). While part of that was due to the opening of Circus Circus Enterprise's Excalibur, which, with 4,000 rooms, was the largest hotel yet opened on the Strip, the Mirage was the more visible face of the "new" Las Vegas, which emphasized not only high-rolling casino play but also luxury accommodations and an only-in-Vegas form of entertainment spectacle then embodied by Siegfried & Roy. By any metric, the Mirage was as big a success as Las Vegas has ever seen.

Thirty Years Later

Today, the Mirage is no longer the top property on the Strip. It's arguably not even a premier property of its owner, MGM Resorts International. The property's reign at the summit lasted only until the opening of Bellagio in 1998 — a nine-year run. Steve Wynn and his original team only operated it for 11 years; it has been 18 years since the MGM acquisition.

But the Mirage inspired every casino that came after it, both on the Strip and farther afield. Look no further than Circus Circus Enterprises. In the late 1980s, it was, by many metrics, the most profitable casino company in the world. Low-frills amenities for price-sensitive gamblers and family vacationers translated into a very healthy bottom line. The business lacked the pizazz but also the volatility of those with high-end aspirations. The Excalibur was the final elaboration of the Circus Circus Enterprises vision: a mass of budget accommodations, with a giant slot floor, and an arcade level attached. Unpretentious fun that doesn't pretend to be anything it isn't — besides a medieval castle. And Excalibur was as much a success as the Mirage, garnering an impressive return on investment.

But Luxor, Circus Circus's next resort, tried to emulate the Mirage more than Excalibur, and its successor, Mandalay Bay, made no bones about its desire to emulate Wynn's pioneering resort, right down to the gold-and-white exterior and the coconut aroma inside. When the company changed its name to Mandalay Resort Group, it was clear that tropical luxury, not clown games, was the future of Las Vegas. And everything built in Las Vegas since then followed a similar path, with some variations. If the 1950s and early 1960s are best known as the "Rat Pack era," the period from 1989-2001 deserves to be called the "Mirage era."

So, 30 years later, that ambitious gamble in the desert still stands as a true landmark in not just Las Vegas history, but the evolution of the casino resort. Other buildings have since reached higher in the sky, but none has made as profound an impact as the Mirage. ✦

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GRIT, GUTS, & VISION

A gambler. A mobster. A muckraker. In 1989, the deaths of three very different Vegas icons closed an era that shaped our modern city

BY MICHAEL GREEN

In March 1952, *Las Vegas Sun* publisher Hank Greenspun met with Flamingo boss Gus Greenbaum and Horseshoe owner Benny Binion. It wasn't exactly a social call. According to Greenspun, they told him to "quit jabbing the Old Man." They were referring to Nevada's powerful U.S. Senator Pat McCarran — whom Greenspun regularly assailed in his front-page newspaper column, accusing McCarran of corruption, anti-Semitism, and red-baiting.

Less than a week later, almost every hotel-casino in Las Vegas canceled its advertising in the *Sun*. (Binion refused to join the boycott, and Greenspun reportedly removed the Horseshoe ads to protect him.) Greenspun recalled racing to the Desert Inn and asking its top executive Moe Dalitz, "What's behind these ad cancellations?"

Dalitz replied, "You should know. Why did you have to attack the Old Man?"

It wasn't the first or last time Greenspun, Binion, and Dalitz crossed paths or made news. And when they died within 155 days of one another in 1989 (Greenspun, July 23; Dalitz, August 31; Binion, December 25), they were remembered as men of another era who adapted to changing times, as philanthropists, and as mythic figures who shaped modern Las Vegas.

An attorney who had fought in World War II, Greenspun accompanied a client to Las Vegas in 1946. He found the town and its weather inviting (one of his first acts on arriving in February was to take a dip in the Last Frontier hotel pool, which would have tempted any New Yorker). He and two friends began publishing a magazine that led to his job as publicist for the Flamingo, and thus for Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel. After Siegel's murder, Greenspun moved on to the Desert Inn project with his friend Wilbur Clark, invested in a local radio station, and took time away to run guns to Israel, for which he had to plead guilty to violating the Neutrality Act.

By the time of his guilty plea, Greenspun had found another line of work, publishing a new daily newspaper, the *Las Vegas Sun*. He had little trouble getting attention. His front-page column, "Where I Stand," railed against such favorite targets as the U.S. Senate's two leading Communist witch-hunters, McCarran and Joe McCarthy.

Greenspun's attacks on McCarran prompted the advertising boycott. Greenspun sued him and the casino owners, and won a settlement that restored the *Sun*'s advertising. He also wound up in court over McCarthy. After a series of columns asking if McCarthy was a secret communist (yes, it concluded) and a Nazi sympathizer (probably, it said), Greenspun wrote a column suggesting McCarthy would be assassinated. ("Really, I'm against Joe getting his head blown off, not because I don't believe in capital punishment or because he does not have it coming, but I would hate to see some simpleton get the chair for such a public service as getting rid of McCarthy"). He was indicted for inciting assassination and acquitted.

Greenspun went on to become a political power in his own right, and a financial success story. He helped start Las Vegas's first television station, KLAS Channel 8. He obtained the contract for cable television, which was later sold to Cox Communications. He bought land south of Las Vegas that later became Green Valley.

Dalitz and Binion also spent some time in courtrooms and operating outside of casinos. They were leaders of a generation of Las Vegas gambling operators who had criminal pasts — and faced accusations of bringing those criminal connections to Nevada, then the only state with legal gambling. As Dalitz put it, "Hard times make hard people."

Dalitz worked in the family laundry business before turning to bootlegging during Prohibition (as he told Senator Estes Kefauver's committee investigating organized crime, "If you people wouldn't have drunk it, I wouldn't have bootlegged it"), and illegal gambling afterward. With other members of Cleveland's Mayfield Road Gang, he came to Las Vegas, oversaw the completion







GREENSPUN: EVERETT COLLECTION HISTORICAL/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; BINION, DALITZ: UNLV LIBRARIES

of the Desert Inn, and helped make it a jewel of the Strip, with a country club and a championship golf tournament. He finished construction of the Stardust Hotel, which opened in 1958 as the Strip's biggest resort. With Merv Adelson, Irwin Molasky, and Allard Roen, Dalitz formed Paradise Development Company, which basically built Maryland Parkway: They constructed Sunrise Hospital, the Boulevard Mall, and several office complexes, and took over the Las Vegas Country Club and Commercial Center. Dalitz was landlord of the Sundance Hotel in Downtown, now The D.

While Dalitz had little to do with Downtown, Binion tended to stay there. A longtime player in Texas rackets, he came to Las Vegas in 1946 (the same year as Greenspun) when, as he put it, "My sheriff got beat in the election." He was involved in a few different local casinos before opening the Horseshoe in 1951 on the ground floor of the Apache Hotel (the Silvagni family owned the building, and Binion always leased his space).

Binion proved innovative. Your first bet was the limit. He carpeted the floors, which was new to Downtown. He sent limousines to the airport. He installed a horseshoe of $1 million in currency, creating one of the greatest tourist photo opportunity Las Vegas ever had. With his family, he started the World Series of Poker.

He and Greenspun remained friends until they died. The *Sun* publisher defended Binion amid allegations of violence and other illegal activity. Binion helped Greenspun financially in the *Sun*'s early days — not just during the ad boycott.

Greenspun and Dalitz never entirely reconciled. When Greenspun ran for governor in 1962, Dalitz led the charge against him among casino owners upset with his muckraking. Greenspun said casinos spent $250,000 to beat him, and Dalitz allegedly replied, "Ha, it cost almost twice that, but we got results!"

All three of them got results. When they died in 1989, all three were remembered, even by their critics and foes, as crucial figures in the development of Southern Nevada, as philanthropists, and as quintessentially Vegas characters. They helped make it possible for Southern Nevada to become what it is today, for good and ill: a global resort mecca and a bustling desert metropolis. When people say they miss the "old Vegas," they're usually referring to generous comps and free-flowing cocktails. These three men embodied a different old Vegas ethos of grit, guts, and vision. ✦

Clockwise from top left: *Las Vegas Sun* Publisher Hank Greenspun in 1966; Benny Binion (in hat); Moe Dalitz (with glasses)

The Long Tail

From politics to entertainment to the environment, events from 1989 still send ripples through Southern Nevada today



It was the year that protected the desert tortoise and enshrined it as an icon of wilderness conservation.

In July, after a contagion that killed more than 600 Desert Tortoises, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the animal as an endangered species. The following year, the Mojave Desert Tortoise population's status was reduced to "threatened," allowing Clark County to grant permits to develop their habitat in exchange for mitigation funding, used to create the 200-acre Desert Tortoise Conservation Center. The listing formed the basis of other widespread conservation efforts, too, including the purchase of Southern Nevada ranchland populated by tortoises to protect it from development. One rancher who refused to sell and would go on to create quite a stir over the federal takeover of his land: Cliven Bundy. HK



IT WAS THE YEAR VEGAS EMBRACED FULL, FLORID TEAM SPIRIT — AND FOUND THE PROMISE OF CIVIC IDENTITY IN SPORTS.

Okay, frothing fandom is easy when you have a winning team — and the 1989-1990 UNLV Runnin' Rebels were certainly that, with their famed "amoeba" defense masterfully developed by Tark. But, by all accounts, the season that led up to UNLV's crushing victory over Duke for the 1990 NCAA trophy inspired a citywide Rebel fever whose underdog spirit accounted for more than just college basketball. It said: *We're a real city. We're real people. Don't write us off.* See also: The mania that took hold in the inaugural 2017-2018 season of The Vegas Golden Knights. AK

IT WAS THE START OF RICHARD BRYAN'S SENATE CAREER, IN WHICH FUTURE #METOO STORYLINES LURKED.

In 1988, then-Gov. Richard Bryan successfully ran for U.S. Senate, replacing Chic Hecht. Bryan served as chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee during the initial stages of the investigation into Republican Oregon Sen. Bob Packwood — whose sexual harassment exploits detailed in his personal diary were a foreshadowing of the #MeToo movement. Bryan's remark that Packwood may have violated the law (and the revelations in his subpoenaed diary) eventually led Packwood to resign from the Senate in 1995. SS



It was a year of vindication for the anti-nuclear movement. Reagan's buildup of the nation's nuke arsenal galvanized peace activists around the world — and at the Nevada Test Site. The crowds were scruffy, but the message was heard. During his term beginning in 1989, George H.W. Bush cut the nuclear arsenal by nearly half, and engaged a collapsing Soviet Union with a spirit of conciliation that looks masterful today. The Nevada Test Site ceased underground tests after September 1992. AK

It was the beginning of the long decline of our two daily newspapers.

When the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* and *Las Vegas Sun* entered a joint operating agreement (JOA) in 1989, many thought it meant both papers now shared the same owner. Not true: a JOA is a complex mechanism by which Justice Department antitrust officials allow competing newspapers to merge business operations and split the revenue. This is done to save a failing paper and keep alive the ideal of different editorial voices serving a community. However, a lopsided 90-10 revenue split favoring the *RJ* ensured the *Sun* couldn't scale up to a competitive size. Eventually, that proved too little for the standalone *Sun* to survive on, and in 2005 it became an insert in the *RJ*. Still, the *Sun* rallied its editorial resources to win a 2009 Pulitzer Prize for Public Service. Since then, though, plunging ad revenue for both papers has seen the *Sun's* talent depleted, while the *RJ* suffered a traumatic change of ownership when Sheldon Adelson bought it in 2015. SD

REBELS: AP PHOTO; PROTESTORS: UNLV SPECIAL COLLECTIONS; BRYAN, EXCALIBUR, TYSON: LAS VEGAS NEWS BUREAU



IT WAS THE YEAR THE NARRATIVE OF A NEW "FAMILY-FRIENDLY" VEGAS WAS CONSECRATED BY THE MEDIA.

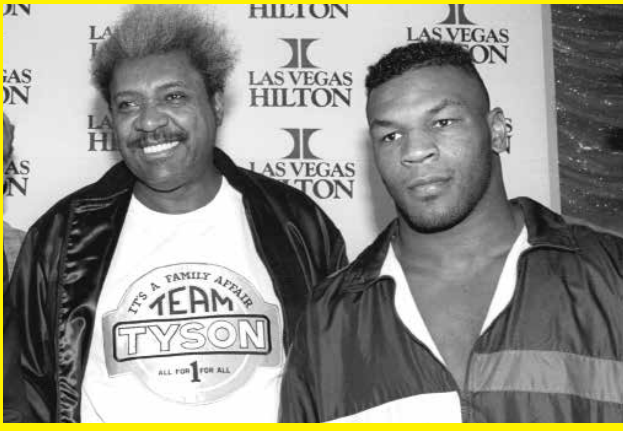
In a May 30 front-page story, "Las Vegas Transformation: From Sin City to Family City," *The New York Times* considered Vegas' attempts to broaden its appeal: "There are title fights, golf tournaments, rodeos, the Wet 'n' Wild aquatic park for children and new retirement complexes." The *Times* got it wrong with its insistence on equating diversification with marketing to families. (Yet it's just so compellingly man-bites-dog.) But it got it right in observing that Vegas' constant reinvention is a necessary survival strategy: "So the question is how shrewd and quick Las Vegas will be in coming up with something new to draw a public that is likely to become jaded as gambling nationally becomes a forbidden fruit that is no longer forbidden." See also: All the other reinventions we've tried since then. AK

IT WAS THE YEAR THE RURAL WATER PIPELINE PLAN WAS BORN.

In 1989, the Las Vegas Valley Water District board promoted Pat Mulroy to general manager. She immediately began filing applications for rights to groundwater flowing from Baker, Nevada, south through the green valleys on the eastern side of the state — the foundation of the now-controversial plan to pipe water to Las Vegas. Mulroy would go on to facilitate the valley's construction boom as the head of the Southern Nevada Water Authority, a coalition of municipal water districts, and as a mastermind of Colorado River politics. HK

IT WAS THE YEAR MIKE TYSON WENT FROM BOXING HERO AND POP CULTURE FIGURE TO TABLOID HEADLINE.

In 1988, Mike Tyson was at his peak. He'd unified the three heavyweight belts. He'd knocked out Michael Spinks in 91 seconds in what was then the largest-grossing boxing match in history. He was in millions of living rooms in Nintendo's *Mike Tyson's Punch-Out*. 1989 was a turning point. His defeat of Frank Bruno at the Las Vegas Hilton on Feb. 25 was an unspectacular TKO — and overshadowed by tabloid drama: He broke his hand in a street fight. He looked on as then-spouse Robin Givens detailed his abuse on *20/20* (and later hit him with a $125 million libel suit). He crashed his BMW into a tree. He later lost his heavyweight belt to Buster Douglas in a now-legendary 1990 upset in Tokyo. (The Mirage, the only casino to take bets on the outcome of the fight, had Douglas as a 42-to-1 underdog.) AK



IT WAS THE YEAR ONE OF THE ARCHITECTS OF MODERN, REGULATED GAMING DIED.

Nevada-born and bred, Charles Russell grew up in Lovelock, graduated from the university in Reno, and was a newspaperman and Republican state senator in Ely when he won Nevada's lone congressional seat in 1946. In 1950, he challenged incumbent Democrat Vail Pittman for governor and won. During his two terms, Russell pushed through the creation of the Gaming Control Board after Hank Greenspun's *Sun* published an exposé about Meyer Lansky's hidden involvement in the Thunderbird Hotel. When casino executives lobbied, browbeat, and bribed lawmakers into trying to gut the board's power, Russell vetoed the legislation, saving the regulatory body. Perhaps ironically, it's that regulatory system that helps ensure our reputation as Sin City evokes freewheeling indulgence, not crime and corruption. MG



IT WAS THE YEAR STRIP MUSIC DIED AS CORPORATE VEGAS EYED THE BOTTOM LINE.

On June 3, 1989, Musicians Local 369 went on strike against the Tropicana hotel-casino, the opening move in the union's effort to prevent Strip showrooms from replacing live orchestras with taped music. The entertainment business was changing: Shows, once a loss-leader, were pressured by corporate owners to turn a profit, and recorded music was cheaper. As the strike spread to other properties, grew acrimonious, and garnered national headlines, some marquee performers declined to cross the picket lines. But the union couldn't fight the future, and in January 1990 it agreed to a settlement that essentially granted the casinos almost total victory. Live music eventually made something of a comeback on the Strip, as Cirque du Soleil and others preferred responsive musicians (though in smaller numbers) to static recordings. SD

IT WAS THE YEAR THAT PROTECTED KEY NEVADA NATURAL ATTRACTIONS AS CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC ASSETS.

In January, Congress passed the Nevada Wilderness Protection Act, a bill creating 13 new wilderness areas to be managed by the U.S. Forest Service. They include now-popular areas such as Arc Dome, the Ruby Mountains, and Mount Charleston, which, along with Great Basin National Park that was established three years earlier, would become the bedrock of Nevada's outdoor recreation economy. That sector currently generates more than $12 billion for the state, according to the Outdoor Industry Association. It's also under threat by the Trump administration, which is pushing to open wilderness areas across the country to oil and gas exploration, logging, and other commercial activities. HK

IT WAS THE YEAR WE GOT A TASTE OF THE FINE-DINING SCENE TO COME.

Most historians credit Spago with kicking off the Las Vegas food revolution when it opened in December 1992. But the real story starts a few years earlier when Ruth's Chris Steakhouse opened its doors on Paradise Road. It was the first upscale chain to take a gamble on Las Vegas, and within a year of its 1989 opening, the Louisiana-based meat emporium was the top-performing outlet for the brand. "No national chains thought anyone would leave a casino to eat somewhere else," was how owner Marcel Taylor once put it. But they flocked to Ruth's Chris, and by 1991, other operations like Palm and Morton's were eyeing our market. Once they became raging successes, celebrity chefs took note, and things were never the same. JC

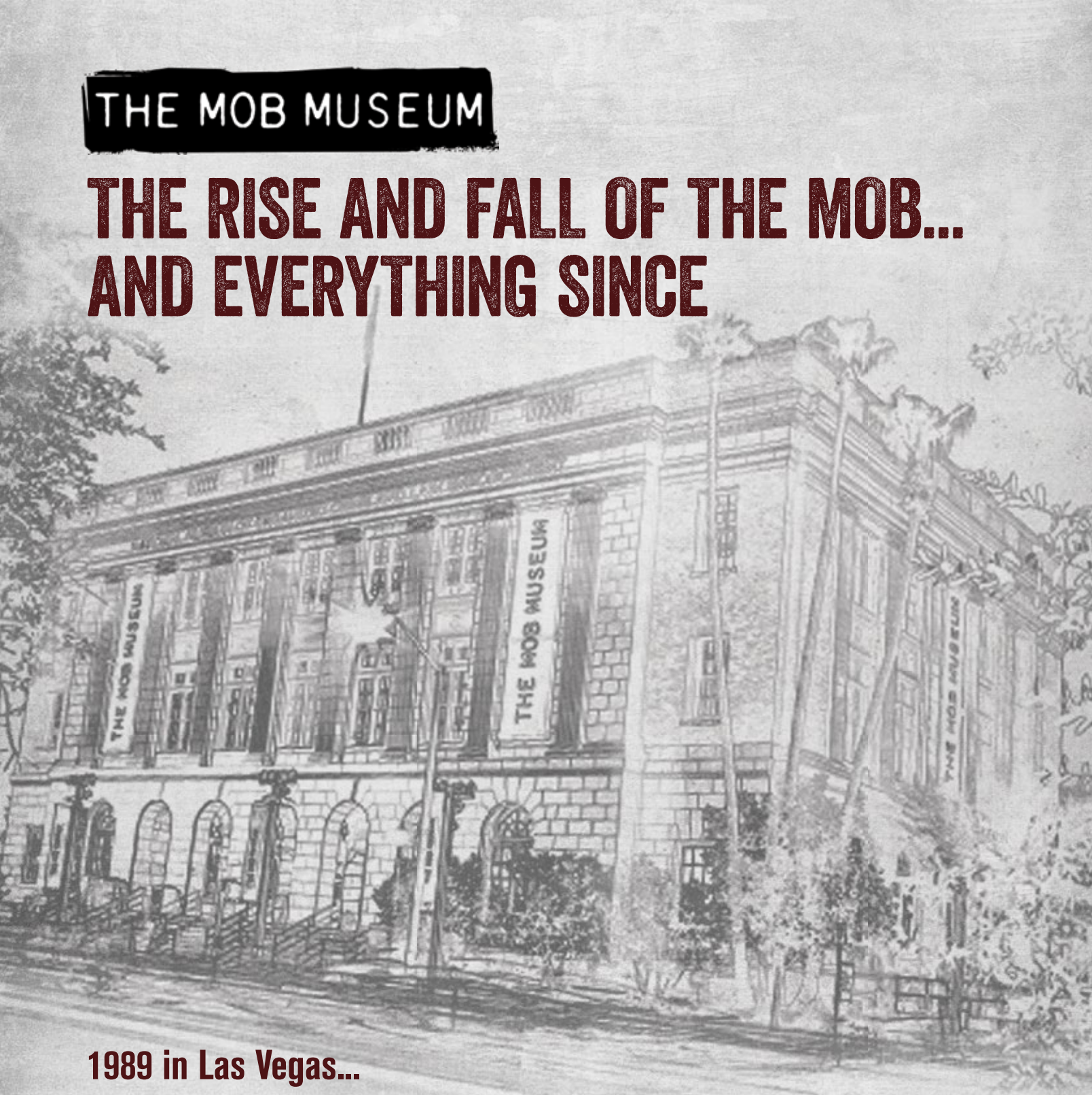
IT WAS THE YEAR OF SUMMERLIN'S TRUE START, AND A NEW CHAPTER IN VEGAS' GROWTH.

1989 bridged the announcement of the behemoth master-planned community in 1988 and the 1990 completion of the first Summerlin Parkway section connecting it to Las Vegas. Summerlin's developers took Henderson's master planning example of Green Valley and scaled it up: 80,000 homes housing 200,000 people on 22,500 acres, completed over 50 years. Howard Hughes Corporation has since added all the standard city amenities, from parks to hospitals to shopping complexes. More important, it set new conservation standards by swapping 5,000 acres of sensitive Red Rock Canyon land for 3,000 acres that were more appropriate for development. And it set the bar for future Southern Nevada developments with innovations such as an improvement-district fee for quick infrastructure construction, HOA boards focused on quality of life as much as building codes, desert-friendly landscaping, and private land donated for public transportation and recreation. HK

MUSICIANS: SCOTT DICKENSHEETS

THE MOB MUSEUM

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE MOB... AND EVERYTHING SINCE



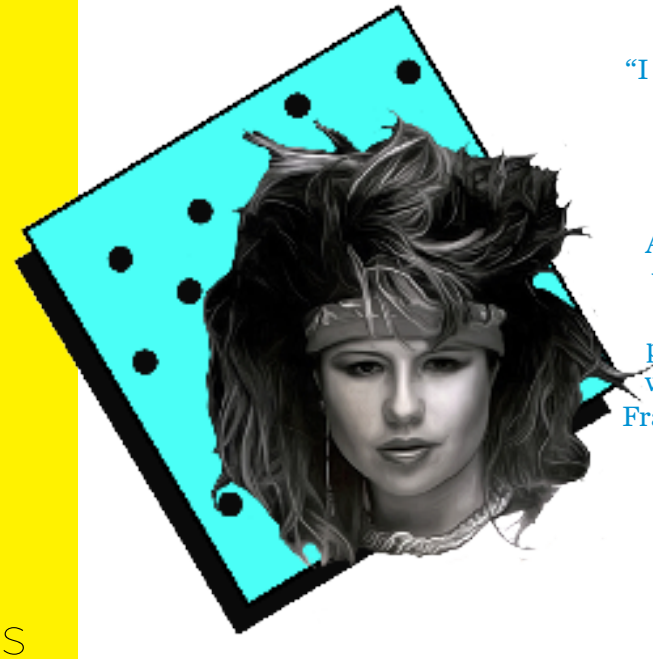
1989 in Las Vegas...

- The Mob was out of the casino business and corporations such as MGM Grand, Inc. were in.
- Key figures from the Mob's heyday, including Moe Dalitz and Morris Shenker, died.
- The Mirage Hotel ushered in the new "megaresort" era with Treasure Island and dozen others following in the 1990s.
- Learn more by visiting The Mob Museum.

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Where Were They Then?

Notable Las Vegans in 1989



"I was home with husband #1, two kids, no real employment, movie or TV prospects, and had just been named 'Worst Actress of the Decade.' It was a wake-up call that I should focus on my real passion — singing. I then went on tour opening for Frank Sinatra, and that led to my cabaret show and opening of Pia's Place at Piero's."

PIA ZADORA, ACTRESS AND SINGER



"That was the year we started making *Saturday Fright at the Movies* on Channel 33! I was the host, Count Cool Rider, a vampire who loved Elvis and everything Las Vegas. What better place to live than a 24-hour town? That crazy late-night show ran for 10 years!"

DANNY KOKER, *COUNTING CARS*

- In 1989, **NICOLAS CAGE** starred in the cult-classic comedy *Vampire's Kiss,* which *The Washington Post* panned as "incoherently bad." Later, he was in Vegas-centric films such as *Honeymoon in Vegas* (1992) and *Leaving Las Vegas* (1995), which won him an Oscar for Best Actor.

- 1989 is the year **GEORGE KNAPP** broke the story of Bob Lazar, the man who claimed to have worked at Area 51, where he saw alien spacecraft and other mysterious technology. "And thus I became the UFO guy," Knapp says.

- After leaving Vinnie Vincent Invasion, Las Vegas musician **MARK SLAUGHTER** formed a new hard rock band, Slaughter. The band's 1990 debut album, *Stick It To Ya,* went on to sell more than 2 million copies.

- "I was 10 years old living in the Bay Area outside of San Francisco, and had never been to Las Vegas. The most notable thing that year was the big earthquake, which was quite scary." **ALEXANDRA BERZON, 2009 Pulitzer Prize-winner for a series on Strip construction deaths in the *Sun***

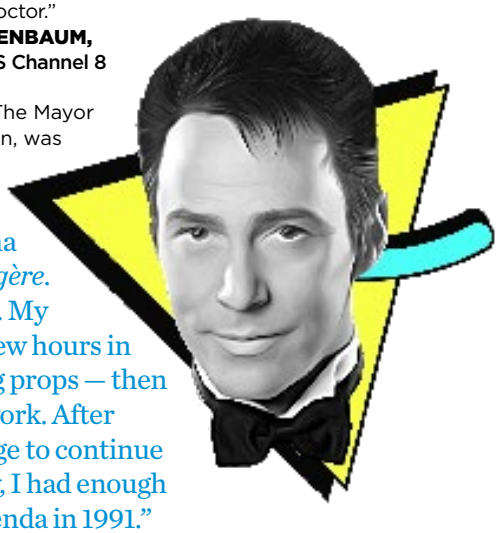
- **BRITNEY SPEARS WAS 8.** A few years later, she'd appear on *Star Search,* and the '90s revival of *The Mickey Mouse Club* alongside Christina Aguilera, Ryan Gosling, and Justin Timberlake.

- **DAN REYNOLDS,** the lead singer of Imagine Dragons, was 2 years old.

- "1989 is the year I arrived in Las Vegas to begin what's now a 30-year run on local radio and TV stations. I stayed my first couple weeks at the Gold Coast, wondering about my career choice. Returning each night to the hotel, I crossed the lounge, which featured a stand-up comic tossing rapid-fire jokes and insults at random passers-by. The performer? None other than Cork Proctor." **NATE TANNENBAUM, Anchor, KLAS Channel 8**

- **GUY FIERI,** The Mayor of Flavortown, was attending UNLV. In 1990, he graduated with a bachelor's in hotel management, and went on to make his mark on the culinary world and bring what *The New York Times* called an "element of rowdy, mass-market culture to American food television."

- Best known for her 1981 pop hit "Mickey," Las Vegas High School alum **TONI BASIL** continued her main career of film choreography through the '80s, but also appeared in a few schlocky horror flicks, including *Slaughterhouse Rock* (1988) and *Rockula (1990).*



"I was 29, working at the Tropicana as a specialty act in *The Folies Bergère.* But I had dreams of my own show. My routine: I'd wake up and spend a few hours in the garage sawing and hammering props — then jump in the shower and drive to work. After two shows, it was back to the garage to continue building new illusions. Eventually, I had enough to open my own show at the Hacienda in 1991."

LANCE BURTON, MAGICIAN

RESTAURANT *awards*

The conversation was savory. The awards were sweet. The food was ambrosial. And our host? 5 stars! Thanks to John Anthony, Chef of the Year Brian Howard and everyone at Sparrow + Wolf for helping us celebrate this year's Restaurant Awards!









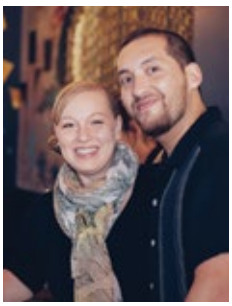














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More photos on For a full listing of upcoming events, go to **desertcompanion.vegas**



Remember? Totally!

The faces, places, and moments of '89 Vegas (and the hair)



DISCLAIMER: MAY CONTAIN NOT-EXACTLY-1989 VEGAS PHOTOS THAT NONETHELESS CAPTURE THE ZEITGEIST.
CREDITS: AP, LAS VEGAS NEWS BUREAU, UNLV SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, DANNY BREEDEN, SHANNON MCMACKIN, TOM MORITZ, MICHELLE DROLET LEVERTON

MARKETPLACE

SHOPS • DINING • GOODS



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Featuring Chef Wes Kendrick's contemporary American cuisine including fresh fish, wild game, duck and lamb, Certified Angus Beef and comfort food classics.

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Priscilla Fowler Fine Art Gallery

Priscilla Fine Art is proud to present:
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The Guide

ART

THROUGH JAN. 6

The Great War: The Western Front and the Nevada Homefront

This exhibit celebrates the 100th anniversary of Armistice Day. **9A–5P, free for members or with paid general admission. Big Springs Gallery at Springs Preserve, *springspreserve.org***

THROUGH JAN. 6

Numbers in Nature: A Mirror Maze

Engage with this interactive exhibit explaining the mathematical patterns that abound in the natural world. **9A–5P, free for members or with paid general admission. Springs Preserve, *springspreserve.org***

THROUGH JAN. 16

Colorado River: Artfully Engineered

Known for his black and white pinhole photography, Cody Brothers explores the art deco designs along the Colorado River. **9A–5P, free for members or with paid general admission. Springs Preserve, *codybros.com***

THROUGH MARCH 31

Scholastic Art & Writing Awards

The nation's longest-running, most prestigious recognition program for creative teens dates back to 1923. **9A–5P, free for members or with paid general admission. Big Springs Gallery at Springs Preserve, *springspreserve.org***

THROUGH APRIL 28

Infinity Mirrored Room — Aftermath of Obliteration of Eternity and Narcissus Garden

Artist Yayoi Kusama's two installations offer unique wonderlands of lights and reflections where guests become part of the artwork. **10A–7:30P, $15. Locals night every Wed 5–7P, $11. Fine Art Gallery at Bellagio, *bellagio.com***

MUSIC

JAN. 4

The English Beat

The popular Two-Tone ska and pop group will play hits from their albums. 18+ only. **7P, $25–$30. Brooklyn Bowl at The Linq, *brooklynbowl.com***

JAN. 4

Sin City 4

The Vegas-based rock and variety band will journey through an amazing repertoire of covers from Chuck Berry to Cheap Trick. **7:30P, $10. Starbright Theatre at Sun City Summerlin, *scscai.com***

JAN. 5

It's Another Saturday Night Hootenanny with Hickory Wind!

Performing feel-good songs from the "peace and love" era, Melanie Spector and the band will have you singing along. **7P, $15. Starbright Theatre at Sun City Summerlin, *scscai.com***

JAN. 5

More Music of the Classic Horn Bands with the Lon Bronson Band

Local favorites perform the hits of Chicago, Tower of Power, Steely Dan, and many more. **8P, $19–$37. Myron's Cabaret Jazz at The Smith Center, *thesmithcenter.com***

JAN. 7

Vegas Strip Kings

With their unique influences and instrumentation, the band has crafted a distinctive mixture of Americana, blues, rockabilly, and zydeco. **7:30P, $10. Starbright Theatre at Sun City Summerlin, *scscai.com***

JAN. 8

Jeanne Brei & The Speakeasy Swingers in Concert

The joint will be jumping with songs from the Roaring Twenties, the Rat Pack era, and more. **7P, free. Main Theater at Clark County Library, *lvccld.org***

JAN. 9

Honors Jazz Combo

The honors combo from UNLV Jazz studies will perform various pieces. **7P, free. Main Theater at Clark County Library, *lvccld.org***

JAN. 10–20

Trunk Songs

A production of songs that were cut from shows during tryouts and previews from productions written by Gerald Sternbach, Faye Greenberg, and John Kroner. **Thu–Sat 7P; Sun 2P, $30. Super Summer Studios Theatre, 4340 S. Valley View, *supersummertheatre.org***

JAN. 11

STEFnROCK

The band will be playing everything from oldies and classic rock to current pop/rock plus their very own original songs. **7:30P, $10. Starbright Theatre at Sun City *Summerlin, scscai.com***

JAN. 12

CHICAGO IX — Greatest Hits and More

The tribute band will feature The Lon Bronson Horn Section as special guests who will also pay homage to other bands of the era. **7P, $20. Starbright Theatre at Sun City Summerlin, *scscai.com***

JAN. 12

The Music of John Williams

The Las Vegas Philharmonic presents music from Close Encounters, Star Wars, Harry Potter, and many more classic films. **7:30P, $30–$109. Reynolds Hall at The Smith Center, *thesmithcenter.com***

JAN. 15

Shadow Breeze

The easy-listening group features the vocals and piano expertise of Marlane Coker, Enrico Santarelli on bass, and Norman Z on drums. 7:30P, $10. Starbright Theatre at Sun City Summerlin, ***scscai.com***

JAN. 16

Four by Four

The musical revue celebrates the music of The Beach Boys, The Beatles, The Bee Gees, and Motown. **7P, $20. Starbright Theatre at Sun City Summerlin, *scscai.com***

JAN. 17

The Green

The Hawaii-based reggae band is one of the most beloved and successful of its genre. 18+ only. 8P, **$22–$25. Brooklyn Bowl at The Linq, *brooklynbowl.com***

JAN. 17–18

Jane Monheit — Never Never Land

The jazz vocalist has collaborated with Michael Bublé and John Pizzarelli. **8P, $39–$59. Myron's Cabaret Jazz at The Smith Center, *thesmithcenter.com***

JAN. 18

Hal Savar Band

Known as a human jukebox, Savar lets the crowd pick all the songs they want to hear. **7:30P, $10**

JAN. 18

I Am Timyra-Joi — The Journey

The youngest contestant to make a team on the The Voice showcases her talent. **8P, $25. The Back Room at The Space, 3460 Cavaretta Court, *thespacelv.ocm***

JAN. 19

HERE the (improvised) Musical

Tara DeFrancisco and Rance Rizzutto use one suggestion to create theme through an opening number and effortlessly weave the strings together to discover one piece. **9P, $25. The Space, 3460 Cavaretta Court, *thespacelv.com***

JAN. 22

Bill Fayne's Backstage Cabaret ... Broadway Iconic Performers

An evening of tribute to Broadway's best. **7P, $10. Starbright Theatre at Sun City Summerlin, *scscai.com***

JAN. 25–26

George Winston

The iconic pianist brings a seasonal theme full of piano tunes in a wide range of genres. **7P, $39–$59. Myron's Cabaret Jazz at The Smith Center, *thesmithcenter.com***

JAN. 25

El Caliente Band

The high-energy dance show-band performs everything from disco to country. **7:30P, $10. Starbright Theatre at Sun City Summerlin, *scscai.com***

JAN. 26

Kris Kristofferson and the Strangers

The legendary singer-songwriter performs his beloved songs, backed by Merle Haggard's longtime band. **7:30P, $39–$99. Reynolds Hall at The Smith Center, *thesmithcenter.com***

JAN. 31

Essentially Ellington Festival — Concert I

The UNLV Jazz Ensemble I with guest trumpeter Kenny Rampton and the Latin Jazz Ensemble perform in celebration of Black History Month. **7P, $10; $8 seniors, military, and UNLV faculty. Artemus W. Ham Concert Hall at UNLV, *unlv.edu***

JAN. 31

Kodo One Earth Tour 2019: Evolution

The taiko drum masters from Japan present an all-new show marking their 35th anniversary. **7:30P, $29–$99. Reynolds Hall at The Smith Center, *thesmithcenter.com***

JAN. 31

Romance Is in the Air

UNLV faculty perform chamber works of love and romance from the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries. **7:30P, $25; discounted tickets available for students, seniors, military, and staff. Lee and Thomas Beam Music Center at UNLV, *unlv.edu***

FEB. 1

Essentially Ellington Festival — Concert II

The UNLV Jazz Ensemble I with guest trumpeter Kenny Rampton and the Latin Jazz Ensemble perform in celebration of Black History Month. **7P, $10; $8 seniors, military, and UNLV faculty. Artemus W. Ham Concert Hall at UNLV, *unlv.edu***

FEB. 1

Lizz Wright

The celebrated vocalist delivers songs in a variety of styles, from folk to jazz to spirituals. **7P, $39–$64. Myron's Cabaret Jazz at The Smith Center, *thesmithcenter.com***

FEB. 1–2

John Lloyd Young

Known for his role as Frankie Valli in Broadway's Jersey Boys, Young will perform multiple numbers in this intimate concert. **8P, $45–$85. The Space, 3460 Cavaretta Court, *thespacelv.com***

FEB. 2

The Beach Boys: Now & Then Group co-founder Mike Love and longtime member Bruce Johnson lead the current lineup of the beloved band. 7:30P, **$45–$119. Reynolds Hall at The Smith Center, *thesmithcenter.com***

FEB. 5 AND 26

Michael Grimm — A Night of Southern Rock 'n' Roll

The Season 5 winner of America's Got Talent presents a sampling of his original songs plus the songs of Lynyrd Skynyrd, The Allman Brothers Band, and many other Southern rock legends. **8P, $30–$49. Myron's Cabaret Jazz at The Smith Center, *thesmithcenter.com***

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THEATER & COMEDY

JAN. 10

Kathleen Dunbar's Comedy Tonight

Enjoy after-holidays comedy with Carla Rae, Matt Markman, host Tom Garland, and others. **7P, $10. Starbright Theatre at Sun City Summerlin, *mistinguettproductions.com***

JAN. 10

This Stays Here! House improv team Uncle Crimson performs an advanced short-form improv show made up with your suggestions. **8P, $8. Vegas Theatre Hub, 705 Las Vegas Blvd. N., *vegastheatrehub.com***

JAN. 10–25

Spring Awakening

This Tony Award-winning musical explores the journey from adolescence to adulthood with a poignancy and passion that is illuminating and unforgettable. **Thu–Sat 8P; Sun 5P, $15–$28. Majestic Repertory Theatre, *majesticrepertory.com***

JAN. 11–13

A Soldier's Play

A mystery about the murder of a black sergeant, set in 1943 on a segregated Army base in Louisiana. **Fri–Sat, 7P; Sat 2P; Sun, 3P, $39. Troesh Studio Theater at The Smith Center, *thesmithcenter.com***

JAN. 17

Scriptease

The Fabricated Egg presents their long-form improv murder-mystery format show based off of a single suggestion. **8P, $8. Vegas Theatre Hub, 705 Las Vegas Blvd. N., *vegastheatrehub.com***

JAN. 18–FEB. 3

Assassins

A historical "revusical" that explores the dark side of the American experience, from John Wilkes Booth

to Lee Harvey Oswald. **Thu–Fri 8P; Sun 2P, $22–$25. Las Vegas Little Theatre, *lvlt.org***

JAN. 19

Happy New Year with Las Vegas Improvisational Players!
LVIP is the only family-friendly improv in the valley with musical and short-form improv all made up by suggestions by you, the audience. **7P, $10; $5 kids, seniors, and military. Show Creators Studios, 4455 W. Sunset Road, *lvimprov.com***

JAN. 22–FEB. 10

Spamilton: An American Parody
This spoof of a particular hit musical was created by Gerard Alessandrini, the man behind the hit show Forbidden Broadway. T**ue–Sun, 7:30P; Sat–Sun, 2P, $55. Troesh Studio Theater at The Smith Center, *thesmithcenter.com***

JAN. 23–FEB. 10

Accidental Death of an Anarchist
A man has fallen to his death from a police station window. Did he jump or was he pushed? The cops want a cover up, but first they have to contend with an unlikely detective – a certified lunatic with a knack for impersonation. **Wed–Sat 8P; Sun 2P, $20–$25. Cockroach Theatre, 1025 S. First St., *cockroachtheatre.com***

JAN. 24

Funderdome
Two teams enter; one team leaves — an action-packed short-form improv show starring a rotating cast of prisoners. **8P, $8. Vegas Theatre Hub, 705 Las Vegas Blvd. N., *vegastheatrehub.com***

JAN. 26

Voices of Hollywood
Ken Block brings more than 100 impressions to life including singers, comedians, politicians, and TV stars. **7P, $20. Starbright Theatre at Sun City Summerlin, *scscai.com***

FEB. 2

Ryan Ahern in Concert
The show pianist will be backed by his contemporary pop orchestra to play an eclectic mixture of genres. **7P $20. Starbright Theatre at Sun City Summerlin, *scscai.com***

DANCE

JAN. 20

A Love for Dance
The Gateway Arts Foundation

Performing Arts Center
UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA LAS VEGAS

2018-2019 SEASON

RUSSIAN NATIONAL BALLET:
The Sleeping Beauty
Monday, February 4, 2019 • *7:30 p.m.*
$50 · $40 · $30 · $20

Legendary Bolshoi principal dancer Elena Radchenko directs the Russian National Ballet in this production of the Marius Petipa classic, *The Sleeping Beauty.*





ROMANCE IS IN THE AIR
Thursday, January 31, 2019 • *7:30 p.m.* • $25
A UNLV Chamber Music Society Concert

UNLV faculty perform chamber works of love and romance from the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries including works by Beach, Fauré, Heggie, and Schumann.





T.Y. ZHANG
Friday, February 8, 2019 • *7:30 p.m.* • $45
Sponsored by the Lawrence Livingston Downs Trust

Tengyue (T.Y.) Zhang, winnner of the GFA International Concert Artist Competition (2017), comes to Las Vegas.

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Buy one ticket, get one 50% off for any UNLV PAC 2018-19 Season event in 2019. Order online or by phone and use code: SPRING.
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702-895-2787 LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL pac.unlv.edu

Although unanticipated, artists, dates, and times are subject to change without notice.



presents Mary LaCroix and husband Barrington Lohr in an elegant and eclectic performance. **2P, $20. Starbright Theatre at Sun City Summerlin**, *scscai.com*

FEB. 4

The Sleeping Beauty

The Russian National Ballet performs this beautiful production of the Marius Petipa classic. **7:30P, $20–$50. Artemus W. Ham Concert Hall at UNLV**, *unlv.edu*

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DISCUSSIONS & READINGS

JAN. 15

Stardust International Raceway & The Mob with Author Randall Cannon

Cannon tells tales from his new memoir about the raceway and its interconnectedness with the Mob. **7P, free. Main Theater at Clark County Library**, *lvccld.org*

JAN. 19

The Folies Bergère in Las Vegas

Go behind the shimmering curtain for a revealing discussion with Folies Bergère cast and crew. **2P, free. Main Theater at Clark County Library**, *lvccld.org*

JAN. 25

A Staged Reading of Appropriate by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins

Many shocking revelations rock the family after the patriarch's death. After the reading, A Public Fit Theatre Company will conduct an interactive discussion. Mature audiences only. **7:30P, free. Main Theater at Clark County Library**, *lvccld.org*

JAN. 29

Sports, Casinos, The Mob, and The Moolah

Will new betting laws allow the Mafia to work its way back into sports? Moderator Geoff Schumacher of the Mob Museum leads a panel of experts in this discussion. **7P, free. Main Theater at Clark County Library**, *lvccld.org*

FEB. 1

National Geographic Live: When Women Ruled The World

Join Egyptologist Dr. Kara Cooney in exploring the vastly different power structure of ancient Egypt which saw more female rulers than any other place in the ancient or modern world. **7:30P, $19–$49. Reynolds Hall at The Smith Center**, *thesmithcenter.com*

FEB. 5

The W. Kamau Bell Curve — Ending Racism in About an Hour

Bell is a sociopolitical comedian who is known for his podcast, comedy specials, and paragraph-long book titles. **7:30P, free (tickets required). Artemus W. Ham Concert Hall at UNLV**, *unlv.edu*

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FAMILY & FESTIVALS

THROUGH JAN. 15

Christmas Tree Recycling

Keep your holiday tree out of the landfill and put it to good use! Remove all non-organic objects so that your tree may be mulched; flocked trees cannot be recycled. **9A–5P, free. South parking lot at Springs Preserve**, *springspreserve.org*

JAN. 3

First Friday

Join in the Las Vegas community event that brings together local artists, actors, vendors, food trucks, and bars in a festival-like atmosphere. **5–11P, free. 1025 S. First St.**, *fffIv.org*

JAN. 5

Winter Puppet Show

Preschool-age children will enjoy this winter-themed puppet show full of funny tales. **11A, free. Third Floor Children's Library at Clark County Library**, *lvccld.org*

JAN. 9

The Very Hungry Caterpillar

This show uses 75 handcrafted puppets to bring Eric Cale's classic children's books to life. **6:30P, $14.95–$24.95. Reynolds Hall at The Smith Center**, *thesmithcenter.com*

JAN. 27

Wild Kratts Live 2.0 — Activate Creature Power!

The stars of the animated PBS Kids Series present a live stage adventure where youngsters will learn about some of the world's most amazing creatures. Recommended for children ages 5–12. **1P and 4:30P, $19–$99. Reynolds Hall at The Smith Center**, *thesmithcenter.com*

FUNDRAISERS

JAN. 17

Knight to Remember VGK Foundation Gala

The Vegas Golden Knights hockey players will be featured in this black-tie event along with celebrity chefs and handcrafted beverages. 100% of proceeds benefit community non-profits. **21+ only. 7:30P, $500–$1,000. Pavilions at World Market Center, 205 W. Symphony Park Ave., *vegasgoldenknights.com***

JAN. 23

Stand for America

Scooter Brown, Nick Sterling, Padre Paul, and Blackbird Anthem will perform at this event benefitting Wheelchairs for Warriors, Sealkids, and the Gary Sinise Foundation. **5P, $50–$20,000. Stoney's Rockin' Country, 6611 Las Vegas Blvd. S., *standforamerica.co***

JAN. 26

Black & White Ball

Nevada Ballet Theatre's 2019 ball celebrates its 35th anniversary and Woman of the Year, Rita Moreno. Funds support NBT's productions, school, and outreach programs. **6:30P, $100–$10,000. Aria Resort & Casino, *nevadaballet.org***

JAN. 26

Night at the Museum 2019

Junior League of Las Vegas and Discovery Children's Museum will help you escape to paradise with a silent disco, tropical drinks, island-inspired food, raffles, and more. Proceeds benefit the museum. 21+ only. **7P, $60. Discovery Children's Museum, 360 Promenade Place, *discoverykidslv.org***

JAN. 27

Laps for Charity

NASCAR fans and car enthusiasts will have the opportunity to drive their personal vehicles around the 1.5-mile superspeedway at speeds up to 75 miles per hour (behind a pace car), all in an effort to raise money for local children's charities. Must be 18+ with valid license. **12–7P, $35–$45. Las Vegas Motor Speedway, *speedwaycharities.org***



END NOTE

RANDOM ACCESS MEMORY

Droll, odd, poignant, and awkward moments from the many Januaries of Las Vegas history

BY ***Chip Mosher***

January 1, 1982: Sally Palmer, 29, gives birth to the first local baby of the year, five seconds after midnight — a feat she accomplished the year before, in 1981, one second after midnight. What are the odds?

January 2, 1937: With 383,294 tourists the previous year, the newspaper editorializes that the Las Vegas-Boulder Dam area "has everything to attract wealth except one — a great resort hotel such as those found in other places."

January 3, 1952: The state tax commission reports that more than a billion dollars, or "three times the value of the entire state, was wagered in Nevada casinos during 1951."

January 4, 1953: Cuba announces its withdrawal from the legalized gambling field, leaving Nevada "with a virtual monopoly in the industry."

January 5, 1939: Eleven years after a brief visit to Vegas and saying she would like to live here someday, aviatrix Amelia Earhart is declared legally dead, two years after going missing in the South Pacific.

January 6, 1995: For $50,000, the city council has hired consultants from Cleveland to study the feasibility of turning Cashman Field into a 60,000-seat domed stadium.

January 7, 1960: National advice columnist Abigail Van Buren, "Dear Abby," speaks to Rancho High School students about "going steady, courting in automobiles, girls in slacks, and teen marriages."

January 8, 1913: The Consolidated Power and Telephone Company reports the first street lamps in town should be installed by February.

January 9, 2009: The Business Women's Club says Nevada's slogan, "One Sound State," is discredited by our lack of needed tax revenues.

January 10, 2002: With $1.47 million in tax revenue spent so far to keep it from being torn down, the historic Huntridge Theater's future still remains "uncertain."

January 11, 1995: Our semi-professional hockey team, the Las Vegas Thunder, defeats the Cleveland Lumberjacks, 5-0, in its second season at the Thomas and Mack Center. During its amazing first season, the Thunder tallied the best record in the IHL with 52 wins and 18 losses.

January 12, 1924: Industrial engineer H.E. Davis from Los Angeles predicts the Las Vegas Valley may become one of the world's "garden spots" — with an estimated population of up to 25,000 people someday.

January 13, 1910: In a meeting at the schoolhouse to better understand "difficulties confronting teachers," parents are urged to support instructors "in all action necessary to preserve order" in their children's classrooms.

January 14, 1962: Two local parents have been arraigned in court after ordering two of their sons to beat up their other brother when he refused "to give up his babysitting money for his parents to buy liquor."

January 15, 1929: The population of Vegas has hit 7,000.

January 16, 1932: Actor Rex Bell, husband of movie star Clara Bow, is robbed of $800 on Fremont Street by two thugs.

January 17, 1983: Nevada Power Company boasts of record profits, more than $42 million, for the previous year.

January 18, 1969: After two months studying the situation "of the extremely isolated Negro Westside ghetto in Las Vegas," sociologist Louis Vitale has surmised that "people who live under segregation build up fantasies about the other side. Whites don't know what the Negroes are yelling about, and Negroes don't know how the whites think."

January 19, 1974: *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*, directed by Ivan Dixon, is playing at a Downtown movie theater. It depicts an all-out black revolution in America led by a former CIA agent.

January 20, 2005: KTNV-TV Channel 13 investigates how its white weather-forecaster Rob Blair's racial slur made it onto the airwaves, when Blair, a day before the MLK holiday, said, "For tomorrow, sunshine, 60 degrees, Martin Luther Coon King Jr. Day ..."

January 21, 1981: At a convention of firefighters, Clark County Fire Chief Roy Parrish compares the MGM Grand Hotel fire this past November to science fiction, saying, "As the fire raced through the football-field-sized casino at 17 feet per second, temperatures reaching 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit; 6,000 occupants were sleeping upstairs." The fire killed 87 people.

January 22, 1969: District Attorney George Franklin announces: "A Mod Squad of teenagers will be formed to help uncover narcotics peddlers in our schools."

January 23, 1932: Four area children have been stricken with infectious spinal meningitis the past week.

January 24, 1950: The Union Pacific whistle sounds curfew at 9:45 p.m., weekdays, and 11:45 p.m. on weekends for kids under 16.

January 25, 1929: Boulder Dam Park, "the logical residence for Boulder Dam workmen," is offering residential lots, 25 by 102 feet, for $98 each.

January 26, 2005: Twenty-six-year veteran Rod Jett has recently been promoted to assistant sheriff, becoming the highest-ranking black police officer in Metro's history.

January 27, 1951: "Must be an A-bomb," one player at the roulette table in The Golden Nugget says casually at 5 a.m. as the sky outside suddenly lights up while the floor trembles during the first nuclear blast on American soil in six years, 100 miles away at "the Las Vegas proving ground."

January 28, 1995: A recent study reports that fallout from nuclear testing during the 1950s in Nevada "dumped a lifetime dose of radioactivity on North Dakota and its children."

January 29, 1950: The first suicide attempt at Hoover Dam is thwarted when paroled murderer Jake Jaramillo is restrained from jumping by three dam guards.

January 30, 219,998,312 BCE: A mile above the Vegas Valley, gigantic deep-diving dinosaurs, or ichthyosaurs, swim in this tropical sea while lunching on a buffet of large cephalopods, called belemnites.

January 31, 1948: Two cans of sardines in our valley cost 19 cents. ✦

Sources: Las Vegas Age; Las Vegas Morning Tribune; Las Vegas Review-Journal; Las Vegas Sun



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