2022 FALL CULTURE GUIDE

TOP DOCTORS + TOP DENTISTS

PLUS

ONES TO WATCH
These rising talents bring fresh perspectives in art, literature, film, music, and more

Filmmaker SINA BALU

MEN IN FLIGHT
The real Topgun of Fallon

UNCAGED
The problem with wildlife in Vegas

FUN IN FUNERAL
Taking the road death travels
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Gastroenterology

Blair Duddy, MD  
Pediatrics

Margaret Hwang, MD  
Pediatrics

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Internal Medicine

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Rheumatology

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IN LAKE LAS VEGAS
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ALL THAT'S TO COME
2022 WORLD TOUR
AUSTRALIAN PINK FLOYD
AUGUST 20

JAGGED LITTLE PILL
THE MUSICAL
JAGGED LITTLE PILL
SEPTEMBER 6-11

SIX
THE MUSICAL
SIX
SEPTEMBER 20 - OCTOBER 2

HAMILTON
HAMILTON
OCTOBER 18 - NOVEMBER 6

ALAN CUMMING
IS NOT ACTING HIS AGE
ALAN CUMMING
NOVEMBER 11

ANNIE
THE SUN WILL COME OUT
ANNIE
NOVEMBER 22-27

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Editor’s Note

BYEEEE

This is my last issue of Desert Companion. (Boom, needle scratch, mic drop, gasps and murmurs ripple through the crowd!) Gawd, I’ve had such fun, such fulfillment, but it’s time for a break and something new.

The deathless mandates of capitalism will vacuum my mind and body back into the labor force soon enough, so I’m taking a slacker sabbatical-type pause, but I still have the fortitude to withstand the suction.

The privilege of serving as editor of Desert Companion represents the culmination of a squiggly Vegas journo career arc I certainly never planned and probably never deserved. I started with self-published punk and skate ‘zines in the ‘80s, lucked into the alt-weekly explosion of the ‘90s, and then, in 2010, CEO Flo Rogers and Director of Development Melanie Cannon gave me and impossibly talented Art Director Christopher Smith a chance to grow Nevada Public Radio’s nascent city-regional magazine. We leaned into their vision of Desert Companion as a vehicle to celebrate, explore, and explain our fascinating city — in a manner ennobled by the mission of public radio. Over the last 12-plus years, I hope we brought you some reliable measure of delight, pleasure, wonder, edification, or fruitful consternation. I hope we helped to vividly and richly articulate Las Vegas’ sometimes elusive sense of place.

Along the way, we somehow managed to attract insane talent, the true engine of this magazine: Scott Dickensheets, Scott Lien, Brent Holmes, and dozens of brilliant writers, artists, and photographers. And last but most definitely not least, we were blessed with Heidi Kyser, who will serve as Desert Companion’s interim editor. Knowing that she’ll be taking the reins assures me that my tenure as editor is ultimately a foundational Phase 1 for the magazine’s exciting future. Heidi’s voracious curiosity, passion for storytelling, and blazing intellect will only steer Desert Companion onward and upward. I’m so stoked. I’ll finally get to read Desert Companion as a subscriber and see what the fuss is all about.

I love you, Las Vegas.

Andrew Kiraly
EDITOR

CONTRIBUTORS

GABRIELA RODRIGUEZ is a California transplant turned Las Vegas local who writes about the overlooked and under-covered pockets of art, entertainment, and music in the valley. Her favorite topic: local bands and musicians who deserve recognition well beyond social media. She earned her bachelor’s degree in journalism from UNLV, where she wrote for The Scarlet and Gray Free Press. She enjoys traveling and makes it her mission to find the best dive bar in every city she visits.

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Made possible with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
Tucked away on Losee Road’s automotive corridor, The Gas Station Studios has nothing to do with cars — but everything to do with fueling local talent. That was the aim of Tyler Gaston when he launched the North Las Vegas music production business with his spouse and business partner Tiana Shai in 2016. “It was really important for me to bring quality, professionalism, and production value to North Las Vegas,” he says. “Because I care about our stories and what we bring to music.”

Also known as King Gas (adapted from a nickname he earned as a UNLV football defensive lineman), Gaston has considerable Vegas roots and a respectable production résumé. He’s worked with artists ranging from Adina Howard to Tech N9ne to Adrian Crutchfield (Prince’s saxophonist). Songs that Gaston has produced have been licensed to popular shows such as Love After Lockup, All-American, and United Shades of America. But his ambitions for The Gas Station Studios have always gone beyond merely turning out songs, albums, and podcasts; from the start, he’s envisioned the studio as a fertile creative hub for the valley’s hip-hop and R&B community.

“It’s about bringing more opportunity to the city,” Gaston says, “and showing young people here that it’s not far-fetched to have a career in music or the arts.”
That ambition drove Gaston and his team earlier this year to begin producing The Blueprint — think Tiny Desk Concerts for local talent — as well as hosting events such as the increasingly popular The Cookout, a live battle-rap series. He’s also deployed The Gas Station as a classroom, teaching music production classes to youth enrolled in Clark County’s gang intervention program. It’s little surprise that The Gas Station has since become a waypoint through which anyone interested or invested in the Vegas hip-hop scene passes.

“It’s ironic that the Entertainment Capital of the World doesn’t actually facilitate the growth of entertainers and artists, people who add to that economy,” Gaston says. “I see The Gas Station as a model for other businesses that are not only creating jobs in this industry, but also building a pathway for local creatives to work in digital media and film without having to relocate to a city like L.A.”

Film too? That’s right. Now The Gas Station is really kicking into high gear: Gaston and Shai recently opened an entirely new wing next door that hosts a complete film studio with seven individually themed sets. After purchasing the building, Gaston and Shai spent the last five months renovating and redesigning the space with their business manager, Damian Hicks. What had previously been a mechanic’s shop now features multiple film sets, including a jungle-themed room with four walls of artificial greenery, a mock courtroom and jail cell, and a room dubbed “The Matrix” with a wall full of LED screens. They’ve also got two more sets under construction.

“Being artists ourselves, it was fairly easy to pinpoint what was missing here in the valley,” Shai says. “Jail cells and prison sets are one of the most popular concepts for hip-hop visuals, but before we built ours, the closest one was in L.A. Similarly, when looking for locations with lush greenery to shoot my video, we couldn’t find a suitable place nearby.”

Other sets in the film studio follow a similar stylistic intent — to fill the visual concept gaps in the Vegas production scene, and to make each set immersive and flexible enough to serve everyone from content creators to professional filmmakers. A number of artists and filmmakers have already used the new film wing to produce short-form projects and music videos, including a new video for Adina Howard’s “Keep Lookin.” One of the initiatives Gaston and Shai are most excited about is their plan to work directly with UNLV’s Department of Film and young, aspiring filmmakers throughout the valley.

“Through our outreach in the community — from the projects produced here to the platforms we make to share and promote those projects — we can highlight the way that Vegas culture is built by creatives from the inside,” Gaston says. “There’s so much beyond the Strip.”

Whether The Gas Station is pumping out new films, developing Vegas’ next breakout artist, or showcasing local talent at live events, Gaston hints that the studio’s evolution into a North Las Vegas cultural hub has only just begun. “Without giving the plans away, we have a few ideas about how we can make The Gas Station a space where people in the community come together not just to create culture, but to enjoy it as well.”

**TUNES**

Now Hear This
Two Vegas music-lovers riff on their favorite local acts and albums of the moment

**HIP-HOP**

**WAVE MMLZ**

“I’m the golden child out the Silver State.” That’s from the opening track of Alexander Decatur, the latest EP from Wave MMLZ. He’s a triple threat — he came up out of the hardcore scene playing drums in Imperial Tide before trying his hand at rapping and making beats — and he’s been batting a thousand ever since.

**Choice track:** “Craig / FR.” In a deadpan stoner drawl against a boom-bap track, Wave MMLZ raps about Craig Discount Mall and having a “homie off of Oakey,” celebrating the less glamorous corners of Vegas with pride.

**POP**

**YEYO**

This band dropped on my radar by accident a while back. They were playing an opening-act slot at a local show, and completely captivated the crowd (and me) with their R&B-influenced bedroom pop.

**Choice track:** “Tonight,” from their 2020 album Teenage Dream. It’s soulful and sentimental, dreamy and intimate.
ROCK

**SECOS**

Remember that too-cool-to-care sound of the early 2000s, brought to you by The Strokes and Interpol? Secos delivers that New York sound to the desert with songs that are upbeat and playful, but also mature and assured.

**Choice track:** “Rewind,” from their 2022 self-titled album. The song’s bright melody is a perfect frame for the deadpan vocals of lead singer David Candelas, who might just be our own Julian Casablancas.

**GR**

**RED DRAGONS**

This duo is made up of producer Scartoon and singer Audrey Brazelle. They’re a little indie, a little electronic, a little down-beat. Their songs are anchored in these deep, heavy drums and Brazelle’s haunting, ethereal vocals.

**Choice track:** “Observer,” their latest single, feels like you’re walking alone in a big city at night. **ZM**

RAP

**ITSRAYIGUESS**

When I heard *Ray Is My Last Name*, the latest project by rapper ItsrayIguess, I was stunned by how polished, complete, and, well, how perfect it sounded. *Ray Is My Last Name* serves as the 28-year-old rapper’s origin story, rich in emotion and vivid autobiographical detail. Better yet, he’s got an incredible ear for beats.

**Choice track:** “Balance.” Don’t be fooled by the bouncy UK garage/house feel; in this track, he grapples with real stuff, from politics to racism. **ZM**

**CHILL**

**VIAJE NAHUAL**

Imagine dreamily cruising around your neighborhood on a bicycle on a carefree Sunday morning. That’s what the chill ballads of Viaje Nahual sound like — though they might surprise you, too, with some psychedelic surf-rock-inspired jams as well.

**Choice track:** “Brownies,” their recent single. With its sing-song Spanish vocals and shimmery guitars, it charms its way into a danceable organ jam. **GR**

**TRIP-HOP**

**RED DRAGONS**

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**HARDCORE**

**THE HATE**

Formed in 2018, The Hate isn’t new to the hardcore scene, but their sound is still shaking things up. Oh, it’s certainly hardcore — scream-y, shout-y vocals, blasting drums, hooky breakdowns — but The Hate’s brand of this punk subgenre boasts a polish and discipline like few other local acts.

**Choice track:** “White Noise,” from their self-titled EP. Rife with chuggy riffs, it builds to an almost operatic interlude with a chorus that’s hard not to sing — uh, make that scream — along to. **GR**
he story of Lori Cobo’s 30-year career at UNLV’s Performing Arts Center is a romance. A classically trained pianist who started playing at 7, Cobo was raised by parents who took her to the opera and symphony. But she truly fell in love with theater in 1983, the year after graduating from high school. While working as a PAC usher, she stood in the balcony one night listening to the National Symphony Orchestra and was completely transported. Marked by the experience, she tried to study nursing but, after barely a year, switched her major to theater. She worked at Bally’s for a few years after college before making her way back to the PAC. Like that rare couple who gets married right out of high school and stays together till old age, Cobo rose through the center’s ranks from the box office to the executive suite. Now executive director, she’s still moved to tears by a symphony. Just after announcing the PAC’s 46th season, Cobo shared her passion for the job with Desert Companion. An edited excerpt of the conversation follows.

What is it about the theater that gives your life meaning?

There is nothing like live theater. I can’t watch movies based on musicals like Les Miserables, Rent, and The Producers. Being able to sit in a venue and see what’s happening on stage and feel what those people are giving you is just... It’s a very emotional experience.

As a pianist, does part of your love of theater come from being on stage?

Oh, no. I did recitals in school, but it terrified me. And it still does to this day. With the exception of close family, if there’s anybody else in the house, I won’t sit down to play piano.

I see a file over your shoulder called “bar operations.” The PAC consists of three buildings: Ham Concert Hall, Judy Bayley Theatre, and the Black Box. That’s a lot of carpet to be cleaned and HVAC units to be serviced. Have the nuts and bolts of running a facility diminished your love of it?

It’s a different component, but the nuts and bolts of running the facility also brings me a lot of joy.

There’s so much performance art out there. How do you choose your shows?

The artist management companies come to me with a plethora of ideas. So, I plow through them. I engage the rest of the team. We ask the community, our donors, faculty. I’m always interested to see what is out there that they might be interested in. 

The concert hall does limit us, because we can’t fly (vertically move scenery on and off stage via a rigging system above). Technology has become a major player in how shows are produced. With our building being 46 years old and not being able to keep up to speed, that has limited our ability to have some of the more advanced productions.

You have made community education one of your missions as executive director. How does that work?

I always ask the artists we bring if outreach can be part of the contract. I want to make sure that we give our kids in the community the opportunity to have art as part of their background and their upbringing, because it’s so important. A few years ago, we took violinist Taylor Davis to Pinecrest Academy, and she performed for all of third and fourth grade. Most of the guitarists do master class opportunities for both high school students and the kids here at UNLV. When the mariachis were here, a local high school group performed as the opening act. For this year’s Zephyr — a Whirlwind of Circus with Cirque Mechanics, not only are we doing a school district performance on Friday morning, but they’re also doing master classes for the Department of Dance and the Department of Theater.

Why does young people hearing a musician or seeing a play matter?

If you don’t give kids the ability to open their minds through the creative process, whether it be music, theater, dance, or some other art, you’re really hindering their ability to express themselves and to see the what’s good in the world. When there’s so much darkness and negativity out there, to take that beauty, that light away from them – it’s not fair. ✦
Five years later, Nevada's cannabis industry shifts from its initial growth boom to its next phase: growing up.

BY Lissa Townsend Rodgers

Dispensaries may be as ubiquitous in Las Vegas as Capriotti's or Terrible's these days, but it's only been five years since recreational cannabis sales became legal in our state. Granted, it's been an eventful time for all of us, but even more so when it comes to weed. “I call them marijuana years,” says Brandon Wiegand, chief commercial officer of The Source+ dispensary. “It feels like each year would be seven years in another industry, because so much change happens and so much innovation happens so quickly.”

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Dignity for All. Period.

Menstrual poverty endangers women’s health and demoralizes the vulnerable. Here’s how the community is working to solve it

BY Anne Davis

Keep it quiet, try not to complain, don’t let it affect your productivity, carry on as usual...

That’s an unwelcome and anxious stream of thought many women have every month — but it’s particularly unwelcome and anxious for women facing period poverty. Period poverty refers to a chronic lack of access to feminine hygiene products, as well as an absence of sanitary conditions for using those products. Period poverty and the stigma around it have always been a problem, but in recent years, it’s become a focus for women’s health advocates who feel the issue has been dismissed and overlooked for too long.

“This is for real, it’s a substantial issue,” says Captain Lisa Barnes, executive director for all of Southern Nevada’s Salvation Army branches, which serves thousands of homeless Nevadans each year. “Period supplies are usually the least donated item when the community comes together.” Why? Donors simply aren’t aware of the need. Add to that lack of awareness the effects of COVID — think supply-chain issues, stockpiling behavior, and unemployment — and Barnes says the period poverty problem is particularly “magnified” in Las Vegas.

Having access to pads or tampons is about more than just comfort. The dangers of period poverty are real. “People who are experiencing period poverty are either using things that are not meant for your period, or they’re using things that are meant for your period, but for too long,” says Wendi Schweigart, founder of Las Vegas charity Project Marilyn, which distributes more than 1,700 period kits a month around the valley. “(Period poverty) causes everything from mild infections to upsetting fertility.”

Southern Nevada is facing a bigger period poverty problem than most people realize. According to Kotex’s Alliance for Period Supplies, almost one in seven females 12-44 years old live below the federal poverty level in Nevada, putting them at greater risk of period poverty than their higher-income contemporaries. Nationally, two in five women say they’ve struggled to buy feminine hygiene supplies because they’re financially unable to. This puts some women in an unfair position — for example, having to choose between feeding their children or buying tampons. For many, the decision is obvious. “We make sacrifices,” Schweigart says. “Anyone that’s in that caregiving role is just going to do that.”

That’s why legislation such as SB415 is so crucial, says former Assemblywoman Ellen Spiegel; she was a primary sponsor of the 2017 bill that abolished the “tampon tax.” Approved as Question 2 by 56 percent of voters in 2018, the legislation has made Nevada only one of 23 other states to do away with the sales tax levied on all feminine hygiene products.

“This bill addressed an issue that has really just been ignored across the board,” Spiegel says. “If you’re only earning 54-82 percent of what your male counterparts are earning, you don’t necessarily have the same disposable income and the same discretionary income as somebody who’s earning 100 percent of what they should be earning for their job.”

A more recent piece of legislation, AB224, aims to address another shocking statistic: one in four young people in America miss school because of lack of access to period products. AB224, signed into law by Gov. Steve Sisolak in 2021, aims to erase period poverty among middle and high school students by requiring schools to stock free feminine hygiene supplies in bathrooms.
UNLV students such as Miah Strellnauer are also on the front lines of the effort to expand access to period products for local pupils. As the outgoing president of the American Medical Women’s Association, a student organization on the UNLV campus, Strellnauer and her fellow AMWA members organized a period product drive last year. Collecting enough for more than 115 kits, the association distributed them to both a local homeless shelter and UNLV’s Women’s Research Institute of Nevada office, so students can stop by anytime to grab free hygiene supplies. “If this is one thing that we can fix,” Strellnauer says, “I think that’s awesome.”

Yet, according to Schweigart of Project Marilyn, period products themselves are only one piece in the puzzle of period poverty. A bigger challenge is addressing the psychological impacts that a lack of access to period supplies has on women.

“People aren’t meant to see these things. No one likes to think about death, so we are ignored.”

Meet Derrick Butler, a normal guy in his mid-twenties who enjoys video games, skateboarding, and grabbing beers with friends. He also happens to be a person who gets called to pick up the bodies of those who’ve passed. Some call them undertakers, body transporters — even weirdos or freaks — but the official job title is Removal Technician.

Butler has reported to the scene of murders, car accidents, hospice care, suicides, and death by natural causes. People of all ages, sizes, and walks of life eventually succumb to the hands of death, and it’s Butler’s job to take them from there.

He comes from a family of caregivers, his late mother a registered nurse and his father a retired police officer. During the illness that led to his mother’s death, Butler discussed his interest in becoming a mortician with her. She jokingly told him, “Everyone’s dying to get in!” Her passing motivated him to begin his journey into the world of death. He plunged in, having no idea what to expect.

As with any occupation, a body transporter has certain duties at the top of their daily to-do list. Butler begins by reviewing scheduled cremations at the funeral home where he works. He does a “minimum prep,” which starts with verifying the identity of the person on the slab, matching their face with a provided photo and checking their name tag.

Funeral homes may offer cosmetics and hair washing, usually done when there is a viewing service prior to cremation. Some other gruesome, day-to-day details: the deceased’s mouth is sewn shut and “contacts” with little pricks are placed under their eyelids to keep them closed.

“We want our clients to know you are worthy to hold your head high — to get out there and get that job, to take care of your family, to take care of yourself,” Schweigart says, “and that starts with the very basic necessities, and one of those is period supplies.”

Barnes agrees. “When we address those needs before they become catastrophic, we continue to remind people of their dignity, and that they’re not a lesser human because this is a need in their life.”

Access to period supplies is expected to expand in the future, depending the generosity of the Las Vegas community. “A lot of times people aren’t meeting a need, because they just don’t know,” Barnes says. “But what’s so beautiful about Southern Nevada is that I’ve been able to serve in this capacity in lots of different cities, and I have never seen a community rally and support like Southern Nevada. Folks here care.”

Profile

Body Movin’

Derrick Butler brings humor and compassion to the weighty job of ferrying the dead

By Gabriela Rodriguez

Mark your calendars and join us for a fun evening of trivia debauchery!

Do we want a website for information?

KNPR.ORG/TRIVIA

Q:
Which popular Nevada Public Radio event is coming back to Brooklyn Bowl Las Vegas on September 26?

A:
Mark your calendars and join us for a fun evening of trivia debauchery!

KNPR.ORG/TRIVIA
“Sometimes they even have to plug up your butt if you leak too much!” Butler laughs.

After the initial run-through, he sits back and waits for pick-up assignments from the call service. When he gets back to the care center with a body, he is responsible for unwrapping it and documenting the physical details of the deceased. A checklist helps with this step. “For example,” he says, “if someone has an IV, you’re going to want to check that off, because if the hole is open, the embalming fluid will drip out. It’s good to let the embalmer know to put a little dab of super glue to avoid that.”

The transportation van Butler drives can hold up to four bodies, separated by a lift and gurneys. Removal technicians are responsible for cleaning out their van weekly and the processing center (called a “care center”) daily.

Butler emphasizes how important it is for hospital workers to leave the deceased alone to avoid a messy situation when he removes a body. “It’s hard enough dealing with skin slips, blood purging, and the weight and smell of a person,” he says. The body bags that hospitals use rip easily, which can result in fluids spewing out while in transport and the mortuary cooler. “People leak all the time,” he says. “Their body just releases everything — it’s unavoidable. And it’s our job to clean it up.”

Asked about the smell in the cooler, Butler says it’s not that bad, because it’s about as cold as a restaurant refrigerator. But he can’t avoid the unforgettable stench of decomposition at the initial pick up. He gives smoking some credit for helping him deal with that.

The pay certainly isn’t helping much. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, morticians, undertakers, and funeral arrangers make an average of $23-$26 dollars an hour. However, Nevada death care wages are on the lower end, at only $14-$16 dollars an hour. These numbers were last updated in May 2021, but in Butler’s experience, not much has changed. Negative stigma is one barrier to fair compensation, he says.

There are no formal education requirements (other than a high school degree) to become a removal technician, but employees do need to abide by local and state laws, as well as company procedures, to properly care for the deceased. At the same time, death care is an emotionally and physically demanding job. (Butler jokes that it’s a great workout.)

The grisly responsibilities and low wages can lead to quick burnout. During Butler’s first few months in the industry, he saw some twenty people come and go. But a certain kind of person, who can stomach the job, may stick around and last for years. Butler
says he relies on his coworkers and father to get through it.

For him, the hardest part of the job is dealing with the families of the deceased. “You never know how the family is going to react,” he says. “Sometimes a family member becomes aggressive when you need to take their loved one away, almost wanting to fight me. Others are nonchalant about it.”

Yet families also offer an opportunity for one of the job’s rare rewards. Butler feels it’s important to be there for them, showing empathy and respect. He’s even had to face the reality of death within his own circle. Butler recalls the time he saw an old friend while picking up their deceased grandparent. The two men embraced and laughed at the randomness of bumping into each other under such circumstances.

“I’m getting to an age where I’m going to start running into people I know,” Butler jokes.

Clearly, for this Removal Technician, a dark sense of humor is a job requirement.

In the Coen Brothers’ 1998 noir comedy The Big Lebowski, affable main character The Dude (Jeff Bridges) visits avant-garde artist Maude Lebowski (Julianne Moore), who shows him a clip of a porn film featuring two people involved in his labyrinthine kidnapping investigation. A leering man enters the apartment of two beautiful women, de-
claring that he’s a repairman from the cable company. “You can imagine where it goes from here,” Maude scoffs. “He fixes the cable?” The Dude responds.

The joke, of course, is at the expense of the flimsy plots of typical adult movies. But for Las Vegas-based gay adult film company Helix Studios, there has been a surprisingly lucrative alternative market for movies in which characters, well, fix the cable. “We’ve always tried to distinguish ourselves from all the other people in the business by creating something that we consider to be a little bit more valuable,” Helix owner Keith Miller says. From its earliest days, Helix has paid closer attention to the narrative content of its films than most adult film companies do.

That effort has hit new heights since the company, founded in Florida in 2002, relocated to Vegas in 2017. A year later, local independent filmmaker Heidi Moore joined Helix as an editor, and her creative contributions have opened up Helix’s movies to a whole new audience. “The scripts were really bad,” Moore says of the Helix movies she was editing when she first started. “That was our weakest link forever,” producer Casey Roman says. “We would take a script and completely have to rewrite it.”

“I wished that I could at least go through and fix them up,” Moore recalls. “So one time I finally did, and showed them, ‘Here’s an example of what I mean.’ From then on they had me writing all the scripts.” With her experience in self-distributing independent films, Moore also expanded on Helix’s practice of posting short, nonexplicit clips to YouTube. “Let’s make a normal movie where the sex scenes happen to be real, and then we can edit a version where we take out the sex scenes, and then we can put them on Amazon Prime and YouTube and all of that.”

So now, Helix movies such as Quiet on Set, which Moore wrote based on her experiences working on independent films, have completely separate existences as mainstream, nonexplicit films. Moore writes scripts that feature far more dialogue and emotion than typical adult content, with full storylines that can be packaged without the X-rated material that’s hosted exclusively on Helix’s site. Quiet on Set played in local film festivals including the Las Vegas Queer Arts Film Festival and the Nevada Women’s Film Festival. Helix productions such as The Lake House, Happy Campers, and the series Helix Studios Presents are available to watch on Amazon Prime Video.

“Heidi’s abilities at managing these things and knowing how to put them together and make them appeal to an audience have really proven helpful,” Miller says. “She’s from the independent film world, so she knows exactly what we’re looking for,” says Roman, who works with his director husband, Alex Roman, on every Helix production. “It’s been an awesome collaboration.”

For the Romans, who went to film school together and came to the adult industry from a background in documentary filmmaking, working with Moore has been a return to their roots. “Once we got to Las Vegas, and we were hiring new editors, we came across Heidi, and Heidi was from our world,” Casey Roman says.

Helix’s YouTube channel has nearly 150,000 subscribers, and their videos regularly get tens of thousands of views. “I wish I had 100,000 subscribers to the porn site,” Miller says. Plenty of devoted viewers now know Helix productions primarily as lighthearted, romantic gay movies without any hardcore sex. Although Helix has done well at industry honors including the Grabby Awards and the GayVN Awards, they remain unique among adult companies in creating mainstream-friendly versions of...
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their movies. "The majority of them, when they talk to me about it, go, 'Why are you doing that? Why are you doing so much extra work?" Miller says of his peers in the adult industry. "We make an actual movie, and then just make the sex scenes real. No one else does that," Moore says.

That also means that the performers in Helix films get to do far more than might be expected of other porn stars. "Our models tell us that when we post the non-sex versions of our films on YouTube or wherever, they can show their parents," Casey Roman says. "It legitimizes it, like they're doing something bigger and more important, reaching out to a larger audience." That helps Helix retain talent, too. "We've had models come back to us wanting to start filming again because,'I want to do a movie,'" Miller says.

For Moore, working at Helix has opened up a whole new avenue of her career as an independent filmmaker. She's still awaiting the release of her latest horror film, Kill Dolly Kill: Dolly Deadly 2, from legendary underground distributor Troma Entertainment, but in the meantime she's working more than ever. "I get two scripts a month produced that I write, so I'm constantly writing and editing full-on films," she says. "This is something that I know a lot of my friends who are in independent filmmaking would love to be doing." She's even recruited some of those friends as actors. "Because I work in the film community in town, I have a lot of friends who are actors, and they came and acted in the movies. It's a paid gig, and they're not in the sex parts."

Miller sees Helix eventually expanding into a multifaceted LGBTQ media company, mixing adult films with mainstream productions. The Romans, too, see no limits to the kind of stories they can tell at Helix. "Literally any idea we can think of, we can turn it into something for work," Casey Roman says. Plenty of people may still scoff, like Maude Lebowski, at the idea of porn movies being artistically valuable and entertaining to watch, but Moore knows not to listen to them: "I've had a lot of people tell me, 'Oh, I could never do that.' And it's like, you don't know what I do."
essay about writing, she’s particularly good in the way that the writer and her material conspire to devise the self that will write that material.

What coheres all this is the presence — up close or at a remove, but always there — of her faith. If, as I do, you flinch when someone talks directly and unapologetically about his or her belief in God — if you’d just rather not hear it — consider yourself warned. But not warned away. Throughout, Barber is upfront about her spirituality, but never dogmatic. Indeed, while we’re right to be skeptical of religion’s role in America these days — it often seems to exist mostly to apply a Biblical shimmer to the necrotizing politics of the right — Barber shows how, at the individual level, it can bestow dimensionality to one’s life and perceptions. And she exhibits an appealing independence of spirit. The title essay finds her straining against the received dictates of her LDS upbringing; she will always question her way toward the divine, wherever that takes her: “It was necessary and compulsory to find my way to God by myself.” So she will consult with shamans in South America, attend a Gullah church in South Carolina, and play piano for a Baptist congregation in backwoods Arkansas. She’s familiar with the Eastern texts. At no point does the reader feel Barber is busking for her church; she’s making room within a system she wants to belong to, but on her own terms.

From an anecdote about tumbling bloodily into a mountain stream, “The Art of Falling” builds into an extended riff on the many meanings of “falling.” Falling down. Falling from grace. Falling in love. Falling off of a motorcycle, as she once did, the whole essay capillary with gradients of meaning, building to her implied challenge: What’s more important about a fall, the hard landing — or that fleeting instance of suspended gravity when you’re aloft with the birds and the angels? What can you pull from that moment to make it worth the splat?

To the extent that she’s able to answer that question, she has the desert to thank. Because of it, she tells us, “I’m a creature who has found a way to live in the midst of challenges.”

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**The Precarious Walk:**

*Essays from Sand and Sky*

By Phyllis Barber

Torrey House Press, $18.95
TAKE YOUR PLEASURE SERIOUSLY
Betting on the Food
At Aroma Latin American Cocina, Chef Steve Kestler spins diverse flavors into a delicious new concept

BY Jason Harris

IN THE RAW
Aroma’s ceviche mixto marinated in “tiger’s milk,” a vibrant citrus sauce
By the time this story runs, Aroma Latin American Cocina should have a proper sign out front. Since it opened in November, the tiny eatery has had only a simple banner hanging outside. A few doors down from a Brazilian jiu-jitsu gym and a beauty supply store, the tiny café doesn’t stand out from its neighbors. It’s nearly impossible to see from the street. And, on top of all this, chef Steve Kestler is serving dishes unfamiliar to many American palates. You could predict Aroma would be another shuttered restaurant before too long. If it weren’t for one thing: The food is incredible. What Kestler is doing at his tiny Green Valley storefront is as exciting as any new concept on or off the Strip.

It evokes Jamie Tran’s opening of The Black Sheep off Durango and Warm Springs in 2017. Vietnamese comfort food with French influences wasn’t something Las Vegas diners were accustomed to. The Black Sheep was also in a hard-to-find strip mall stuffed with other businesses. But the food was different, dynamic, and worth seeking out. Word quickly spread. Now Tran is a James Beard finalist, who had a respectable showing on Season 18 of *Top Chef*. Aroma Latina American Cocina is in different part of town, Kestler is cooking a different style of cuisine, and he hasn’t had the publicity that Tran has. But it seems inevitable that once people find Kestler and Aroma, they’ll be fans.

Kestler, 40, spent years in high-end kitchens, including Bouchon, Bazaar Meat, and EDO Tapas & Wine before striking out on his own with the Maize St. food truck. It was in the world of mobile eateries that he met Yasser Zermeno. The two teamed up for Aroma, with Kestler running the back of the house while Yasser handles the business.

The pair’s goal was to find an affordable space, which, in the current market, wasn’t easy. So, they took the hidden storefront, rebuilt the interior themselves, including the handmade lighting fixtures and host station, and let their food do the talking. Aroma offers a tour of Latin American cuisine, which sounds both buzzy and overambitious. Usually, when a chef tries to combine dishes from different countries in one menu, they suffer from a lack of focus and cultural background. Kestler is an exception, however. Born in Guatemala, he serves dishes from his home country, as well as dishes from Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela. And, like the dishes from his former kitchen-mate at EDO, Oscar Amador, many of the plates have a heavy, thoughtfully executed Asian influence.

Unlike Mexican or Peruvian cuisine, Guatemalan food hasn’t cracked the American mainstream, but it’s intriguing to imagine...
what Kestler will introduce to the Las Vegas culinary scene. Consider his Guatemalan enchiladas: “If you go out to the street in Guatemala, you’ll see these ladies on the corner with giant baskets of tostadas,” he says. “They’ll have the pickled beets, the cabbage, the meat with tomato sauce. That dish, I’m not doing anything different with it. It’s just pure nostalgia from back home.” The crunchy tostada, the acidic beets, the flavorful beef picadillo and the sharp cotija cheese are tied together with a hard-boiled egg that adds a rich throughline bite after bite.

Often, Kestler takes an ingredient or experience and puts his own spin on it. The mangonada salad, for instance, is both simple and complex with just five ingredients — mango, jicama, greens, cashews, and chamoy vinaigrette — that undergo a sophisticated preparation. Inspired by snacks he's found in the Mexican market near Aroma, Kestler slices the mango thin, creating an exotic carpaccio. Then, he sous vides it overnight with chamoy seasoning, giving the fruit layers of flavor that are reinforced by the vinaigrette. The jicama and cashews also are dusted with chamoy, intensifying the flavor profile and adding texture. It’s a provocative plate, something not often said about salad.

Such attention to detail is a hallmark of Kestler’s cuisine. To cook his 15-ingredient mole, he says, is a 10-minute process, but prepping those ingredients takes 12 hours. He uses it in a number of dishes, including a short-rib taco with escabeche that’s stunning to look at and even better to taste.

Peruvian food offers a natural opportunity to incorporate Asian influences, because there’s a large Japanese population in the South American country; the two cuisines have intertwined for more than a century. Kestler’s nod to the traditional fusion is lomo saltado Nikkei, featuring beef tenderloin, beef jus reduction, peppers, tomatoes, onions, fried potatoes in aji amarillo cream, and acidic sushi rice — a mixture that blends harmoniously.

Aroma Latin Cocina is just getting started. As diners continue to find it and Kestler incorporates more dishes into the menu, excitement should build. “We bet not on the location,” he says, “but on our ability to produce good food. Eventually people will know and find us.” In a town full of foodies, it seems like a safe bet.
S

tometimes, all it takes is a wall. A fun, flashy wall that lures Instagrammers and TikTok-kers, creates irresistible buzz, and hopefully attracts lines that stretch around the block.

In the case of Sorry, Not Sorry Creamery, two walls of theirs have been splashed over my Instagram feed time and time again: One wall features a sprawling, whimsical mural from local artist Pretty Done, and the other sports a smiley face rendered in glowing pink neon. With its cute, clean aesthetic and baby-shower color palette, the recently opened ice cream shop totally pops on Instagram, which should come as no surprise: Sorry, Not Sorry's cofounder Drew Belcher also happens to run one of Las Vegas' most successful Instagram foodie accounts, @unlokt. He knows better than anyone how to turn customers into viral marketers who can't pass up the chance for a fun selfie.

"If you look at the characters in the Pretty Done mural, everything has a little meaning. There's a lot of Vegas innuendos and references," Belcher explains. "Once people are standing in line, you want to give them something to do, and you want to see if they can provide some sort of marketing for you for free."

Belcher didn't achieve his mastery of generating social media buzz overnight. He started Unlokt 10 years ago as an iPhone app to showcase local eats. He then launched an Instagram account to promote the app. That account ballooned into its own foodie phenom that today has more than 400,000 followers. After years of posting about the Vegas food scene, Belcher developed Unlokt into a marketing agency that currently works with 58 clients, including buzzy restaurants such as Good Pie and Truffles N Bacon Cafe.

So why launch an ice cream shop? Isn't Belcher rolling in the dough as a foodie influencer turned marketing impresario? Not as much as you might think. Belcher points out that today's social media supernova means there's a glut of would-be influencers crowding the market.

"With every single foodie in Las Vegas or just on Instagram in general, there's not really money to be made per se," he says. "A lot of the time, these restaurant owners are so spoiled because they're entirely built off the back of these Instagram influencers now for pretty much pennies, nearly chump change. Instagram influencers are literally changing the dynamic of these businesses — increasing the sales, increasing the following, and literally growing their brand for peanuts. They're just so excited and happy to do it."

Even with 1.3 million followers on his Unlokt TikTok account, Belcher says he only makes "a couple hundred bucks a month from the Creator Fund." That's one of the reasons Belcher, along with partners Tim Dang and Kevin Whelan, decided to open a brick-and-mortar shop of their own.

"I got tired of growing these brands and
blowing them up, and then getting fired six months or a year in after getting so attached to these brands emotionally,” Belcher says. “I said, ‘You know what, instead of making all these other restaurant owners all this money, why don’t I throw my hat in the ring and really utilize what I’ve learned building a brand on social media?’”

Of course, he also recognized that he had to have a great product. “We wanted to make sure that we actually had not only a good aesthetic, but we had to have the best ice cream you can physically possibly make. And that’s what we did.” Sorry, Not Sorry sources its dairy from Scott Brothers Dairy, the same farm from which Portland-based ice cream phenomenon Salt & Straw gets its dairy.

“Scott Brothers Dairy is the number-one dairy farm in the entire United States, out of Chino, California,” Belcher says. “It’s a 110 year-old dairy farm with 18 percent butterfat. Any more butterfat and legally you would have to call it custard.”

A sampling of Sorry, Not Sorry’s selections proves that Belcher isn’t just talking hype. The richness of the dairy elevates traditional flavors such as Mint Chocolate Chunk and complements the jammier flavors of their Crunchy PB&J and Strawberry Balsamic with Black Pepper. My personal favorite, Churros and Fudge, is a vegan, oat milk-based flavor that’s just as velvety as its dairy-based counterparts.

“You’ll see stunt food, the crazy viral items, on Instagram, but is it good?” Belcher says. “It may get people in the door, but getting them to come back over and over is the dilemma that a lot of restaurant owners find themselves in.”

At Sorry, Not Sorry, the design choices are attuned to smartphone snappers, but it’s the craft creamery’s product — served traditionally in a cup or cone with few frills — that will keep the foodies flocking back. Sorry, Not Sorry’s Instagram account, which has only been active for two months, already has more than 22,000 followers. But it’s a good bet that the new creamery’s rising profile on social media won’t just be a fleeting five minutes of Insta fame: Belcher and his team already have two more Sorry, Not Sorry Creamery locations in the works. ✫

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O
nce, I saw a coyote outside of a Target in Las Vegas. He was confident, smiling, eyeing the street and waiting to cross. He understood the traffic patterns.

His resemblance to my tan-colored, pointy-eared dog was spooky. My dog who, on hot summer mornings, skitters with glee across the polished marble floor of the Bellagio, past Hermès, toward the craps tables. He likes the sound of slot machines, the scent of strangers’ suitcases rolling past him at eye level. Outside of Caesars Palace, he kisses tourists’ palms like a priest offering communion. “Are you on vacation?” they ask him. I tell them no; we live here, he’s a Vegas dog, a city dog. He prefers brunch on Fremont Street to hiking in the Spring Mountains. He refuses to swim in Lake Mead, sulks in the dirt on camping trips, as if he is wondering when we will return to a place where waiters pass him strips of bacon under a white tablecloth. He likes traffic, trash, parking garages.

My dog is a Vegas dog. Except no, not really. He’s a German shepherd mix, a breed that, according to the American Kennel Club, traces its lineage back to a 19th-century dog in Thuringia named Horand von Grafrath. Horand and his descendants were bred to watch over sheep in cold, foggy meadows. Unlike the coyotes in Las Vegas, they were designed to live elsewhere.

In January 2022, a mountain lion was shot by police officers in a Las Vegas backyard. The homeowner who spotted the animal told the Las Vegas Review-Journal she was afraid to let her granddaughter ride her bicycle outside again.

A few months later, a mountain lion was found sleeping in another Las Vegas backyard. Nearby schools went into lockdown. Officers were called to the scene. But the mountain lion ran away. The woman who first spotted the 70- to 80-pound animal spoke with bewilderment when she told 8 News Now, “That’s the scary part, that it’s still on the loose.”

Mountain lions are native to the Mojave Desert, but you’re not supposed to see them. They hunt at night. They don’t roar. They’re solitary, elusive, lethal. But in recent years, people have been encountering them in Las Vegas. Drought conditions have made prey scarce in mountain lions’ preferred habitat, forcing them into the city, where the same people who would gladly buy tickets to see a tiger on the Las Vegas Strip are astonished — and inconvenienced — by their existence.

People in Las Vegas are beginning to talk about mountain lions the way they’ve long talked about coyotes. But unlike mountain lions, coyotes aren’t coming into the city because they’re being forced out of nature; they’re coming into the city because they like living here. Coyotes are omnivorous, opportunistic. They eat rabbits, rodents, deer, insects, grass, and fruit, among other things. They can live in cold and warm climates. They can live among bears and wolves. They can live with us.

And they’re smart. According to National Geographic, humans kill about 500,000 coyotes annually — but it doesn’t matter much; when their population is depleted, they respond by producing larger litters. When ranchers shoot at them and miss, it only teaches them how to avoid being shot at again. Some people buy spiked Kevlar vests to protect their small dogs from coyotes. Some people try to kill them. They curse them out when they see them trotting through neighborhoods. I hate these coyotes, they say. But they keep building golf courses and parks, planting trees, and creating artificial ponds.

Coyotes have outsmarted us, or perhaps we are just very dumb; if we hate them so much, maybe we should stop constructing the exact environments where they thrive.

Flamingos are not native to Las Vegas, and yet there is a flock living behind the eponymous hotel alongside brown pelicans, turtles, albino catfish, sturgeons, and koi. When I first moved to Vegas, I used to visit them at night. Leaning against the pink railing that barely separated us, I could sense them in the silent dark. It was a paradox: The blush of their feathers seemed like a showgirl’s costume. But the air was damp and rich, containing the smell of something too wild to ever be commodified.

And still, people feel entitled to the animals at the Flamingo. In 2012, three drunk Berkeley law students named Eric Cuellar, Justin Teixeira, and Hazhir Kargar named Turk, caught it, strangled it, and decapitated the bird while tourists looked on from the buffet.
Following their arrests, Cuellar and Kargaran were sentenced to community service and required to pay small fines. Teixeira, the man who had beheaded the bird, was sentenced to four years of probation after completing a prison boot camp program. According to his LinkedIn, he currently works as vice president of marketing for JPMorgan Chase & Co. in London. Guineafowls are native to Africa. Turk was the only one at the Flamingo.

A little more than a mile down the road lies the MGM Grand, where a pride of 20 lions rotated in and out of an enclosure on the casino floor for 13 years. I only saw them once, but the fever dream lingered: a tawny lion behind a glass wall, massive head on massive paws, claws contracting and releasing as he dreamed, mere feet from the gift shop. In 2010, a male lion lunged and bit a trainer inside the MGM habitat. The enclosure was soundproof, so no one could hear the man screaming. The video poker machines outside the clear walls purred and sang, dispensing and collecting money. When asked about the incident by ABC News, celebrity zookeeper Jack Hanna said of the lions: “I wouldn’t say they shouldn’t be there.”

In 2012, the MGM Grand renovated and replaced the lion habitat with a nightclub. The lions were sent away. It wasn’t that the resort had realized it was inhumane to keep them; they had simply become superfluous inventories captive marine life, traces her lineage back to the Gulf of Mexico, but she was born on the Las Vegas Strip. Her parents, Huf-n-Puf and Lightning, were born on the Las Vegas Strip. Her daughter, Lady Ace, was born on the Las Vegas Strip. What does it mean to be native when you’re a dolphin living in a tank at a casino, performing tricks under the hot Mojave sky as tourists watch, frozen margaritas sweating in their hands? What does it mean to be a creature native to the ocean when the desert is all you’ve ever known? Four generations of dolphins have lived on the Las Vegas Strip. I’ve only been here for seven years, and I have the audacity to call myself a local.

In Las Vegas, we like the animals we import, cage, and use for entertainment. They are sacred to us. The flamingos are the Flamingo. The lions are MGM Grand. The dolphins are the Mirage. But turning a wild animal into a corporate symbol is not love, no matter how beautiful that animal looks when he waves his rosy wings in the heat, lets loose a roar that echoes in the desert, or keeps us on our toes with his trickery. Our love is conditional. We want to control how they behave. We don’t want them showing up in our neighborhoods, unannounced.

Once, I heard a coyote howling from a drugstore parking lot. It was late summer, not quite dawn yet. Silence for a moment, and then the responses began. Coyotes have about a dozen different vocalizations. I heard them all: yips, barks, lonesome wails, frenzied laughter. Their collective noise was chaotic, but their intention was anything but. They were conducting a census, I realized. They were saying I live here again and again.
Far from the hype of Hollywood, elite pilots take to the skies in Fallon to train the next generation of combat aviators

By Michael Hanson

It’s a typical June day in Fallon, where the sky hangs sapphire blue and the truck tires whine along Route 95. A lush little oasis in the middle of the high desert, Fallon is known as Nevada’s salad bowl. The air here is moist with the scent of alfalfa and cow shit, and like other farm towns of fewer than 10,000 people, it’s the kind of place where the beef tastes better because you know the ranchers who raised it, the same way you know the people pumping your gas or pouring your morning coffee.

Summer days seem longer in Fallon, where the corn grows knee-high by the Fourth of July and weekends are spent watching rodeos over rounds of light beer at the Churchill County Fairgrounds, which also hosts the Cantaloupe Festival and County Fair each August.

And yet, if a “highway to the danger zone” exists in real life, it’s the 95 into Fallon. People in town go about their daily errands: picking up feed, chasing down tractor parts, heading to Safeway for groceries. No one seems to notice the rumble over the rooftops, even when it turns into a roar. They load fertilizer into flatbeds or chat outside the post office, never so much as pausing as the sky tears open above them. The out-of-towners are easy to spot because they are the ones looking up, but for locals, it’s just another day at “the base,” which is what they call the Naval Air Station Fallon, home to the United States Navy Fighter Weapons School — aka Topgun. Known as the PhD program of naval fighter combat, the school was moved from its original home at Miramar in San Diego in 1996 and brought to Fallon, where it eventually became part of the Naval Aviation Warfighting Development Center. Flightertown USA was replaced by Small Town USA, and with the latest Top Gun movie only adding to years of misconceptions and mythmaking, one thing remains clear: The real Topgun is a long way from the beaches of San Diego. A long way from Hollywood, for that matter. Nineteen thousand feet up, it’s another
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day at the office for Lieutenant Graham “Bones” Stapleton and his new Topgun students. Up here, Fallon is nothing but a little green blip in a sea of brown and beige. At 32 years old, Stapleton has been a Topgun instructor for three years, and he’s just received a fresh crop of “studs,” which is what they call their pupils. Today’s exercise is a 9K perch, which is the first flight in the basic fighter maneuvering, or dogfighting, phase of the syllabus. It’s the first “hop” that students execute with a Topgun instructor, and they are usually very nervous. The setup is fairly simple, as far as one-on-one fighter combat goes, with the student’s jet in an offensive position about a mile and a half behind the instructor. On paper, the student’s goal is to “stay offensive,” or to stay behind the instructor. Stapleton’s goal is to neutralize the student, which typically happens when seasoned instructors square off with new pupils. Stapleton remembers what it was like for his first air-to-air hop as a student, the near-crippling nerves that curdled in the bottom of his stomach, and after three years of instructing, he always bears that in mind.

For today’s exercise, both instructor and student are flying identical F/A-18 E Super Hornets. They are flying “slick,” which means all external stores have been stripped off their aircraft: no centerline tanks, no ordnance pylons. It’s an unusual configuration for fleet aviators, but they do this to force students to fly timely mechanics. Errors are more pronounced, which makes them easier to learn from.

“Viper One, speed and angles left,” Stapleton says into his mic, beginning a communication cadence to initiate the “set,” which is Navy talk for drill. “Viper Two, speed and angles right,” his student says. “Check tapes H.U.D.” This is to ensure the aircraft’s recording system is on, which will give valuable information for the debrief later. “Tapes,” the student says. “Check left 50,” Stapleton says, signaling his student to place their jet 40 degrees off his tail, giving them the offensive position. “Reverse,” the student says, letting Stapleton know they are in position. From here, the student counts down the beginning of the set. “Viper Two in from 2.0...1.9...1.8...” When the student closes the distance to 1.5 miles, or 9,000 feet, they begin the drill with one last communication. “Fox Two,” they say — signaling that the fight is on.

With the student immediately on his tail, Stapleton begins a defensive maneuver by executing a break turn to the right, pulling as hard as he can on the stick. Right away he can tell he has caught his student “behind the jet,” meaning that the student is not keeping up with the changing relationships between the two aircraft. Dogfighting is all about energy management, and with the F/A-18s flying slick, the angles are tighter than the student is used to, causing them to underestimate their airspeed and begin their turning pull early. Within seconds, the student is pointing at Stapleton instead of flying wide around his wing line, causing them to collapse the range and pass directly behind Stapleton’s aircraft with too much energy, essentially forfeiting the tactical advantage.

Having seen this a dozen times before, Stapleton instinctively unloads his aircraft out of its turn, resets the stick, and reverses. All of a sudden, instead of the student being squarely behind and forcing Stapleton into an evasive dive, the two are locked in a side-by-side arc, swirling slowly downward. At this point, Stapleton cues his helmet to deploy a simulated AIM-9X sidewinder missile at his student’s aircraft, all the while gauging whether they know what to do or if they are “lost in the sauce,” and as the jets approach the hard deck of 9,000 feet, Stapleton makes a final aggressive maneuver, gaining a last-second advantage.

For Stapleton, it doesn’t get better than this. He knows the student has made a fatal
error, and in an instant, he will send a burst of simulated cannon fire straight through their cockpit. Unlike the movies, however, Stapleton doesn’t showboat. Sure, a healthy amount of confidence is essential for a job like this, but he never seeks to embarrass, and for most students, this is a one-time error that soon gets corrected. But still, killers will be killers.

In fact, Stapleton doesn’t just relish the kill; he “cherishes it.” The kill is what he lives for. It’s a deep, carnal satisfaction all good fighter pilots thirst for. The mission of Topgun is “to win in combat,” and achieving victory requires split-second decisions — how quickly can you spot a deviation? How quickly can you capitalize on an opponent’s mistake when you’re going 400 knots, when you’re “under G,” the increased gravity draining blood from your head and specifically from your eyes, causing you to see stars, a blackness forming at the bottom of your sightline and, like a bathtub filling up with water, slowly rising until you lose vision or pass out completely?

How quickly? This entire exercise takes about 90 seconds, in which both aircraft have descended 10,000 feet. They complete the set a few more times before heading back to base, always executing their landings as if flopping down onto a carrier.

On the ground, Stapleton peels off his helmet and visor, revealing his long face and brown hair which, with years of stress, is going gray above the ears. After completing his shutdown procedures, he steps onto the flight line and walks toward Hangar 5, a gearhead’s dream of fighter jets with panels pulled off, tool chests wheeled here and there, mechanics using highly customized tools to replace highly customized parts. Like cars, jets have scheduled and unscheduled maintenance, and the goal for the flight crew is to never have a breakdown in the air. Even though pilots tend to get all the attention, it takes hundreds of man-hours from hundreds of people to make this operation possible, from the mechanics to the operations managers to the oxygen equipment technicians.

After giving one of the mechanics a customary nod, Stapleton strides into the flight equipment shop, which is essentially a locker room where the pilots keep all their gear. He hangs his helmet on a peg on the wall, along with his G-suit, harness, and survival vest. He then walks to the Fleet Training Building, stepping through an airlock into fresh air-conditioning, which feels cool on his skin after being out in the Fallon sun.

Stapleton remembers the first time he walked through these doors as a student. He’d heard all the stories, all the legend and lore. He knew that the Navy only sends 36 fighter crews to Topgun each year, so when he was first accepted as a student, his highest priority was not screwing it up. He also had a lot to live up to. Originally from the northwest suburbs of Chicago, he grew up listening to jets take off at O’Hare International Airport, living the life of a conventional White Sox-worshiping Midwesterner.

But it seemed he was always destined to become a pilot. His father was a naval aviator, having flown helicopters off the USS Enterprise in the ’80s before retiring as a commander in the reserves. His grandfather on his mom’s side was a first-generation American from Hungary who flew float planes as a 20-year-old in the Pacific Theater of World War II. His other grandfather was a radio operator on a B-17 in Korea, and Stapleton will never forget sitting at the foot of his chair listening to the story about the time his grandfather was flying over enemy territory with a busted-up engine, flames wrapping around the wing and fuselage. The crew had opened the bomb bay doors and were staring out into the darkness, wondering whether they would have to bail out over hostile territory. Luckily, they made it back to a friendly airfield, but the story always stuck with young Stapleton, which is part of the reason he decided to join the Navy.

After flashing his badge at the security desk, he hangs a left past a 25-millimeter MiG-29 cannon mounted on a wooden
learned and put it into practice — a student instructors trying to defend it. It’s a chance students trying to strike a target and the staff brings in a veteran who has seen actual for anything, and after that exercise, the F-22 Raptor. This teaches them to account what they are about to fight. It could be an Vietnam War vet, or someone who has be a Vietnam War vet, or someone who has been known as “patch wearers,” a symbol of their time in the program.

The most common misconception is that they’ve reached the top of the pyramid, that they’ve finally arrived, but in truth, Topgun is just a stop along the way.

From here, most of them will head out to various weapons schools to train the fleet. Some, like Stapleton, will be asked to join the staff at Topgun, and the fact that he’s been through it makes him perfect for the job. As he heads to debrief the day’s exercise, Stapleton remembers what it was like the first time he did a 9K perch set as an attacker. Like his student today, he also pulled early and got reversed on by the instructor, ending up defensive. He remembers thinking he would never make it through the 13 weeks having failed so miserably on Day One. But, as with most pursuits, failure is the only way to learn, and Topgun is the ultimate pressure cooker. No one goes easy on themselves here. Everyone is on point all the time, whether flying or studying or eventually teaching. Instructors work upward of 15 hours a day when class is in session and are routinely told not to come in on Christmas, which most of them attempt to do anyway. From the staff to the students to the flight crews, these aviators are truly “not in the business of good enough,” and as Stapleton heads to the debrief, he is thinking about the best way to relate this to his students when he passes his commanding officer in the hall. “Hey Bones,” his CO says. “Remember you have an interview later today. That reporter is coming up from Vegas.”

“Can’t wait,” Stapleton jokes, letting out a noticeable sigh. It’s funny because in Fallon, where most people have a relative or friend who works on base, where most people have seen an F/A-18 so many times that they don’t even look up when they come screaming overhead, there’s nothing overly sexy about Topgun. It’s not like the movies. There’s no cocktailing on the flight deck, no measuring each other’s missiles. In fact, the mission is far more sobering. The truth is, they’re flying the most advanced war machines ever created, and if the day ever comes, they will be asked to take lives, something each pilot must reckon with privately. There are no simulated threats in combat. The weapons are real, and so are the people flying the aircraft. Some of them might suffer lifelong emotional and psychological trauma, which can happen in training as well as combat. Some of them might head out for a mission one day and not come home. Despite Fallon being a cowboy town, at the real Topgun there are certainly no cowboy antics.

But how do you explain that to a reporter? How do you explain that you don’t crave the limelight; that in fact, you don’t appreciate you and your colleagues being portrayed as a bunch of macho fighter bros junked up on adrenaline who like to stand tall for the cameras and wax poetic about how lonely it is at the top of the heap? Maybe past generations were like that, the people Ehud Yonay wrote about in his original “Top Guns” for California magazine in 1983, the article on which the original film was based. That was a different time, a time before the internet, before anyone could be the main character of their own personal movie. When YouTube or Instagram can place anyone inside the cockpit of a fighter jet, how do you explain what it really feels like to strap into a machine with more than eight tons of thrust and blast off, hair on fire, the earth and everyone on it becoming just a blur?

And how could you honestly explain, without coming off the wrong way, that you wish no one even knew about Topgun or Fallon or any of it; that if you could have your way, you wouldn’t have to talk to reporters or do television interviews; you wouldn’t have to answer the same stupid questions every time you sat at a bar: Have you ever done a flyby? Do you really play volleyball in jeans? In a perfect world, you wouldn’t be symbolized as a counterpunch to waning American masculinity, as a prototypical alpha male with a do-or-die attitude, as the sole sovereign to the Kingdom of Winning. In a perfect world, you wouldn’t have to do any of that stuff. You could just fly fighter jets and teach others how to fly them, and no one would even know about it.

But that’s not the world Lieutenant Graham Stapleton lives in. As flawed as the Hollywood rendition of his profession is, it’s part of the culture now, and despite how cartoonish it makes him look, it works wonders for recruitment. The Navy needs a face, after all, and today, that face is him. “Another reporter?” he says to his CO, running his hand through his hair. “Those people never get it right.”
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The boggling variety, the dramatic productivity, the cornucopian much-ness — that’s the first thing that hits you about the late Rita Deanin Abbey as you move through the new Rita Deanin Abbey Museum: As an artist, she contained multitudes. There’s a lot going on here. In the facility’s 12 galleries you encounter paintings in more distinct modes than you can keep track of, as well as sculptures in half-a-dozen more, as well as an expansive selection of drawings, assemblages, prints, enamels, pounded metal, cast bronze, carved wood, cut Plexiglass, poured resin. Then there are the massive black steel sculptures outside. Unless you’re familiar with Abbey — and odds are you’re not — it might not be easy to collate it all around a legible aesthetic throughline. But trying to do just that is what makes the museum experience fun.

Abbey, who died last year at age 90, was “the most important unknown artist in Southern Nevada,” as arts scene observer Patrick Gaffey said in her Review-Journal obit. If you’ve been to the Summerlin Library, you might’ve seen “Spirit Tower,” her large metalwork guarding the entrance; members of Temple Beth Sholom have long congregated in the light of her 16 extraordinary stained glass windows there. But otherwise, as Gaffey, noted, “she kind of intentionally stayed out of the limelight.” “My energies,” Abbey once said, “have always gone into making art rather than promoting it.”
So that’s what the museum is here to do. I spent a recent morning wandering its 10,500 perfectly lighted, marble-floored square feet with museum director Laura Sanders, trying to get a bead on Abbey and her work. I knew the barest few biographical details: Professionally, she kept the Abbey surname of her first husband, noted environmental author and desert crank Edward Abbey (Desert Solitaire, The Monkey Wrench Gang); early on, she was the only woman on UNLV’s art faculty, teaching until 1987; and that she worked constantly.

“She worked in every medium you can think of,” Sanders says. The 175 works on display are just a portion of what’s on hand — Abbey kept way more art than she sold — and the exhibits will be freshened from time to time.

Our first stop is a room largely devoted to pieces that front Abbey’s deep connection to the desert. One wall is dominated by the 10-by-30-foot painting “Bridge Mountain,” which once hung in UNLV’s Judy Bayley Theatre. Its desert associations emanate from its sere yellows, its nightfall blue, its touch of red, and from the abstracted geology implicit in its forms; it feels desert-like in a way entirely in sync with the intuitive, rather than theory-driven, way that Abbey worked. (Making no preliminary drawings, she just barged into a piece to see what happened.) She often created in series, and some of the pieces in this gallery are from a set titled From Desert to Bible Vistas: gestural abstracts that tint her love of nature with her enduring interest in Jewish spirituality. Nearby hang a set of “crushed landscapes,” rectangles of crumpled dark metal. It’s only when you look at them as if looking down at them that it clicks — they’re abstracted aerial topographies. “If you fly over Nevada or the desert Southwest,” Sanders says, “you’ll see this.” Indeed, the saturating importance of place is the second thing that hits you.

“Nature has had the greatest influence on my work,” Abbey said in 2003. “I have explored desert landscapes and have been deeply affected by rock formations, vistas, sunsets, plant and wild life, rivers, the colors and textures of canyons. These places communicate and resonate with my own nature.” One of her six books was Art and Geology: Expressive Aspects of the Desert (co-authored with scientist G. William REACHING HIGHER

Rita Deanan Abbey at work on her 1974 piece, “Bridge Mountain,” a series of five acrylic-on-canvas panels. It was installed in the lobby of UNLV’s Judy Bayley Theatre and hung there for many years.

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Fiero), which paired her artworks with photos of geological features in a harmonic convergence of shared forms.

“Land is not simply a subject for Abbey, but a major fact of her life that she examines daily,” William L. Fox wrote in his 1999 book Mapping the Empty: Eight Artists and Nevada. Its chapter on Abbey is a solid introduction to her work and methods.

By the time we move through a couple more galleries, I’ve also noticed what’s not on display. You will search these walls in vain for encrypted political messaging; there are no socially urgent -isms, no “interrogations,” “critiques,” or “interventions.” Thanks to Abbey’s self-imposed distance from the art world, her work opts out of our screen-optimized culture which so often — subtweeting Jeff Koons/Damien Hirst here — mistakes novelty for distinction. As with a deep-cave fish, her work has evolved in its own way, untainted by the market hustle. And her aversion to hyping what she made means that most of it, of whatever vintage, will be brand new to the rest of us.

* * * * *

THE MUSEUM ITSELF is as much outside the mainstream as its subject. It’s not located Downtown or in a tony Summerlin commercial district — it’s not in any commercial district. Rather, somewhat improbably, it sits next to the home she shared with her husband, Robert Rock Belliveau, on a large, sculpture-dotted parcel in a rural neighborhood off of Ann Road, one clearly not overseen by a heavy-handed HOA. Visitors began trickling into its nine-space parking lot in January, by appointment only, though Sanders says the museum is not overseen by a heavy-handed HOA.

The museum contains separate galleries devoted to Abbey’s early landscape abstractions, to works that center her Jewish heritage (including her original stained glass windows for Temple Beth Sholom), to figure drawings, to her late work — large organic abstracts that revel in bold lines and an exuberant precision — and much more. But not nearly all.

“We weren’t able to represent every series she’s ever done,” Hough says. The two spent 2017-2020 editing Abbey’s vast trove toward a usable selection. “I tried to get her to pick her favorites, on a scale of 1-10. Give me your eights, nines, and 10s.” Hough laughs. “To her, all of them were nines or 10s; she didn’t have any specific favorites.” Hough made the final cut herself.

Built into the museum’s flow are moments of bracing juxtaposition: As you leave the dim gallery devoted to The Black Series — works that, in a nod to volcanic geology, completely eschew color — it’s a trippy vibe shift to encounter “Celebration,” a pop-bright assemblage of cut Plexiglass that looks like the cover of the grooviest album the Grateful Dead never recorded.

McCollum proclaims himself a fan of her early landscape abstractions, and the room devoted to them is compelling. “Taos Mountain,” for example, oscillates between visually suggesting an actual New Mexico landscape and capturing an emotional response to it. Part of your enjoyment as a viewer comes from your brain’s disorientation as it works out the dissonance between those visual and limbic responses.

Or, as Hough puts it, “She doesn’t paint the river. She paints what it feels like to be in the river.”

THE MUSEUM ITSELF

Officially the culmination of 10 years of effort by Abbey, Belliveau, and the family foundation, the museum as an idea goes back as far as the early 2000s, according to Katherine Plake Hough, former chief curator at the Palm Springs Art Museum, a longtime friend of Abbey’s, and co-curator — with the hands-on, perfectionist Abbey herself, of course — of the exhibits inside. (Indeed, she says, Abbey was involved in every aspect of the place, from the architecture to the grounds.)

The two met when Hough curated a 1988 Abbey retrospective in Palm Springs — Abbey wasn’t wholly opposed to putting her work out there, of course, and over time participated in many group shows and 50 solo exhibits — and they became friends.

Sanders, too, had a long history with Abbey, serving as her archivist from 1990-2006. “I feel like I got a master’s degree in abstract art,” she says with a laugh. This brings to mind a story from artist Michael McCollum, who joined the UNLV art staff in 1969, fresh from the MFA program at the University of California, Berkeley. Knowing he needed to brush up on color theory, he sat in on one of her classes. “I learned so much and got so excited by it,” he recalls, “I asked if I could take her class. It changed my life.” In part, he says, that was because of her skill at interacting with students; don’t take her preference for solitary time in the studio to mean she had no people skills. “She was absolutely approachable,” McCollum says. Formidable, too, Fox adds: “I knew if we were going to have a conversation, we were going to have a serious conversation.”

She was in some ways a path-breaker, for a while the lone female on UNLV’s art faculty. “And then,” Fox notes, “she picks up a welding torch.” Steel sculptures of such brute physicality (“Hidden Pass,” for example, weighs 22 tons), especially given Abbey’s small stature, must’ve been somewhat incongruous at a time when large-scale metalworks were mostly a guy thing. (Fox writes that she had to assemble her pieces in the school’s engineering workshops, the art department not being set up for such work.) She didn’t make a big deal of it, though, or sublimate feminist point-making into her art.

“Rita spoke about it with me,” says Fox, now director of The Center for Art + Environment at the Nevada Museum of Art. “She was very aware of it, but didn’t talk about it a lot; she didn’t want to create more obstacles for herself.”

Says Sanders, “She just wanted to get on to the next exploration.”
But then the museum serves up oddball moments like “Centaurus,” a life-size bronze humanoid figure, roped with strange musculature and wearing a horse skull (“I get to dust him,” Sanders says with a smile). It’s not easy to square the big fella with, say, the pensive acrylic washes of “Gathering” (from her Desert Space series) or the frantic jabbing oils of “Summer Lightning” (from the Arches National Monument series) or even to link those with the formal gravitas of the big steel “Holocaust” in the sculpture garden. What, finally, are you to make of all this variousness?

Let’s let Abbey field that one: “I strive to discover these forces through deeply felt distinctive images rather than consistency of style,” she’s quoted as saying on one of the many wall cards that bring her voice into these galleries. “My love of color, texture, and form, my curiosities, intuition, observations, and need for discovery keeps me from repeating what no longer seems challenging.”

From some angles, the Rita Deain Abbey Museum probably looks like a beautifully realized vanity project, conceived by the artist and completed by her family in loving homage to its matriarch. I ask Hough what she thinks gives it a wider import than that.

Her answer: It’s the reintroduction of a serious, one-of-a-kind artist who spent so many productive years off the grid. “She hasn’t really been discovered. The museum showcases an artist whose body of work is unbelievably creative, distinct, and imaginative. It’s not derived from anyone else’s work. And this will be discovered.”

In addition to serving as the legacy of one creative life, her art — with its full embrace of nature, its fluid adaptability, its multichannel curiosity, its restless creativity, its insistence on doing everything her way — furthermore proposes an enviable way of being in the world, whether you’re artist or not. That, for what it’s worth, is my takeaway.

Our tour ends with a peek into Abbey’s studio, maintained largely as she left it; I don’t know if its sense of bustling Abbeyian productivity is something they’ve actually managed to preserve, or if that’s just the impression I lug in from the galleries. But it’s not a stretch to imagine her strolling in, removing her signature sunglasses, and picking up a paintbrush — or a clay-sculpting wire, or a hammer, or a carving knife, or a welding torch — and getting to work on something new.

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“We are lucky to have had a leader like Dr. Shepherd that set the tone for the practice when it began,” says Steven O. Hansen, MD, FACS, and president of Shepherd Eye Center. “By keeping his vision of always putting the patient first, we have been able to embrace the challenges and opportunities that have presented themselves over the last 50+ years and provide compassionate eye care for the whole family.”
Dr. Jabran Alemi, a prosthodontist at Pine Plaza Dental, is proud to be providing advanced dental care to the communities of Las Vegas since 2012. His passion for dentistry began at an early age, and by 19, he was teaching a class on Topics in Dentistry, while in undergraduate studies.

His excellence in math, science and dream of a profession in oral healthcare was rewarded by a rare early acceptance into the prestigious UCSF School of Dentistry. He is one of only a very few graduates to have earned their BS, and DDS degrees from UCSF. After graduating with the Senior Dental Student Award, and practicing general dentistry for 3 years, under the mentorship and guidance of his brother, Dr. Hamed Alemi, in San Diego, California, his continued passion and hunger for knowledge, led him to completing a 3 year residency in Graduate Prosthodontics at the one and only University of Michigan.

Specializing in Prosthodontics, Dr. Alemi and his team commit themselves to providing the highest standards of oral health care. His award-winning dentistry utilizes a unique combination of science and artistry to give each client a remarkable experience, and an unbelievable result. His expertise covers a broad range of dental treatments, from same day dental implants and teeth, to smile makeovers and full mouth reconstructions with crowns and veneers.

Dr. Alemi continues to expand his knowledge thru continuing education courses throughout the world, professional affiliations with the American College of Prosthodontists (ACP), and Academy of Osseointegration (AO).
Nevada Eye Physicians, formerly known as Nevada Eye and Ear, is a comprehensive eye care facility with locations across Southern Nevada including Mesquite and Pahrump. For over 20 years, our priority has been to deliver the highest quality personalized eye care to patients of all ages using the latest advances in technology.

In addition to routine annual eye exams and vision screenings, our highly trained physicians offer a full spectrum of treatment options for a wide array of eye conditions. At Nevada Eye Physicians, we keep up with the latest advances in eye care and vision-saving techniques. We are proud to offer laser-assisted cataract surgery, along with premium lens implants that help patients enjoy the best possible vision to suit their unique lifestyle. For those with glaucoma, where the pressure inside the eye is too high, our doctors help manage the condition to preserve vision and maintain their quality of life. In addition, we work with patients who have diabetes, which can adversely affect the eyes if not consistently monitored. Whether for routine eye care, or a more serious medical condition, our physicians have the skills to help you see your world more clearly.

Our optical shops offer the latest styles of eyeglass frames, from designers like Gucci and Tiffany, to lightweight Silhouettes. Our opticians will help find the style that best suits you, along with the lenses that give you the vision and eye protection you need. Like wearing contact lenses more than glasses? We have you covered there too. And if you’re ready to reduce your reliance on corrective eyewear or contacts, we offer laser vision correction procedures that can lead to life-changing vision improvement.

At Nevada Eye Physicians, we respect the unique needs of each patient, spending time to learn about concerns and answering questions about the health of their eyes and the quality of their vision. It is not uncommon for our patients to stay with us for decades because they know we care and are so committed to their health. From the front desk to the surgery center, we work as a team to ensure each patient feels comfortable and relaxed in our state-of-the-art facilities. We understand the importance of eye health and proper vision care, which is why we make it a priority to provide exceptional results for our patients to allow them improved sight and an enhanced quality of life.
Thousands of families have benefited from Red Rock Fertility Center’s service over the past fourteen years. It’s Nevada’s first and only boutique style center specializing in personalized physician care and expertise in an intimate and cozy setting.

Dr. Eva Littman, the Founder and Practice Director, is one of Las Vegas’ most trusted and knowledgeable fertility experts. She has successfully guided the center to produce exceptionally high pregnancy success rates year-after-year and has contributed to worldwide knowledge of specific fertility issues by publishing numerous papers in peer-reviewed journals and regularly presents at international meetings and local conferences.

Dr. Littman completed her medical training at some of the world’s leading medical centers and universities including Stanford University and Duke University. Her ground-breaking research has been honored and recognized by the nation’s most prestigious organizations. She was awarded the Pacific Coast Reproductive Society Prize Paper Award and the Academic Medicine Fellowship Award by the National Medical Foundation.

Red Rock Fertility Center and Dr. Littman have been awarded may notable awards including “Top Doctor” in the field of fertility for the past eleven years and “Woman to Watch” in 2013 by Vegas Inc. In 2017 the U.S. Small Business Administration awarded Dr. Littman and the center “Nevada’s Small Business of The Year”.

EVA LITTMAN, MD, F.A.C.O.G
RED ROCK FERTILITY CENTER

9120 WEST RUSSELL ROAD
SUITE 200
LAS VEGAS, NV 89148
702-262-0079

RED ROCK FERTILITY CENTER
EVA LITTMAN, MD, F.A.C.O.G.

9120 WEST RUSSELL ROAD
SUITE 200
LAS VEGAS, NV 89148
702-262-0079

Red Rock Fertility
Dr. Emily Romberger has been a practicing Audiologist at Desert Valley Audiology since 2018, when she began her residency. After her move, she fell in love with the city and settled into her forever home.

As a member of the team at Desert Valley Audiology, her primary focus is in pediatrics. Over the years, Dr. Romberger has developed Desert Valley into a known pediatric clinic. She specializes in testing and treatment of hearing losses for children who are deaf and hard of hearing. As waves of parents and families have shared, “Dr. Emily” is kind, patient, and has a way of making children feel truly comfortable and relaxed throughout their appointment. It is easy to see Dr. Romberger truly loves her job.

Although Dr. Romberger’s specialty is pediatrics, she also sees patients of all ages. She has a way of making everyone feel heard and has an excellent working relationship with all her patients and coworkers. Recently, a need was recognized in the Las Vegas area for Cochlear Implant recipients. This year, Dr. Romberger became part of the Cochlear Provider Network and has begun seeing adult Cochlear Implant patients. This addition provides greater access for patients with a more severe hearing loss access to care. As time moves forward, pediatrics will be added.

Dr. Romberger also serves as a preceptor/ supervisor for students at various times during their schooling. She provides instruction and hands on experience in the field of audiology, making sure her students feel confident after their rotation.

DESSERT VALLEY AUDIOLOGY

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DESSERT VALLEY

AUDIOLOGY

RANCHO:
ADDRESS: 501 S RANCHO DR
SUITE A8,
LAS VEGAS, NV 89106
PHONE: (702) 605-9133

TENAYA:
ADDRESS: 2911 N TENAYA WAY
SUITE 205,
LAS VEGAS, NV 89128
PHONE: (702) 605-9133

HENDERSON:
ADDRESS: 2850 W HORIZON RIDGE PKWY
SUITE 130, HENDERSON, NV 89052
PHONE: (702) 605-9133

WWW.LASVEGASHEARS.COM
Dr. Carlos Letelier has a passion for dental and medical excellence that’s exemplified through his distinguished background and his education credentials. His dentistry studies began in Chile where he earned his DDS degree. He then went to Boston, where he enrolled in Tufts University School of Dental Medicine, graduating Summa Cum Laude with a DMD degree.

After that, Dr. Letelier went on to complete his surgical residency and graduate from UCLA Medical School with both an MD and an OMFS degree. In addition to becoming board certified in both oral and maxillofacial and cosmetic surgery, Dr. Letelier has taught in the OMFS residency program at Fresno University Medical Center. His expertise covers a broad range of oral surgery, from wisdom tooth extraction and dental implants to facial and dental trauma. He is a trusted oral surgeon in Las Vegas, NV as he’s highly regarded for his treatment of patients with severe bone loss and missing teeth. Even today, Dr. Letelier continues to expand his knowledge by participating in specialty courses throughout the world. Additionally, he is a highly sought-after lecturer by his colleagues throughout the USA and other global locations.

**Dr. Carlos Letelier**
**THE CENTER FOR ORAL SURGERY OF LAS VEGAS**

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**THE CENTER FOR ORAL SURGERY OF LAS VEGAS**

10115 W TWAIN AVE.
SUITE 100,
LAS VEGAS, NV 89147
702.367.6666
WWW.LASVEGASOMS.COM
In 1988 Dr. Leon Steinberg, Dr. David Steinberg, and Dr. Mark Winkler finalized the construction of the very first Steinberg Diagnostic Medical Imaging (SDMI) center. SDMI may have opened its doors 30+ years ago, but Dr. Leon saw the potential of a dedicated outpatient radiology practice long before that. In 1958, Dr. Leon Steinberg came to Las Vegas to help Sunrise Hospital build the first radiology center in Southern Nevada. Through his experience in a hospital environment, he saw the need for a more patient-friendly option for medical imaging and aimed to build such a practice. He constructed SDMI on his founding philosophy ‘If you practice great medicine, the patients will follow.’

Since its founding, the locally owned and operated out-patient imaging center has continued to grow. Today the patient-centric philosophy is practiced throughout the facilities, from the design concept to the state-of-the-art equipment installed. Notably, over 500 staff members and 30 radiologists care for over 1,500 patients daily throughout its 10 locations. Recently, SDMI celebrated the 2022 opening of its tenth facility, located at the corner of Blue Diamond and Lindell Road, with plans for expansion in the years to come.

SDMI continues to show its ongoing commitment to Southern Nevada residents by providing world-class imaging and adding new employment opportunities within Clark County. The group practice offers MRI, CT, 3D Mammography, Ultrasound, Biopsy, PET Scan, Nuclear Medicine, Dexascan, X-Ray, and Interventional Procedures such as Port Placement. Services vary per location.
The Largest Medical School in Nevada

- Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine
- Doctor of Physical Therapy
- Doctor of Nursing Practice
- Doctor of Education
  - Education Administration and Leadership
- Occupational Therapy Doctorate
- Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies
- Master of Science in Medical Health Sciences
- Master of Science in Nursing
  - Family Nurse Practitioner
- Master of Education
  - Curriculum & Instruction
- RN to Bachelor of Science in Nursing
- Post MSN Certificate
- Education Advanced Studies Certificate Programs

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Through the development of Roseman University’s new College of Medicine, Dr. Pedro Jose “Joe” Greer Jr., Presidential Medal of Freedom winner, recipient of the MacArthur Genius Grant, and Founding Dean, and his team envision a medical curriculum that delivers at the street level, in neighborhoods, and most importantly, in individual households. By aligning students, educators, partners and the community, we will create an inclusive and collaborative environment for innovative learning, healthcare and research. Together we can improve the health of our most vulnerable communities and our region’s health overall. Roseman University is building on its healthcare mission to launch a new kind of medical school in one of America’s most diverse and dynamic communities. Learn more, donate or volunteer at giving.roseman.edu/envision.

ROSEMAN UNIVERSITY
OF HEALTH SCIENCES

Uniting the Heart & Science of Healthcare

TRANSFORMING EDUCATION
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EMBRACING DISCOVERY
COMMITTED TO COMMUNITY

roseman.edu
The valley’s best physicians and dental professionals, as chosen by their peers
How the Top Doctors Were Chosen

Castle Connolly Top Doctors is a healthcare research company and the official source for Top Doctors for over 25 years. Castle Connolly's established nomination survey, research, screening and selection process involves many hundreds of thousands of physicians as well as academic medical centers, specialty hospitals and regional and community hospitals all across the nation.

The online nominations process — located at nominations.castleconnolly.com — is open to all licensed physicians in America who are able to nominate physicians in any medical specialty and in any part of the country. Once nominated, Castle Connolly’s physician-led team of researchers follow a rigorous screening process to select Top Doctors who meet the Castle Connolly standards. The research team also identifies Castle Connolly Rising Stars, who are peer-nominated doctors who meet most of our Top Doctor criteria, but are earlier in their career.

Careful screening of doctors’ educational and professional experience is essential before final selection is made among those physicians most highly regarded by their peers. The result - we identify the top doctors in America and provide you, the consumer, with detailed information about their education, training and special expertise in our online directories and national and regional magazine “Top Doctors” features.

Doctors do not and cannot pay to be selected and profiled as Castle Connolly Top Doctors or Rising Stars.

Physicians selected for inclusion in this magazine’s “Top Doctors” feature also appear online at castleconnolly.com, or in conjunction with other Castle Connolly Top Doctors databases online on other sites and/or in print.

Castle Connolly was acquired by Everyday Health Group (EHG), one of the world’s most prominent digital healthcare companies, in late 2018. EHG, a recognized leader in patient and provider education and services, attracts an engaged audience of over 60 million health consumers and over 890,000 U.S. practicing physicians and clinicians. EHG’s mission is to drive better clinical and health outcomes through decision-making informed by highly relevant information, data, and analytics. EHG empowers healthcare providers, consumers and payers with trusted content and services delivered through Everyday Health Group’s world-class brands including Everyday Health®, What to Expect®, MedPage Today®, Health eCareers®, PRIME® Education and our exclusive partnership with MayoClinic.org.® Everyday Health Group is a division of Ziff Davis (NASDAQ: ZD), and is headquartered in New York City.
10001 South Eastern Avenue, Suite 203 (702) 616-5915 Arthritis, Autoimmune Disease

Ewa Olech, MD
Cathedral Rock Medical Center
7200 Cathedral Rock Drive, Suite 110 (702) 489-4838 Rheumatoid Arthritis

Elham Taherian, MD
Dignity Health Medical Group
10001 South Eastern Avenue, Suite 203 (702) 616-5915 Arthritis, Autoimmune Disease

Sports Medicine

Brian A. Davis, MD
Intermountain Healthcare
9280 West Sunset Road, Suite 426, (702) 968-3240 Sports Injuries, PRP (Platelet Rich Plasma)

Timothy James Trainor, MD
Advanced Orthopedics & Sports Medicine
7195 Advanced Way (702) 740-5327 Arthroscopic Surgery, Shoulder & Knee Surgery, Shoulder Arthroscopic Surgery, Fractures

Randall E. Yee, DO
Advanced Orthopedics & Sports Medicine
7195 Advanced Way (702) 740-5327 Arthroscopic Surgery, Cartilage Damage & Transplant, Knee Surgery

Surgery

James Dee Atkinson, MD
Surgical Weight Control Center
2850 West Horizon Ridge Parkway, Suite 100 (702) 316-8446 Bariatric/Obesity Surgery, Laparoscopic Surgery-Advanced, Minimally Invasive Surgery

Anabel Barber, MD
UNLV Medicine
Department of Surgery
1707 West Charleston Boulevard, Suite 160 (702) 671-5150 Robotic Surgery, Colon & Rectal Cancer & Surgery, Gastrointestinal Surgery, Endocrine Surgery

Jennifer Baynosa, MD
UNLV Medicine

Department of Surgery
1707 West Charleston Boulevard, Suite 160 (702) 671-5150 Breast Cancer & Surgery

Peter A. Caravella, MD
Las Vegas Surgical Associates
8930 West Sunset Road, Suite 300, (702) 258-7788 Vascular Surgery

Sean D. Dort, MD
Southern Nevada Surgery Specialists
10001 South Eastern Avenue, Suite 201 (702) 914-2420

Sousan El-Eid, MD
Comprehensive Cancer Centers of Nevada
9280 West Sunset Road, Suite 100, (702) 255-1133 Breast Cancer & Surgery, Cancer Surgery

Daniel Kirgan, MD
UNLV Medicine
Department of Surgery
1707 West Charleston Boulevard, Suite 160 (702) 671-5150 Cancer Surgery, Breast Cancer & Surgery, Melanoma, Sarcoma

Deborah Ann Kuhls, MD
UNLV Medicine
Department of Surgery
1707 West Charleston Boulevard, Suite 160 (702) 671-5150 Trauma, Critical Care

Allan David Macintyre, DO
Sunrise Hospital & Medical Center Burn and Reconstructive Center
3186 South Maryland Parkway, (702) 961-7552 Burn Care, Wound Care

Fikre A. Mengistu, MD
Southern Nevada Surgery Specialists
10001 South Eastern Avenue, Suite 201 (702) 914-2420

Nancy Rivera, MD
Desert Surgical Associates
3131 La Canada Street, Suite 217, (702) 369-7152 Breast Surgery, Gastrointestinal Surgery, Hernia, Trauma/ Critical Care

Irwin B. Simon, MD
Vegas Valley Vein Institute
2450 West Horizon Ridge Parkway, Suite 100 (702) 341-7608 Minimally Invasive Vascular Surgery, Vein Disorders,

Varicose Veins, Hair Restoration/Transplant Darren W. Soong, MD Surgical Weight Control Center
2850 West Horzon Ridge Parkway, Suite 100 (702) 255-1133 Bariatric/Obesity Surgery, Laparoscopic Surgery-Advanced, Minimally Invasive Surgery

Charles R. St. Hill, MD
UNLV Medicine
Department of Surgery
1707 West Charleston Boulevard, Suite 160 (702) 671-5150 Cancer Surgery, Gallbladder Surgery, Hernia

Francis W. Teng, MD
Advanced Surgical Care

Margaret A. Terhar, MD
Comprehensive Cancer Centers of Nevada
1505 Wigwam Parkway, Suite 130, (702) 369-6008 Breast Disease, Breast Surgery

Timothy W. Tollestrup, MD
3035 West Horizon Ridge Parkway, Suite 120 (702) 666-0463 Periperal Nerve Surgery

Thoracic & Cardiac Surgery

Neel V. Dhudshia, MD
Cardiovascular Surgery of Southern Nevada
5320 South Rainbow Boulevard, Suite 282 (702) 737-3808 Cardiothoracic Surgery

Gyuhy Felkes, MD
Cardiovascular Surgery of Southern Nevada
5320 South Rainbow Boulevard, Suite 282 (702) 737-3808 Cardiothoracic Surgery, Endovascular Surgery, Esophageal Surgery

Juan Enrique Martin Jr, MD
Cardiovascular Surgery of Southern Nevada
5320 South Rainbow Boulevard, Suite 282 (702) 737-3808 Cardiac Surgery, Heart Valve Surgery-Aortic, Minimally Invasive Surgery

Michael G. Wood, MD
Dignity Health
Cardiovascular & Thoracic Surgery
7190 South Cimarron Road (702) 829-4259 Cardiac Surgery-Adult, Heart Valve Surgery, Thoracic Aortic Surgery, Heart Valve Surgery-Mitrall

Urogynecology/Female Pelvic Medicine & Reconstructive Surgery

Geoffrey C. Hsieh, MD
Women’s Cancer Center of Nevada
3151 La Canada Street, Suite 241, (702) 693-6870 Urogynecology, Pelvic Reconstruction, Incontinence-Urinary, Pelvic Organ Prolapse Repair

Urology

Scott Baranoff, MD
Las Vegas Urology
9053 South Pecos Road, Suite 2900, (702) 735-8000 Impotence, Incontinence, Urologic Cancer, Kidney Stones

Joseph V. Candela, MD
Las Vegas Urology
7500 Smoke Ranch Road, Suite 200, (702) 255-0727 Urology-Female, Urologic Cancer

Vijay Goll, MD
Las Vegas Urology
7200 Cathedral Rock Drive, Suite 210 (702) 233-0727 Kidney Stones, Incontinence-Male & Female, Minimally Invasive Surgery, Prostate Cancer-Cryosurgery

O. Alex Lesani, MD
Las Vegas Urology
7150 West Sunset Road, Suite 200, (702) 233-0727 Reconstructive Surgery, Robotic Surgery, Urinary Reconstruction

Lawrence H. Newman, MD
Las Vegas Urology
7150 West Sunset Road, Suite 201, (702) 316-1616 Bladder Surgery, Prostate Benign Disease (BPH), Erectile Dysfunction, Kidney Stones

Sarah Ryan, MD
Urology Specialists of Nevada
2010 Wellness Way, Suite 200, (702) 877-0814 Urology-Female, Incontinence

Michael P. Verni, MD
Urology Center
653 North Town Center Drive, Suite 302 (702) 212-3428 Pediatric Urology, Endourology

Jeffrey R. Wilson, MD
Urology Specialists of Nevada
2010 Wellness Way, Suite 200, (702) 877-0814 Robotic Surgery, Kidney Stones

Jason Zommick, MD
Urology Specialists of Nevada
58 North Pecos Road (702) 877-0814 Prostate Benign Disease (BPH), Vasectomy & Vasectomy Reversal

Vascular & Interventional Radiology

Steven H. Davis, MD
Red Rock Radiology
Endovascular Clinic
7120 Smoke Ranch Road, Suite 101, (702) 304-8135 Angioplasty & Stent Placement, Chemoembolization & Tumor Ablation, Radiofrequency Tumor Ablation

Aaron Peterson, MD
Red Rock Radiology
Endovascular Clinic
7120 Smoke Ranch Road, Suite 101, (702) 304-8135 Vascular Surgery

Earl Cottrell, MD
General Vascular Specialists
7200 West Cathedral Rock Drive, Suite 130 (702) 228-8600 Endovascular Surgery, Varicose Veins

Bruce Hirschfeld, MD
General Vascular Specialists
7200 West Cathedral Rock Drive, Suite 130 (702) 228-8600 Endovascular Surgery, Varicose Veins
How the Top Dentists Were Chosen

This list is excerpted from the 2022 topDentists™ list, which includes listings for more than 140 dentists and specialists in Southern Nevada. For more information call 706-364-0853; write PO Box 970, Augusta, GA 30903; email help@usatopdentists.com or visit www.usatopdentists.com.

**SELECTION PROCESS**

“If you had a patient in need of a dentist, which dentist would you refer them to?”

This is the question we’ve asked thousands of dentists to help us determine who the topDentists should be. Dentists and specialists are asked to take into consideration years of experience, continuing education, manner with patients, use of new techniques and technologies and of course physical results.

The nomination pool of dentists consists of dentists listed online through the American Dental Association, as well as all dentists listed online with their local dental societies, thus allowing virtually every dentist the opportunity to participate. Dentists are also given the opportunity to nominate other dentists that they feel should be included in our list. Respondents are asked to put aside any personal bias or political motivations and to use only their knowledge of their peer’s work when evaluating the other nominees.

Voters are asked to individually evaluate the practitioners on their ballot whose work they are familiar with. Once the balloting is completed, the scores are compiled and then averaged. The numerical average required for inclusion varies depending on the average for all the nominees within the specialty and the geographic area. Borderline cases are given careful consideration by the editors. Voting characteristics and comments are taken into consideration while making decisions. Past awards a dentist has received and status in various dental academies can play a factor in our decision.

Once the decisions have been finalized, the included dentists are checked against state dental boards for disciplinary actions to make sure they have an active license and are in good standing with the board. Then letters of congratulations are sent to all the listed dentists.

Of course there are many fine dentists who are not included in this representative list. It is intended as a sampling of the great body of talent in the field of dentistry in Nevada. A dentist’s inclusion on our list is based on the subjective judgments of his or her fellow dentists. While it is true that the lists may at times disproportionately reward visibility or popularity, we remain confident that our polling methodology largely corrects for any biases and that these lists continue to represent the most reliable, accurate, and useful list of dentists available anywhere.

**Dental Anesthesiology**

Amanda J. Okundaye
9500 West Flamingo Road
310-486-6656
anesthesiabydramanda.com

**Endodontics**

Benjamin J. Barborka
Las Vegas Endodontics
6655 West Sahara Avenue, Suite A-106
702-876-5800
lvendo.com

Kristen Beling
Sunset Endodontics
54 North Pecos Road, Suite B, 702-436-4300
sunsetendo.com

W. Scott Biggs
Micro Endodontics of Las Vegas
7120 Smoke Ranch Road, Suite 100
702-463-5000
lasvegasendo.com

William D. Brizpee
Las Vegas Endodontics
6655 West Sahara Avenue, Suite A-106
702-876-5800
lvendo.com

Matthew O. Cox
8460 South Eastern Avenue, Suite B
702-492-6688
coxendo.com

William J. Dougherty, Jr.
Sunset Endodontics
54 North Pecos Road, Suite B, 702-436-4300
sunsetendo.com

John Q. Duong
Lakeview Dental
2291 South Fort Apache Road, Suite 104
702-869-0001

David C. Fife
Fife & Steffen Endodontics
1975 Village Center Circle, Suite 110
702-360-2122
drdavidfife.com

Adam Gatan
Seven Hills Endodontics & Microsurgery Center
2810 West Horizon Ridge Parkway
Suite 200
702-384-0053
lvrootcanal.com

Chad R. Hansen
Las Vegas Endodontics
6655 West Sahara Avenue, Suite A-106
702-876-5800
lvendo.com

Darin K. Kajioka
Endodontics of Las Vegas
9750 Covington Cross Drive, Suite 150
702-878-8584
endodonticsoflasvegas.com

Ronald R. Lemon
University of Nevada Las Vegas School of Dental Medicine
1001 Shadow Lane, MS 7422
702-744-2731

Jason T. Morris
Nevada Endodontics
2510 Wigwam Parkway, Suite 200
702-263-2000

Kathleen F. Olender*
Desert Dental Specialists
7520 West Sahara Avenue
702-384-7200, dds-lv.com

Douglas R. Rakich
Endodontic Associates
6950 Smoke Ranch Road, Suite 125, 702-869-8840

Daniel I. Shalev
Nevada Endodontics
2510 Wigwam Parkway, Suite 200, 702-263-2000

Ryan C. Shipp
Shipp Endodontics
9053 South Pecos Road, Suite 3000
702-798-0911
shippendodontics.com

**General Dentistry**

Stanley S. Askew
Island Dental Center
9750 Covington Cross Drive, Suite 100
702-341-7979
islanddentalcenter.com

Steven A. Avena*
317 West Charleston Boulevard
702-384-1210
stevenavenadds.com

Stacie Baalbaky
Elite Family Dental
7835 South Rainbow Boulevard, Suite 28
702-898-8448
elitefamilydental.com

Will Baalbaky
Elite Family Dental
7835 South Rainbow Boulevard, Suite 28
702-898-8448
elitefamilydental.com

Peter S. Balle*
Balle & Associates
2801 West Charleston Boulevard
Suite 100
702-877-6608
balledds.com

Laurie S. Bloch-Johnson*
Exceptional Dentistry
9501 Hillwood Drive, Suite A
702-463-8600
lauriesmiles.com

Derryl R. Brian
Nevada Trails Dental
7575 South Rainbow Boulevard, Suite 101
702-367-3700
nevadatradidental.com

*denotes cosmetic dentistry services
Matthew M. Kikuchi
Kikuchi Oral Surgery & Dental Implant Center
5765 South Fort Apache Road, Suite 110
702-676-6337
omssnv.com

Bryce Leavitt
Gibson and Leavitt Oral & Maxillofacial Implant Surgery
670 South Green Valley Parkway, Suite 115
702-685-3700
ryangibsonoral.com

Carlos H. Letelier
The Center for Oral Surgery of Las Vegas
10115 West Twain Avenue, Suite 100, 702-367-6666
lasvegasoms.com

Jeff E. Moxley
Moxley Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery
3663 East Sunset Road, Suite 403
702-899-8350
drjeffmoxley.com

Patrick A. O’Connor
“O’Connor Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery
630 South Rancho Drive, Suite B, 702-870-2555
dpatrickoconnor.net

Daniel L. Orr II
Medical Education Building
2040 West Charleston Boulevard, Suite 201
702-383-3711, ors.org

Steven A. Saxe
Advance Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery
1570 South Rainbow Boulevard
702-258-0085
nvjawdcom.com

Orthodontics

Brian Chamberlain
Super Smile Orthodontics
7090 North Durango Drive, Suite 120
702-645-5100
supersmilevegas.com

Victoria Chen
SIGNIFICANCE ORTHODONTICS
6018 South Fort Apache Road, 702-213-9247
significanceorthodontics.com

David A. Chenin
Chenin Orthodontic Group
10730 South Eastern Avenue, Suite 100, 702-735-1010
cheninortho.com

April J. Cole
Chenin Orthodontic Group
10730 South Eastern Avenue, Suite 100, 775-461-1180
cheninortho.com

Eryn E. Ence
Ence Orthodontics
8490 South Eastern Avenue, Suite A
702-260-8241
vegascoolsmiles.com

Jedediah M. Feller
Feller Orthodontics
2871 North Tenaya Way
702-341-8668
fellerorthodontics.com

Michael C. Gardner
Leaver & Gardner Orthodontics
6005 South Fort Apache, Suite 100, 702-602-9066
leavergardner.com

John C. Griffiths
Las Vegas Braces
8710 West Charleston Boulevard, Suite 150
702-256-7846
lasvegasbraces.com

R. Cree Hamilton
Hamilton & Manuele Orthodontics
401 North Buffalo Drive, Suite 220, 702-243-3300
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1700 West Charleston Boulevard, Suite 190
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10400 South Eastern Avenue
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apkids.com

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dcare.com

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deefordentist.com

Marco T. Padilla*
Clear Choice Las Vegas
6450 Medical Center Street, Suite 300
702-430-2372
clearchoicemd.com/locations/dental-implants-las-vegas

Steven L. Rhodes
501 South Rancho Drive, Suite E-29
702-384-4896
srhodesdds.com
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NEVADA BALLET THEATRE PRESENTS

DRACULA

Music by Franz Liszt
Choreography by Ben Stevenson, O.B.E.

October 6–9, 2022

“Spectacle of an order seldom seen today... exquisitely beautiful and atmospheric.”

— NEW YORK TIMES
“Hortua Inhospitalario” by David Lozano, part of the Marjorie Barrick Museum of Art’s ambitious fall show, Notes for Tomorrow.
JAZZ WITHOUT BORDERS

What’s jazz? What’s not jazz? The debate has been raging (well, uh, okay, mildly percolating among a small group of interested parties) since the birth of the celebrated musical form. Trumpeter Bijon Watson and singer/songwriter Niles Thomas want to weigh in with their final answer: It’s all jazz — so can’t we all just get along?

Questioning the idea of limiting categories and exclusive subgenres in this dynamic art form, the two launched the Jazz Republic Entertainment Group to encourage listeners and artists to ditch the labels and get back to the music. Their Jazz Republic Concert series, presented locally by KUNV 91.5 FM, showcases talent from across the jazz spectrum to promote this quintessentially American music form, whatever the style. This concert features saxophonist Tom Luer, acclaimed for his nimble versatility — a welcome virtue in the Jazz Republic's genre-bending vision of the dynamic jazz art form. (AK) Myron’s in The Smith Center, 7p, $39-49, thesmithcenter.com

We Have Liftoff

You haven’t heard of StarBase? What planet are you living on?! The event venue tucked behind Allegiant Stadium is fast becoming a Gen Z hotspot and hangout, with its funkily themed rooms, Insta-friendly visual vibes, and programming that embraces LGBTQ youth. Its One Helluva Friday series has blown up too, and deservedly so. It’s a three-phase event that features “What the Hell Happened?,” a TED Talk-style speaker series; “Hella Expressions,” an open mic showcase, and the Comet Comedy club, which invites local comics to bring the funny. The next installment of One Helluva Friday is August 12. If you miss it, don’t fret — this popular series blasts off monthly. (AK) StarBase, 7p, free, starbaselv.com

RETURN OF A HOMETOWN TALENT

Shamir broke out of Vegas in 2014 with his impossibly sunny, bouncy smash single, “On the Regular.” It was a hit, but it also presented a creative conundrum: How does a restless protean musical artist explore and experiment when fans might just want more hooky hits? Shamir shrugged and forged forward, putting out a slate of solid, challenging albums in subsequent years that ditched easy pop conventions in favor of a bewitching, ragged-edged, basement-party electro-pop that seems perfectly suited to Shamir’s complex personal mythology. The Vegas Shamir returns to is much different than the Vegas of 2014; then again, Shamir is, happily, much different too. (AK) The Space, 9p, $20-35, thespace.lv.com

FLAMIN’ FLAMENCO

Antonio Rey’s Latin Grammy-winning 2020 album is titled Flamenco Sin Fronteras (Flamenco Without Borders), and that perfectly describes Rey’s commanding virtuosity — his forceful but fluid, dreamily expansive flamenco seems to know no limits. (AK) UNLV’s Artemus Ham Concert Hall, 7:30p, $30, unlv.edu/pac

ALL AMERICAN

Remember when patriotism was an earnest sentiment marked by a sense of collective goodwill and belief in national possibility? Me neither! But the Las Vegas Philharmonic remembers. This fall concert will celebrate the OG spirit of America with four works by four diverse American composers: Festive Overture by William Grant Still; Concerto in D Major for Violin and Orchestra by Wynton Marsalis; Hot-time Dance by George Antheil; and Grand...
Retro Future

The twangy cosmopolitan technicolor soul of **Khruangbin** sounds like a stray transmission from an alternate timeline where shag carpets and polyester slacks never went out of style. The live show promises to be a chill, dancy cosmic wormhole, but if you can’t make the show, check out the Houston-based band’s “Shelter in Space” playlist generator on their website.

Whether you’re cooking, painting, drinking, or coming down from psychoactive agents, you’re sure to find your own private musical UFO. (AK) **Brooklyn Bowl, 8p, $49.50-75, brooklynbowl.com**

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**Game On!**

Nerd confession: I remember the first time I saw a limit-break attack sequence on **Final Fantasy VIII**. It was otherworldly — slow-motion, cinematic, stylized fantasy monster violence amid a surging musical score. I had little idea what the hell I was watching, but damn if it wasn’t utterly compelling. No wonder that the Final Fantasy game series has long since become a global franchise — and a lifelong obsession for millions of gamers worldwide. You don’t have to be a fan of the game to appreciate its signature music — gusty and high-flying, tumultuously sentimental — but it’s a sure bet fans of the long-running game series will flock to this concert by the New World Players chamber ensemble, which will perform selections from composers Nobuo Uematsu, Masashi Hamauzu, Naoshi Mizuta, and more. Leave your controller at home — but you’ll be forgiven if your twitchy fingers scream to mash buttons. (AK) **UNLV’s Artemus Ham Hall, 8p, $45-85, unlv.edu/pac**

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**COMIN’ DOWN THE MOUNTAIN**

This Las Vegas Philharmonic delivers a dose of Americana in this fall concert with songs inspired by bluegrass, folk, and our sacred music tradition, including Jennifer Higdon’s earthy **Concerto 4-3**, a work inspired by the Smoky Mountains. The headliner piece is none other than Aaron Copland’s high-spirited **Appalachian Spring Suite**.

(AK) **Reynolds Hall in The Smith Center, 7:30p, visit lvphil.org for ticket info**

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**MUSIC TO YOUR EYES**

The most famous of J. Seward Johnson’s bronze sculptures are celebrated for a reason — they’re slices of Americana in action, capturing everyday people doing everyday things. (Others, like the monumental **The Awakening**, are just as celebrated for their epic sweep and scale.) But what might his works sound like? This multisensory concert,
Sounds for Sculpture, just might have the answer. Composed by jazz vibraphonist Christian Tamburr, the songs in Sounds for Sculpture are inspired by 10 of Seward’s iconic pieces, and meld jazz, and pop in expressing Seward’s artistic vision. Oh, and the talent on stage will truly make his art sing: Clint Holmes on vocals, Dominick Farinacci on trumpet, and Mike Dobson on percussion and sound effects. (AK) Myron’s in The Smith Center, 6p and 8:30p, $39-55

As Indie as It Gets
The best way to describe the bratty, manic tendercore of L.A.’s Illuminati Hotties is to imagine a sun-dappled confetti flume of ‘zines, cassettes, skateboard parts, Pee Chee folders, and puffy stickers shooting out of your speakers and right into your glittery heart. Oh, it’s incredibly smirky and precious, but also hooky and boppy as hell. May contain songs with titles like “Joni: LA’s No. 1 Health Goth.” With opening acts Enumclaw and Guppy. (AK) The Space, 8p, $21-$36, thespaceclv.com

Jazz It Up
This three-day jazz festival will feature sounds served up by the often-underrated talent at UNLV performing classic and contemporary jazz tunes. (AK) UNLV’s Black Box Theatre, $10 per night, 702-895-2787

December 10
Very Very Mariachi
Want to make any song sound better? Mariachify it. “Happy Birthday”? Give it some horn-bomp! “Stairway to Heaven”? Could definitely be livened up with some spirited gritos. “Jingle Bells”? Decades overdue for some brassing up. In this holiday show, the Latin Grammy-nominated Mariachi Herencia de México will break out Mexican and American seasonal classics, which please please please hopefully includes “Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer.” (AK) UNLV’s Artemus Ham Hall, 7:30p, $20-50, unlv.edu/pac

December 11
Fives Times the Brass
The cleverly named Pentagogical Brass Band is composed of five brass-wielding music teachers, and in this concert, they’ll be schooling the public with a selection of holiday music. Some Pentagogical Brass members are retired educators; others are still happily brassing it up in the classroom. In any case, this classy show of brass should be music to your ears. (AK) West Charleston Library, 2p, free, lvccld.org

Forget Success. Murder is the Best Revenge
Topher Payne describes his play Angry Fags as a dystopian revenge tragedy, and it reads like the cathartic squirm-watch we all need now. A conservative candidate enlists the help of right-wing extremists to unseat a lesbian state senator — a mundane plot in the context of today’s headlines, but there’s more. Dog whistling, a
hate crime, aforementioned revenge ... Did I mention it takes place in the American South? Yeah, this dark comedy has it all.

**HK Majestic Repertory Theatre, 8 and 5p, $20-40, majesticrepertory.com**

### SEPTEMBER 30

#### LIFE AND DEATH

Another ripped-from-the-headlines drama, Jane Martin’s 1994 Pulitzer Prize finalist *Keely and Du* lays bare the essential conflict over abortion through a suspenseful tale showing the lengths both sides will go to preserve what they see as fundamental rights. A Public Fit presents the play as a staged reading, but don’t let that deter you; the company has a long track record of making these slightly stripped-down versions every bit as emotionally compelling without the changing of sets. And note: It’s one night only.

**HK Clark County Library, time TBD, free, apublicfit.org**

### OCTOBER 4-9

#### POWER TRIPLE

In line with its usual modus operandi, Contemporary West Dance Theatre’s Fall Concert Series #16 will push the boundaries of Las Vegas performance. This year, the company is presenting a trio of works: *Bolero,* choreographed by Bernard Gaddis; *Coup de Grace* by T Tommy-Waheed Evans; and an all-female interpretation of *Dreamtime* by Elisa Monte. Gaddis

**OCTOBER 14-15**

#### THE BITE STUFF

You don’t have to like ballet to enjoy the hell out of *Dracula,* what with its dark, foggy set, creepy classical music, over-the-top costumes, and flying main character. But if you are a fan of dance, you will absolutely devour Ben Stevenson’s choreography set to the music of Franz Liszt. Nevada Ballet Theatre first thrilled crowds with the ballet about love, lust, and — yes — bodily autonomy, in 2018. Since then, Steven Goforth, who played the lead with a combination of physical intimidation and emotional fragility, has retired, opening the door to a fresh interpretation.

**HK Reynolds Hall in The Smith Center, 7:30 and 2p, $35.95-154.95, thesmithcenter.com**

Also upcoming: *The Nutcracker* (Dec. 9-24), *Blue Until June* (Feb. 18-19)
promises an evening filled with “the raw power of dance, infused with originality and beauty.” (HK) Charleston Heights Arts Center, 7:30p, $15-30, lvdance.org

OCTOBER 14- NOVEMBER 6

IT POURS

A Public Fit turns to another Pulitzer Prize nominee, Richard Greenburg’s Three Days of Rain, for its first staged production of the 22-23 season. Toggling between two time periods, the play tells the story of three children, their parents, and the legacy of close, complicated relationships. First staged in 1997, the story’s appeal is evident from its ability to draw Julia Roberts to New York for her Broadway debut in a 2006 revival that also starred Bradley Cooper and Paul Rudd (but nevertheless left critics unimpressed). (HK) Super Summer Theatre, 4340 S. Valley View Blvd., #208, 7 and 2p, $25-40, apublicfit.org

Also upcoming: Brilliant Adventures (Jan. 27-28), An Oak Tree (Feb. 3-27)

OCTOBER 21-22

AWESOME BLOSSOM

UNLV Dance kicks off its fall concert series, In Bloom, with orchestra 5. The collaboration between the dance department and the UNLV Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Ukrainian-born Taras Krysa, reimagines Ballet Russe’s 1910 work Firebird, set to an Igor Stravinsky score. (HK) Artemus Ham Concert Hall, UNLV, 7:30 and 2:30p, $18, unlv.edu/dance

DECEMBER 9-18

BREAKING THE GLASS

Local writer, director, and performer Maythinee Washington brings her unique vision and powerful voice to Lewis Carroll’s classic novel with her staged interpretation, Alice’s Wonderland: An Original Adaptation. The Rainbow Company Youth Theatre presents this new, ensemble-driven production, which promises to put a new spin on well-known characters, such as Alice and the Mad Hatter, and keep families talking about it long after the curtain drops. (HK) Charleston Heights Arts Center, 7 and 2p, $6, rainbowcompany.org

She Loves Company

Who doesn’t enjoy a good hobbiling? Especially when it’s embedded in the totally plausible plot of a crazed superfan getting revenge on a celebrated novelist for killing off her favorite character in his latest book (after he has an accident right in her neck of the woods!). But, while the sledgehammer scene may be the most memorable from the movie adaptation of Stephen King’s Misery (or the ax scene, in the case of the novel), there’s a heap of spine-tingling storytelling happening before and after that iconic act of violence. Las Vegas Little Theatre takes up the torch, so to speak, presenting William Goldman’s theatrical version of the horror story just in time for Halloween. (HK) Las Vegas Little Theatre Main Stage, 3920 Schiff Drive, 8 and 2p, $30, lvlt.org

Also upcoming: The Foreigner (Sept. 9-25), 1940s Radio Hour (Dec. 2-18), Lombardi (Jan. 20-Feb. 5)
a new woman and moving the family to Brooklyn? In her 1995 drama *Crumbs From the Table of Joy*, Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Lynn Nottage used this plot, and the questions it raises, to probe a pivotal moment for Black Americans in 1950s New York. Nevada Conservatory Theatre presents the still-resonant play about how people adapt to a world changing around them. (HK) Judy Bayley Theatre, UNLV, times TBD, $10-25, unlv.edu/nct

Also upcoming: *The Cherry Orchard* (Oct. 7-16)

**JANUARY 19-MARCH 6**

**SIX INCHES FORWARD AND FIVE INCHES BACK**

Raucous glam rock meets riveting personal tragedy in *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, John Cameron Mitchell's story of Hansel, a gay man who undergoes gender transition surgery to escape East Germany as the wife of an American soldier. The surgeon botches the operation, setting Hansel, now Hedwig, on a path of self-discovery in the United States. Majestic Repertory Theatre brings the musical that inspired the 2001 film back to the stage, where the anger, longing, and (eventually) forgiveness of that one vexed inch can be felt — up close and personal. (HK) Majestic Repertory Theatre, 8 and 5p, $25-45, majesticrepertory.com

**AUGUST 4**

**TAKE ME TO (WHAT’S LEFT OF) THE RIVER**

Here’s a prime chance to see how art about a catastrophe measures up to the real thing: *Along the Colorado* marks one year since the river’s first official shortage was declared.

**COLORADO RIVER BASIN STATES TO DO JUST THAT.**

(2) Nevada Humanities Program Gallery, **through September 28**, free, nevadahumanities.org

**AUGUST 5**

**A PAIR TO DRAW TO**

A dual show featuring Dray Wilmore and Kd Matheson: Two OG Vegas artists, one with an unmistakable, swinging urban vibe, the other trafficking in spacey oneiric mystification. What unites them is (a) the primacy of wild imagination, unconstrained by theory or academic rectitude; and (b) that they each work in black-and-white, which this show will emphasize. (SD) Priscilla Fowler Gallery, through August, free, priscillafowler.com
DOORS OF PERCEPTION

Once you begin to suss its possibilities, “the other door” turns out to be quite a pliable concept around which to organize an exhibit: alternate pathways, untaken opportunities, unfortunate choices, life-altering diversions. You never know what the artists — working in any and all media — in this gallery’s annual Use the Other Door show will bust out, which is the fun of it. (SD)

Core Contemporary, through September (opening reception August 6, 6p; closing reception September 30, 6p), free, corecontemporary.com

THE FACE IS MORE THAN JUST THE FRONT OF YOUR HEAD

“I have an insatiable appetite for color,” Las Vegas artist Suzanne Acosta tells us on her website, “which I use intensely and relentlessly.” Expressive and emotional, color should serve her goal for Until It Speaks Back: creating portraits that capture the subjects’ psychological depths. (SD)

Centennial Hills Library, through October 25, free, lvccld.org

What Does Family Mean?

Drawing on her own experiences in a multiracial family, Nevada State College prof Erika Abad has curated Two Cultures, One Family: Building Family, Finding Home as a way to examine how we deal with questions of family, gender, identity, and reproductive justice. Lots of variety here — sculpture, paintings, poetry, textiles, ‘zines, videos — much of it by local artists you’ll recognize. (SD)

UNLV’s Barrick Museum, through January 28 (reception September 2, 5p), free, unlv.edu/barrickmuseum

Looking Behind, Looking Ahead

Post-pandemic we’re all about getting back to normal — but we can’t pretend the world hasn’t changed. That’s the core truth of Notes for Tomorrow, a sprawling exhibit hosted by the Barrick Museum and assembled by 30 curators from 25 countries that refracts “the new global reality” through the lenses of art. Spirituality, politics, collective memory: Each is an emphasis as the exhibit sifts the recent past in search of “a guiding perspective for the future.” (SD)

UNLV’s Barrick Museum, through January 28 (reception September 2, 5p), free, unlv.edu/barrickmuseum

KEEPING IT REAL

The old-school painterly realism of George Strasburger’s canvases has an enormous throwback appeal: no nods to screen-optimized pop culture here, nor to visual trendiness, nor our metaphorizing cultural irony. Just patiently rendered humans doing actual human things in the flux of emotional, political, psychological, and biblical factors that make up their lives. (SD)

UNLV’s Barrick Museum, through January 28 (reception September 2, 5p), free, unlv.edu/barrickmuseum

BEAKY BLINDERS

Most of us consider pigeons vermin, but local artist Myranda Bair — for whom nature has long been a fascination — wants to flip that bird. She sees in them characteristics of us: “We chastise a creature who builds homes, co-parents, and provides for their mates and offspring — a life we strive for ourselves.” The six artists in Some Pigeons I Know explore those surprising commonalities. (SD)

Sahara West Library, through December 13 (opening reception September 8, 7p), free, lvccld.org

 REMEMBERING THE LOST

You can load up on as much “Vegas strong” swag as you want, but...
the scars of the Oct. 1 shooting will always run deep. There’s no pat cure for an unspeakable tragedy, but coming together as a community in the spirit of artistic sharing can certainly help. This Oct. 1 fifth anniversary exhibit will feature Art of Healing murals by local students and artists, as well as a selection of quilts from the Vegas Strong Resiliency Center. 

(AK) Clark County Government Center Rotunda Gallery (reception October 1, 6:30-11a), free, clarkcountynv.gov

OCTOBER 7

... And Not a Moment Too Soon!

It’s been almost a decade since Miguel Rodriguez had a solo show of his sculpture — too damn long. (He’s been working on public and private commissions.) The drought ends with *Open Sesame.* “The theme is pretty fluid still,” he reports, but he’s definitely feeling the groove — “it’s the first time in a long time that I’ve consistently made work that I want to see, without having anyone else’s vision involved” — so it’s a sure bet it’ll be good. (SD) Priscilla Fowler Fine Art, through October, free, priscillaafowler.com

OCTOBER 7

ART TO COME OUT TO

Gallerist Nancy Good doesn’t shy away from art that grapples with social reality — think back to 2021’s in-your-face gun-carnage exhibit *American Roulette.* In the case of *OUT of This World!,* Core’s second annual LGBTQI+ Coming Out Month exhibit, the nominal subject is a joyous one: celebrating who you are. But you can be sure that implications of social struggle will be provided by our current era of “Don’t Say Gay” bills and trans-rights rollbacks. (SD) Core Contemporary, through November 4 (opening reception October 7, 6p; closing reception November 4, 6p), free, corecontemporary.com

OCTOBER 24

ALL THAT AND A PHOTOGRAPHER, TOO

You may remember Denise Scott Brown as one of the authors of the classic architectural text *Learning from Las Vegas*; she’s been an important American architect and theorist, sadly under-recognized thanks to the fame of her husband, Robert Venturi. This brief exhibit, *Wayward Eye,* reveals her not only to have been a perceptive photographer, as well, but, as one critic noted, displays a talent that infused so many of her achievements: “an uncanny ability to know where to look.” (SD) City Hall Grand Gallery, through October 29, free, artslasvegas.org

OCTOBER 37

‘You Use Works of Art to See Your Soul’ — G.B. Shaw

In 1907, a Massachusetts quack suggested that the human soul weighs 21 grams. If the collages in Jamie Kovacs’ new exhibit, *Keys to Your Soul,* don’t attempt spirit-quantification at quite that level, they are meant to measure the soul in other ways: “Where is your soul at this present time? What do you want to become of your soul?” How will you answer? (SD) Centennial Hills Library, through January 10, free, lvccld.org

NOVEMBER 11

DELIGHTFUL MONSTERS VISIT VEGAS!

Zoë Camper’s work fizzes with a carbonated whimsy that, unless you’re a humorless high-art mandarin, and we know that you’re not, is impossible to resist: It’s a mashup of giant monsters — happy ones — and Las...
October 20
Sonic Boom
From lounge acts and indie gigs to epic arena shows and over-the-top Strip spectacles, music is a vital part of Vegas’ entertainment DNA. In the upcoming literary anthology Neon Riffs and Lounge Acts: Las Vegas Writers on Music, 12 of the valley’s finest scribes consider the role of music in our civic mythos. At this event, you’ll hear anthology contributors — including Jason Bracelin, Wendy Randall, Brian Garth, and Betty Burston — read from their musically minded stories and essays. (AK) Clark County Library Theatre, 7p, free, lvccld.org

October 22
Kicking It With Kid Congo
I love a good coming-of-age story — and the fact that this one is written by legendary rocker Kid Congo Powers (Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, The Cramps, The Gun Club) only sweetens the deal. Powers will be reading from and signing his new book, Some New Kind of Kick, in which he recounts navigating life in the L.A. punk scene of the ’70s as a queer Chicano teenager. (AD) The Writer’s Block, 7p, free, thewritersblock.org

November 3
Mic Check
If the prospect of reading your soul’s deepest poetic outpourings aloud in front of an audience fills you with knee-kicking terror, Poetry Promise’s open mic night sounds like a great place to launch your spoken-word career amid a support-
ive group of listeners. Check out their description: "Bring words, bring memories, make noise, make friends ... Share your poetry and writing in a fun, safe, encouraging environment." Sign us up! Note: this event also takes place Sept. 1, Oct. 6, and Dec. 1 (AK) West Charleston Library, 6:30p, 702-507-3964

**AUGUST 13**

**GO OUT WITH A SPLASH**

Whether you’re soaking up the sun on a beach trip or avoiding the heat with some epic binge-watching, you can’t beat that carefree feeling of freedom that summer brings. As fall approaches, why not make one last splash at the pool? Actually, make that a last run at the pool: The Pavilion Center Pool is hosting Dash and Splash, a 1.5-mile run from the pool to the Veterans Memorial Park, which continues to a 300-meter swim at the pool. It’s a two-for-one exercise kind of deal — and a literal race to the end of summer. (LT) Pavilion Center Pool, 8a-10a, $15, lasvegasnevada.gov

**SEPTEMBER 16-18**

**Life is Beautifully Back, Baby**

Life Is Beautiful is a signature DTLV music festival, sure, but it’s also much more than that: Comedians, thinkers, podcast hosts, and other talents round out this annual three-day event. If you’re looking to inject some euphoric art and culture into your fall season, get your tickets before they’re snapped up. (AD) Downtown Las Vegas, lifeisbeautiful.com

**SEPTEMBER 23-24**

**PARTY WITH THE PLANTS**

Calling all plant moms and dads! The Las Vegas Plant Festival is back this year for two days of botanist bliss. Best of all, you don’t have to have a green thumb to enjoy it. The succulent tables are my personal favorite, but you might find you’re drawn to the living plant wall (very IG friendly), the plant swaps, or even the plant-themed tattoo booth that’ll provide you with a permanent souvenir. (AD) Arts District, Friday 6p-midnight, Saturday 10a-2p, free, facebook.com/lvplantfest/

**SEPTEMBER 24**

**WÜRST TIME EVER**

Four thousand brats and sausages — and dozens of grills at the ready. What’s the wurst that could happen? Sunrise Rotary’s annual Würst Festival Fundraiser is a special sausage fest that supports community events in Boulder City. In addition to the food and drink, there’s also the Würst Dam Car Show, boasting hundreds of classic cars, and a silent auction featuring items from local merchants. (LT) Boulder City’s Bicentennial Park, Saturday 10a-10p, free, bcsr.org/wurst-festival

**NOVEMBER 5**

**ADAPTABILITY**

Rebekah Taussig’s 2020 essay collection Sitting Pretty: The View From My Ordinary Resilient Disabled Body redefined ableism through trenchant reflections on her own experiences as a paralyzed person. This winter, the City of Las Vegas will bring together local storytellers for a return of its live StorySLAM event inspired by the book — which is also the subject of the city’s National Endowment for the Arts-funded Big Read. (HK)
OCTOBER 1

For the Love of Japan

Japanophiles rejoice: Clark County Library District has brought back its annual Teen Anime Fest, which is a fun and kid-friendly festival for shinnichi from grades 6-12. If that sounds right up your anime alley, make sure to stop by to enjoy the food trucks, anime workshops, traditional Japanese taiko drum music, and (most importantly) try your hand at dressing up as your favorite character for the cosplay contests. (AD) Sahara West Library, 10:30a-4p, free, lvccld.org

OCTOBER 7-8

DESERT DREAMS

If you’ve ever wanted to experience that scene from Tangled — you know, the one with the floating lights above the water, where Flynn Rider and Rapunzel sing the iconic “I See the Light” — the Rise Festival is a must-go. When the sun sets, lanterns will be lit up one by one and set aloft, filling the sky with hopes, wishes, and dreams. Better yet, the festival has partnered with Leave No Trace to ensure those hopes and dreams don’t litter the desert. (LT) Jean Dry Lakebed, 3p-10p, $79-$119, risefestival.com

OCTOBER 8-9

FALL FOR THE ARTS

After a long, hot summer, the Summerlin Festival of Arts is exactly the breath of fresh air we need. This long-running festival has fun activities for parents (dining, shopping, art and craft displays) as well fun stuff for kids (activities, fun food, face-painting, and more). (AD) Downtown Summerlin, 10a-5p, free, summerlin.com

OCTOBER 15

Veg Out

If you’re a veggie-lover tired of having to hunt for vegan or vegetarian eats at traditional food festivals, the Vegas VegFest is right up your alley. Featuring music, kid-friendly activities, speakers, and more than 100 vegan food vendors, you can veg out to your heart’s content. (AD) Clark County Amphitheater, 11a-6p, free, vegfest.com

OCTOBER 22

BREWING UP SOME FUN

Beer. Barbecue. Backyard brewery. Say that three times fast and you’ll be transported to the 10th annual Downtown Brew Festival, which is bringing in more than 200 craft beers from more than 60 breweries. With great food and music, it’ll be a night of brewing up some boozy fun. (LT) Clark County Amphitheater, 5p, $50-$115, downtownbrewfestival.com

NOVEMBER 2

CELEBRATION OF LIFE

The city’s annual Dia de los Muertos Festival celebrates dearly departed family and friends in a big, bold, colorful way. It’s nothing less than a celebration of life with food, music, art, and plenty of children’s activities. (LT) Sammy Davis Jr. Festival Plaza, 5p, free, lasvegasnevada.gov
Ones to Watch

THESE FRESH FACES IN THE ARTS SCENE ARE SHAKING THINGS UP IN FILM, MUSIC, THEATER, AND MORE
Singing His Heart Out or Pouring Himself into a Character, He’s Always Fearless

RECENT LAS VEGAS ACADEMY graduate Dakota Renteria is literally one to watch as I write this. He’s in New York City competing in the Jimmys, a choir-camp-meets-Broadway affair officially called the National High School Theater Awards, and I’m compulsively checking Instagram to see if he wins. Ninety-two high school students from around the country have been selected by participating theaters in their region — ours is The Smith Center — to spend eight days being groomed and trained by Broadway professionals before vying for scholarships and, perhaps more importantly in their presumed line of work, recognition.

"Obviously, I would love to win," Renteria says. "That would be amazing. But honestly, if I can just learn a bunch and make some great connections with people in this industry, no matter what the outcome is, the opportunity is the most amazing thing I could have ever asked for."

To help prepare the 18-year-old tenor, The Smith Center arranged for him to get coaching from someone who knows a thing or two about musical theater: Clint Holmes.

"The thing that excites me the most about Dakota is his imagination and willingness to be fearless," Holmes says. "When you take a young person going to New York to do something like this, as a casting director or as an adjudicator, what you’re looking for is someone who makes the material their own. And he can do that. And he will do that."

Post-production update: Renteria was among the eight Jimmy Award finalists, but was not a winner. But in any case, he’s got a solid fallback. Starting in August, he’ll be attending Baldwin Wallace University in Ohio, majoring in a musical theater program that boasts 100 percent of its graduates over the last decade being signed by agents.

How did a born-and-bred Las Vegan land on a path to the Great White Way? It started when he was seven years old, he says, after seeing a cousin perform in a musical. Over the years, he tried sports and other extracurriculars, but nothing appealed to him as much as singing. And when did he know it was his calling?

"This might be a little funny," he recalls, "but when I was younger, I played the role of Shrek in a production of Shrek The Musical." With its over-the-top accent, makeup, and costuming, the role showed him just how fun theater can be. But his family’s awe and pride sealed the deal: "That was like, ‘All right. This is what I’m gonna do. This is what I have to do.’"

Since then, Renteria has been in many shows, the most recent of which was the musical version of Tim Burton’s 2003 film Big Fish at LVA, where he played a father who tells tall tales in a misplaced attempt to inspire his son. He says he used his vexed relationship with his own father as an entrée into the character. "I thought about what I wanted in a father and what it meant to be a father," he says, "and put that into Edward Bloom to make my version of the dad I never had, I guess."

If a show isn’t available to pour his heart into, Renteria can turn to his personal passion for writing and singing country music. And if that fails, there’s always his Rubik’s Cube. Obsessed with the tactile brain teaser since a young age, he can now solve it in 11 seconds. Let’s see how many Jimmy Award contenders can do that! 

Heidi Kyser
Embracing Creativity as a Social Practice, They’re Blurring the Line Between Life and Art

HUE IS SITTING ON a cooler with the top half of their body encased in medical-grade plaster, with only a small hole at the bottom of their nose open for air to pass through. After the cast dries, the four pieces — front and back legs, front and back torso — will be put together and filled with a colorful paint prepared by Hue’s project collaborator, Fractal Frank. This particular sculpture, funded by a grant from the Nevada Arts Council, is about human energy. “Energy isn’t something we can see with our eyes, but it’s what pulls and pushes us towards and away from certain places, people, objects, and relationships,” Hue says. “I wanted to propose, through sculpture, what the physical manifestation of energy can look like.”

Hue emerges from the plaster cocoon matted with Vaseline and plaster bits, and I can’t help feeling like this is the art, this moment I am witnessing. After all, Hue is constantly blurring the lines between life as art and art as life. Hue is a multidisciplinary artist who works with everything from video to textiles, but their most important medium might be people. Hue is a dedicated artist of social practice — a term rooted in 1960s activism that ties together community, situation, and place, and directly relates to the people viewing the art and the space it is in.

For Hue, that social practice is embodied in the Cloud House, a community-focused creative space that is the cornerstone of Hue’s art/life practice. It’s attached to the multigenerational home where Hue lives. “The Cloud House, in layman English, is a free art space and resource space in the middle of the suburbs in Las Vegas,” Hue says. It also functions as a commentary on Las Vegas’ fascination with imitation and impersonation. “I was looking at monumentality, specifically of Las Vegas. Las Vegas is like a plaster mold of every monument in the world, like Caesars Palace, or the Great Pyramid of Giza, and I wanted to make my own monument, which is to the sky.”

Today Hue is being encased in plaster — but tomorrow they might be designing garments or teaching dancers how to unlearn their habitual movements, which is part of Hue’s next project, “an exploration of murmuration and synchronicity and reincarnation through the human form.” Then the Cloud House’s open hours will begin, and Hue will roll up the garage door adorned with clouds painted against a soft blue sky. A neighbor may come by to paint, or borrow a book from the library, or learn how to sew. It’s all part of Hue’s generous, noble idea of what art can do. Oona Robertson
There’s something bracing about the poetry of Elle Hope. Her poems are earnest and direct. They feel spontaneously composed, and thus more tangible and immediate. As a spoken-word artist, she doesn’t so much perform her pieces as manifest them. During a reading, she’ll phase fluidly from speaking to singing to rhyming in sudden cascades — not for the sake of spectacle or novelty, though. The interludes of song, rhyme — and in some cases, dance — just seem to be what the poetry wants.

“I feel like music is a key component to my sense of flow,” Hope says. “I’m not a rapper by any means. However, when I’m writing these pieces, there’s this natural flow that comes to them, and that helps me create these waves while I perform.”

It’s no surprise to learn, then, that long before she discovered poetry and spoken word, Elle Hope was captivated by musicals. As a kid, she adored brassy Broadway classics and over-the-top Disney songfests. As a high-schooler in Tucson, Arizona, she sang in choir and was a proud theater nerd. But those were other people’s songs, other characters’ stories, other writers’ words. In her senior year, she discovered poetry slams — and her powers of creative expression felt ignited. She moved to Las Vegas in June 2016. Her calling as a poet was confirmed after one particular performance.

“I shared a piece one night, and someone said to me after, ‘Your words, they really connected to me on a deep level,’” Hope recalls. “It was at that moment I realized I could write my own stories. I was so used to telling other people’s stories through scripts and plays, but I felt like I wasn’t able to develop myself as a person.” Getting personal opened a channel of emotional connection with the audience.

Hope devoted herself to the craft and the community. She hit open mic events hard with her rhythmic spoken-word pieces about love, relationships, and body positivity; she trekked regularly to L.A. via Greyhound to network with other poets; and she launched her own literary collective, Spotlight Poetry, which organizes readings and publishes poets’ work. In the classic Vegas spirit of reinvention, Hope wrote her own story, minting herself as a magnetic, fast-rising star in the local slam scene who champions diversity, empowerment, and acceptance.

“She’s a powerhouse,” says fellow performer Monarch the Poet. “Her voice always carries a sense of urgency, but also there’s compassion in it, too. And with Spotlight Poetry, she’s cultivated a culture that’s very accepting. Whether it’s your first time on stage or your thousandth time, she’s gonna love you and support you.” Hope has taken the show on the road, too: In late June, as “poetry mom,” she led a team of Vegas poets who performed at the Utah Arts Festival.

“As long as you are speaking your truth, you will always be embraced by the poetry community,” Hope says. “Everyone’s cheering each other on. There’s no jealousy, there’s no envy. We’re united as a community, and that community is growing.”

Andrew Kiraly

She Turns Poetry Into Performance — and Uses Her Voice to Elevate the Literary Community

Elle Hope poet

portrait by Anthony Mair
This DJ Went Back to School — and Learned the Art of Mesmerizing Space Disco

**MOST LOCAL DJS WILL TELL YOU** they want to make music as much as they want to spin it. Some find their way into remix work. Others manage to collaborate with bigger names, or go the do-it-yourself route with hardware such as Ableton Live. Still, when it comes to original material, Las Vegas DJs collectively don’t have much. And yet, Downtown house DJ JP Bueno — aka Lone Plan — managed to pound out seven of his own tunes for his debut collection, *Departure*, and it’s exceptional in its status as a rare local electronic house/techno album and in its craftsmanship.

It was almost 10 years into his DJ career before Bueno purchased so much as a synthesizer, curious if he could springboard from the sounds he was spinning. So he began by playing live keyboards for local bands like Kurumpaw. Then, he enrolled at the College of Southern Nevada, where he not only learned about musicology and production, but also how to properly play the piano. Soon after, original material began to emerge from those keys.

You’d never know from the subtle grooves on *Departure* that Bueno obsessively tinkered his with songs — so much so that he didn’t think he’d ever feel comfortable releasing them. “I felt like if I showed my music to people (who) are close to me, they’re just gonna be nice,” Bueno says. “(But) there was this guy that I met from France. He was staying at my place, and he saw my stuff and asked, ‘Oh, do you make music?’ I said yeah, so I showed it to him. And he’s like, ‘Yeah, you should put it out.’” Which he finally did — not with the help of anyone in the music or nightlife industries, but with the apps Fiverr and Amuse to secure, respectively, an engineer for mastering and a publisher to release and distribute the music.

Now what? Bueno wants streamers to find and embrace his music; Amuse is tasked with getting him playlist placement. And he really wants gigs. But Las Vegas’ musical landscape isn’t hospitable to acts like Lone Plan; neither clubs nor rock venues book live electronic dance music, certainly not the kind of atmospheric space disco Bueno composes. So he’ll have to stick to desert parties for now. Ultimately, Bueno will have to do something he’s never done before: promote himself. Fortunately, he’s already done the hard part: arming himself with a hypnotic work such as *Departure* — which, come to think of it, is mistitled. It sounds more like an arrival. **Mike Prevatt**
Their Own Inner Electricity Illuminates Every Powerful Subject

IN SINAI BASUA’S CARRIAGE, there’s an avid intensity, a crackling, live wire attentiveness, grounded by a gentle, reassuring smile and easy-going attitude. This internal voltage is what powers their art. Basua’s current work, This is How We Live, is a series of intimate video portraits created amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

With a focus on the creative lives of queer people and artists of color, Basua produces bright sparks of cinema in a profoundly compelling manner. Each short film offers perspective on and comprehension of a unique individual by showing how their lives incorporate art. Done in collaboration with cinematographer Rudy Plaza, Basua’s work feels luxurious. Slow-motion pans through spaces, interwoven with focused interviews, frame the subject in soft pantomime.

“QPOC are naturally creative,” Basua says. “It feels like home, like they are more passionate. I’m fascinated by the queer experience, and being a person of color, that’s a huge experience itself. It’s important to me to show their minds.”

The subjects themselves give the work strength. Multidisciplinary artist Adriana Chavez provides glimpses into her creative practice; photographer Julia Gray grapples with the subjects of gender and identity in their image-making; artistic entrepreneur Valerie Stunning draws the viewer to the intersection of sex work and ice cream. The series only includes eight total, yet it elegantly depicts the Las Vegas zeitgeist, so thoroughly peopled with unique and divergent dreamers.

It takes a great deal of self-belief to make any kind of art, especially film about subjects that rarely receive the attention they deserve. When meeting Basua, each subject spoke at length about their relationship with addiction, their sense of place in the world, and their creative motivation. They strike me as self-constructed human beings imbued with the joy and certainty that engenders.

“I’ve always been impressed by the curious way Sinai sees the world,” says artist, friend, and curator Quindo Miller. “Their video work is often surreal and absurd, but always has an innovative element of keeping it cool.”

Looking beyond This is How We Live into Basuas’ earlier efforts, you find similar lavish qualities. What previous pieces like “Pancakes” lack in sophistication, they make up for in askew humor. Basua’s cinematic progression suggests they’re poised to become an earnest, original storyteller in whatever medium they work in. “I’d like to collaborate with more filmmakers,” they say, pondering the future, “and continue This is How We Live. I also want to expand into sculpture and design.” Sounds simple enough, coming from an emergent artistic powerhouse.

Brent Holmes
LDS churches are architectural bemusements in our Las Vegas jumblescape of insistent suburban banality. Among the strip-malled swaths spilling through the valley that express or aspire to little beyond consumer convenience, LDS churches bring a little curious tension, a little variety, to the jigsaw puzzle of our urban grid. These bricky redoubts of solemn posture are tonically prim and somewhat jarring, like hospital corners on an air mattress. Except for this one at 4040 E. Wyoming Ave. that is special to me.

It is 1988, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has unwittingly produced one of the best skate parks on the east side. It is a refuge, a carnival of concrete in a world where our deck stickers proclaim, “Skateboarding is not a crime!” — which means, of course, that skateboarding is a crime. With reliable irregularity, we get chased away by every stripe of miserable asshole rent-a-cop from shredding at strip malls, schools, office parks, and industrial backlots. The LDS church on Wyoming is a blessed safe zone.

And a blessed skate zone. The church has winged concrete accessibility ramps for launching fat airs, expansive sidewalks for wheelie manuals, and luxurious runs of rich, oily asphalt for exhilarating slides. The bushy parking lot medians demand to be oiled, there are stair drops for smacking bonelesses, and a low red curb at the top of a smooth grade for the most viscerally satisfying slappy grinds I’ve ever experienced. Skate bros and skate legends rolled through here: Danny B., ponytail flying, launching melon-grab airs over the accessibility ramps. Shock-haired Kevin S. unveiling ho-hos in the west lot — that’s a board-balancing circus handstand that took skateboarding into the realm of acrobatic street theater. Stephen P. aka Step-Hop, with his trademark mouthful of baby aspirin for achy teeth he couldn’t afford to fix, pulling off brutal wallies on the sharp-edged brick dumpster enclosure. Boyde W. nose-manualing damn near the entire perimeter of the church. Sundays were off-limits, obviously, the grounds and parking lot hopelessly throttled with worshippers. Otherwise, though, the church seemed to quietly percolate with vague administrative burblings from a handful of figures sporadically coming and going in sensible cars. Arguably, we spent more time there than any member of the Mormon faith; frequency and familiarity bred a sense of ownership. In a very particular dimension, the church became ours.

Sure, skateboarding is not a crime, but you’re deluding yourself if you don’t think it’s a vital gateway to creative mischief and (mostly) innocent skullduggery. That’s kind of the cosmic purpose of skateboarding: Before it was a billion-dollar sport, it was a personal growth course in seeing what anarchic fun you could improvise amid the bullshit fiats of gravity, authority, insensate suburbanity. Skateboarding’s punk-adjacent ethos and lessons in physical courage emboldened us, and soon we were scaling the church roof for 15-foot acid drops and ollies, or taking dares to slip through an occasional unlocked door to sneak through the halls and frolic pointlessly but exuberantly in the echoey gymnasium. In our enthused heathen disregard, we embraced the physicality of the church, made our incursions, took over, converted it. It will always be Skate Church to me.
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