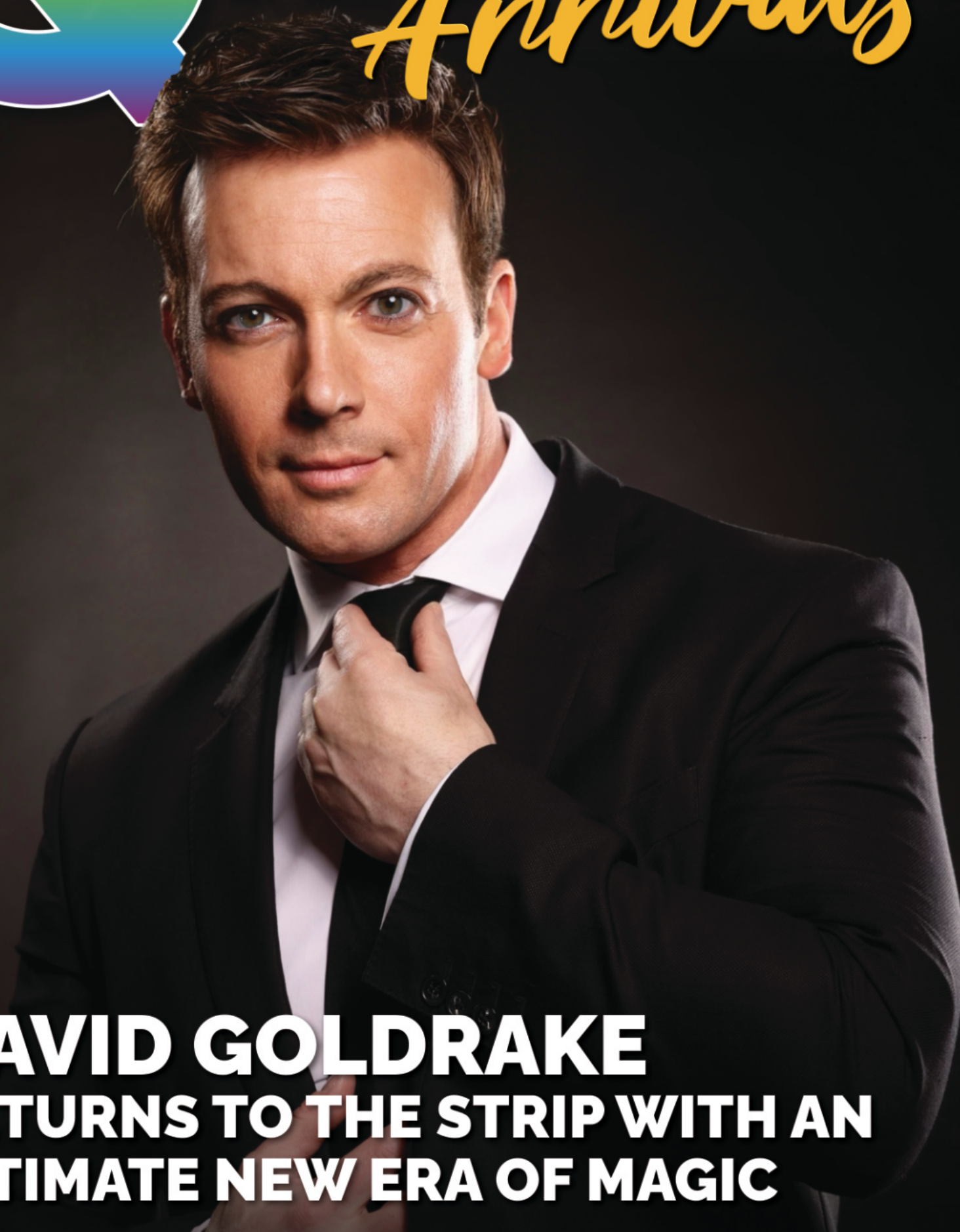




THE LAS VEGAS LGBTQ+ TRAVEL GUIDE

VEGAS *Arrivals*



**DAVID GOLDRAKE
RETURNS TO THE STRIP WITH AN
INTIMATE NEW ERA OF MAGIC**



With a proud publishing legacy that dates back to 1978, QVegas has been at the heart of Las Vegas' LGBTQ+ community for over four decades. What began as a grassroots newsletter has evolved into a dynamic weekly publication that informs, celebrates, and amplifies queer voices across Southern Nevada. QVegas is available in print at over 30 LGBTQ+ establishments, community nonprofits, and partner advertiser locations, making it a vital part of the local scene.

Beyond the printed page, QVegas connects with readers through a robust digital presence—on the web, across all major social media platforms, in our dedicated iOS app, and through weekly email blasts that keep the community in the know. Our coverage spans nightlife, entertainment, politics, health, advocacy, and the everyday stories that make up the diverse LGBTQ+ experience in Las Vegas.

As an advertiser-supported publication, QVegas is the most effective way to reach LGBTQ+ locals and visitors alike—offering unparalleled access to one of the city's most loyal and engaged audiences. In an era where equality rights are under attack nationwide, QVegas stands as a strong and unwavering community partner, committed to visibility, representation, and celebrating the power of queer voices.

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Sparkle, Shuffle, Repeat: David Goldrake, Bellagio Holidays & New Year's on the Fruit Loop

Welcome to Las Vegas, and welcome to the holiday edition of QVegas Arrivals—rainbow-trimmed guide to doing this city right while you're here. Whether you've landed for your very first visit or you're practically on a first-name basis with your favorite bartender on Paradise, we're glad you chose to spend this festive season with us.

The holidays hit different in Vegas. Instead of snowdrifts, we've got sequins. Instead of stockings, we've got showgirls. And instead of quiet nights in, we've got a 24/7 wonderland of lights, music, and queer joy just waiting for you to jump in.

If you're looking for that picture-perfect holiday moment, start at one of our favorite traditions on the Strip: the Bellagio Conservatory & Botanical Gardens and its new winter display, "All Aboard for Holiday Bells and Whistles." Imagine towering trees dripping in ornaments, glittering bells, toy soldiers, and an entire train-themed fantasyland built just so you can feel like a kid again—only this time with better cocktails and a camera roll ready for Instagram. It's open 24/7 and free, which makes it the perfect place to stroll, breathe, and let the seasonal magic sink in between all the dazzling, noisy moments of your trip.

On our cover this issue is someone who understands magic on a whole different level: David Goldrake, now headlining at The Magicians Room at The LINQ Promenade. His journey—from an isolated kid in Luxembourg teaching himself tricks out of a magazine to a star illusionist on the Strip—is the kind of story that feels

especially meaningful this time of year. David talks about the "two heartbeats" in every show: his, and the audience's. He treats magic as a way to connect, to be kind, and to remind us that we don't have to know how everything works to be moved by it. In a world that loves spoilers, we adore his invitation to "keep the mystery alive."

Of course, it wouldn't be a QVegas guide without a little nightlife nudge. As you map out your New Year's Eve, make sure you circle our historic Fruit Loop, just east of the Strip, where Gipsy Nightclub and Piranha Nightclub are turning up the volume on year's-end celebration. If you ring in 2026 under their lights, you're doing it right.

Wherever you go—Bellagio for a holiday stroll, The LINQ to fall a little bit in love with David Goldrake, or Paradise Road to dance your way into January—we hope this issue helps you feel oriented, welcomed, and at home.

From all of us at QVegas Arrivals, we wish you a season filled with joy, safety, chosen family, and a little bit of sparkle you can't quite explain.



Russ White & Garrett Pattiani
Publishers, QVegas & QLife Media



View this week's horoscopes at qvegas.com/horoscopes-are-a-drag.



SAGITTARIUS DECEMBER 2025

Honey, gather 'round because I'm about to spill the cosmic tea! Sagittarius, darling, December 2025 is your runway. The stars are aligning to make you the headliner of your own fabulous show. Expect glittering opportunities to strut your stuff and sashay into success. Love? It's hotter than a stiletto heel on a summer day. So, keep that crown adjusted, charisma on point, and remember, babe, the universe is your stage, and you're the star!

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The Future Hails You: Zoox Opens Public Rides on the Strip

Las Vegas loves a spectacle, and Zoox just rolled out a new one: a purpose-built, fully autonomous robotaxi now offering public rides up and down the resort corridor. After years of testing in the city and limited access for employees, friends, and family, the Amazon-owned company flipped the switch for everyone in September 2025—inviting locals and visitors to summon a driverless ride with the Zoox app. At launch, trips are free, tightly geofenced, and focused on a handful of marquee destinations—including Resorts World, AREA15, Topgolf, New York-New York, and Luxor—so people can sample the tech where the action is densest.

What makes Zoox's debut different from other autonomous pilots you may have seen creeping around the valley is the vehicle itself. This isn't a converted sedan with the steering wheel yanked out; it's a symmetrical, toaster-shaped shuttle designed from the ground up for autonomy. There's no driver's seat, no pedals, and no wheel. Passengers sit face-to-face on bench seating for up to four, while a crown of cameras, lidar, and radar scan the environment. The layout is equal parts futuristic and pragmatic—optimized for tight urban maneuvers and quick curbside boarding rather than highway sprints.

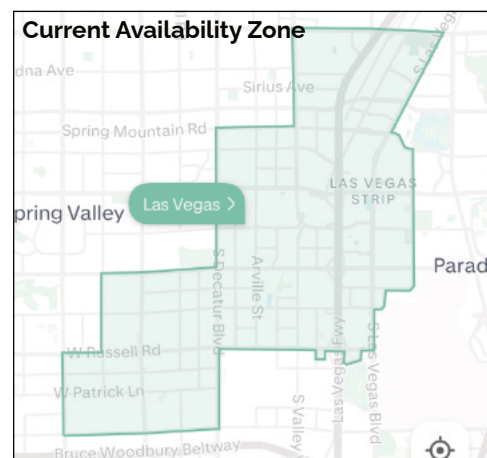
The service model is equally intentional. Zoox established designated pick-up and drop-off zones with on-site concierges—an important early-days touch that helps wrangle crowds, educate first-timers, and ensure the vehicles aren't stopping in loading lanes where they'll snarl traffic. Inside the app, riders see wait times and

vehicle details and can hit a help button in the car or the app to reach remote support. These operational choices, while conservative, are a savvy way to build trust on the Strip, where foot traffic is chaotic and curb real estate is fiercely contested.

For now, the rides are short and sweet—roughly three miles or less—perfect for hopping between resort properties, attractions, and nightlife while skipping rideshare surge pricing. Offering those rides for free during the shakedown phase is part product trial, part public outreach. Zoox says it plans to transition to paid service after the necessary regulatory steps, with pricing that competes with taxis and app-based ride-hailing. In a city where the distance between venues can be deceiving (and the desert heat is real), an all-electric, autonomous shuttle that just shows up could quickly become a nightlife staple.

The Vegas launch is also a strategic statement in the autonomy race. Waymo has earned headlines in Phoenix, San Francisco, and beyond, but Zoox is staking out a different lane: a fleet of vehicles manufactured to be driverless from day one, assembled at a new facility in Hayward, California that's targeting up to 10,000 units annually at full tilt. That vertical integration—designing the vehicle, building it, and operating the service—may help Zoox iterate quickly on hardware and software as it scales beyond Las Vegas, with Austin and Miami already teased as “coming soon.”

Of course, the big question is performance. Early rider accounts describe smooth, cautious driving and predictable routing—exactly what you'd want from a machine



piloting itself through the tangle of pedestrians, tour buses, and rideshares near the Strip. Some have noted the bench seating isn't as plush as a limo, but this is a shuttle, not a rolling nightclub. In short hops between must-see stops, comfort is good enough; reliability and safety are the headliners. By keeping launch operations focused and staffed, Zoox can collect data, refine pick-up behavior, and prove it can play nicely with Vegas traffic before widening the map.

Zoom out, and the symbolism is hard to miss. Las Vegas has always been a proving ground for next-gen entertainment and hospitality tech—from cashless gaming to immersive venues—and autonomous mobility slots right in. If Zoox can make a compelling case here, with demanding crowds and a 24/7 rhythm, it bodes well for broader adoption in downtown districts and entertainment zones elsewhere. For now, the pitch is simple: open the app, step into a driverless pod, glide to your next stop, and tell your friends you rode the future on the Strip—on the house.

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Trains, Twinkles & Tinsel: Bellagio's New Holiday Display Puts the "Extra" in Extravaganza

Bellagio's Conservatory & Botanical Gardens has officially flipped the switch to full holiday fantasy with its new winter display, "All Aboard for Holiday Bells and Whistles," on view through January 3, 2026. This year, the beloved Las Vegas tradition leans into the nostalgia of train travel, the comfort of coming home for the holidays, and—very on brand for our city—a bit of over-the-top sparkle.

Designed once again by Ed Libby and brought to life by Bellagio's horticulture team, the Conservatory becomes a storybook train station where every direction feels like another chapter in a holiday tale. The theme celebrates the joy of connection, the magic of movement, and the kind of glittering drama you'd expect from a Strip icon.

At the West Bed, the holidays quite literally revolve around a towering, 42-foot tree crowned with a Swarovski crystal star. Dressed in thousands of LED lights and more than 8,700 ornaments, it's the kind of showstopper that demands a selfie (or five). At its base, the Peppermint Express miniature train circles the trunk, complete with a live-feed camera so guests can watch the tiny journey in real time.

To the left, another festive train overflows with wrapped gifts as elves hustle to make deliveries to all the "nice" kids—interpret that however you wish. On the right, a gingerbread house dripping with icing and ruby-red hearts hides something new and very Vegas: The Garden Table, a one-of-a-kind dining experience set right inside the display.

The North Bed turns up the volume with a full symphony of holiday décor. Oversized brass instruments, elegant bells, and red-and-green drums are suspended over a shimmering pond fed by gentle fountains. A gilded storybook invites guests into a

world of music and memories, while nearby LED screens show a holiday train departing the snowy North Pole, visiting festive MGM Resorts properties, and finally arriving at Bellagio. Layer in holiday music and a custom seasonal fragrance with notes of orange and warm spices, and you've got a full sensory moment. If you want to take the scent home, Bellagio's "Bella" holiday candle is available at the Giardini Store.

On the East Bed, the Bellagio Express makes its debut, inspired by classic train ornaments you might remember from your childhood tree—if your childhood tree had Vegas-level drama. Conducted by Elvie the Elf, the locomotive hauls oversized ornaments and gifts, while guests are invited to walk through the train itself via a winding pathway that puts you right in the middle of the magic. Clouds of baby's breath puff out of the smokestack like whimsical steam, mixing with red and white crystal snowflakes, while poinsettias and decorated trees blanket the ground.

The South Bed is pure toy-box fantasy. A towering nutcracker guards the scene, his hat topped with a golden Bellagio "B" and adorned with a thousand red feathers. Four rotating toy soldiers march in time to the season's rhythms, and Billy the Elf rides a white rocking horse that gently sways back and forth. Glittering bells, ornaments, and perfectly wrapped presents complete the tableau, ready for every family photo, couples shot, and thirsty holiday thirst trap you can dream up.

For foodies and experience collectors, The Garden Table is the headline. For the first time during the holidays, guests can book an intimate table set inside that gingerbread house in the West Bed. By day, Sabelle's serves brunch at \$145 per person; by night, MICHAEL MINA Bellagio steps in with a \$195 per person dinner. It's

an immersive way to dine in the heart of the Conservatory, wrapped in lights, flowers, and the buzz of visitors from all over the world. Reservations are required and can be booked online or by phone.

If you're more into sweet treats on the go, the Peppermint Express is back as a pop-up pastry station. Located in the alcove behind the South Bed, across from the OMEGA Boutique, it's open daily from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Expect holiday cookies, peppermint meringues, chocolates, nougat, popcorn, drip coffee, and hot chocolate—basically everything you need to sugar-fuel a marathon photo session.

Behind the glamour, the Conservatory keeps sustainability in focus. All the water used in the display comes from on-site underground wells that rely on rain and recycled resort water, not municipal drinking water. That water is reused throughout the exhibit and around the property. When the season ends, plants and botanical materials that can't be reused are sent to a local composting facility instead of a landfill, helping improve regional soil, air, and water quality.

By the numbers, the display is as impressive as it looks: 110,000 energy-efficient light bulbs, 20,000 poinsettias, 41 fresh-cut Silvertip trees, 12 massive gold and silver bells, and a team of 80 people who transform the space in just six days.

Best of all, Bellagio's Conservatory & Botanical Gardens remains complimentary and open 24 hours a day, seven days a week—making it one of the most accessible and inclusive holiday experiences on the Strip. Whether you're a local bringing visiting family, a couple on a festive date night, or a queer friend group chasing the next great group photo, "All Aboard for Holiday Bells and Whistles" is ready to welcome you home for the holidays, Vegas-style.





SPELLBOUND AND A LITTLE BIT SMITTEN: FALLING UNDER DAVID GOLDRAKE'S VEGAS CHARM

David Goldrake remembers the exact moment his life snapped into focus. He was eight years old, alone with a German children's magazine that came in the mail once a month. Hidden between comics and games was a little section on magic—nothing fancy, just a simple trick using a thimble: make it vanish, make it reappear. For most kids, it would have been a five-minute curiosity. For David, it was a door.

"That was my very first piece of magic," he recalls. "I could practice, be in my own world, escape reality. And when I saw the impact it had on people—not just the sleight of hand, but the psychology of how you can fool people—I knew that was going to be it. I've never looked back."

That tiny thimble became the starting point of an unlikely journey from an isolated childhood in Luxembourg to becoming one of Las Vegas' most compelling illusionists, and now, one of the star attractions at The Magicians Room, a new intimate magic speakeasy at The LINQ Promenade. The venue is the latest chapter—but the story begins with a boy practicing alone in a place where magic barely existed at all.

A magician with no scene

Unlike many Vegas magicians who grew up surrounded by mentors, magic shops, and a visible circuit of performers, David's early years were defined by absence. "I grew up in Luxembourg," he says. "The magic scene there? Zero."

He discovered magic at eight. He didn't see a real magician live until he was fourteen.

In between, there was the magazine that arrived every month, a magic kit gifted by an aunt, and countless hours experimenting on his own. When he finally did see a performer, it wasn't a polished illusionist with doves and dancing assistants, but a fakir-style act—needles through the cheek, sideshow stunts, things that looked so real he believed they might be.

"There were a few magicians in Luxembourg, but they were mostly amateurs, doing it as a hobby or a side gig," he explains. "I never had that real exposure that so many of my colleagues had. When they tell their stories, they talk about growing up around other magicians, meeting this legend or that legend. I knew nobody. I was on a little island, just trying things, trying to be creative, trying to get gigs without knowing the big outside world."

That isolation could have been a barrier. Instead, it forged a magician who didn't copy anyone's blueprint because he never saw one. The art form he fell in love with was something he had to build for himself, piece by piece.

The date that changed everything

Even without mentors, David's sense of direction was unnervingly clear. At eleven, without ever having seen a live magic show, he told his parents he wanted to be a magician. There was no business plan, no

roadmap—just that persistent voice inside. Then came September 27, 1993.

He can recite the date the way other people recite anniversaries. He and his girlfriend were sitting in a theater in Frankfurt, Germany, watching David Copperfield. The scale, the theatricality, the emotional storytelling—it was like someone had taken the vague dream inside him and projected it in full color onto a stage.

"I looked at her and said, 'That's it. I want to do that. I know I can do that,'" he says. "She told me I was crazy. And I said, 'I know. But I still want to.'"

After the show he met Copperfield in a meet-and-greet, then drove home and dropped the bombshell: he was going to quit school.

"Big drama," he laughs. "My parents made me finish high school. I even did a year of college. But I knew it wasn't for me. Magic was it. From that day on, there was no plan B."

That combination of stubbornness and clarity is still there. You can feel it in the way he speaks about his work: it's not a career he stumbled into. It's a choice he keeps making.

Speaking the language of connection

One of the most striking things about David's performances isn't just what he does with his hands, but what he does with his voice. He speaks seven languages fluently, and he uses that not as a party

trick but as a bridge.

At The Magicians Room, where audiences include visitors from all over the globe, that gift comes into play almost every night.

"We had a lady from Iraq in the audience recently," he recalls. "I greeted her and thanked her in Arabic. She freaked out. Another night we had a Filipino guest—I switched to Tagalog. People feel seen in a very specific way when you acknowledge their language."

Over years of touring, he's picked up how to say "hello," "thank you," and a few key phrases in dozens of languages—thirty, forty, maybe fifty by his estimate. For one corporate event in Hawaii for a Japanese company, he insisted on performing in Japanese. He hired a translator, had the entire script written phonetically in Roman letters, and learned it by heart.

"Were there mistakes? Absolutely," he says. "But you could tell from the reactions—people felt more connected. That's the power of language. It's the most powerful instrument we have. It brings people together."

For all the spectacle of his illusions, those human moments—speaking to someone in their own tongue, looking them in the eye—may be the real magic.

Ask him his favorite place to perform, and the answer comes without hesitation: the Magic Castle in Hollywood.

"The first time I performed there was November 2002," he says. "To this day, whenever they call, I say yes. The mystique, the decorum, the atmosphere—everything about that place is magic. It feels like home."

Magic between body and mind

Over the years, David's work has evolved into a very particular mix of physical daring and emotional depth. If he has to define his style, the word he reaches for is "inspirational."

"I try to incorporate messages into my magic," he explains. "I want to move people, provoke them, make them think. There are pieces where I'm playing with pure emotion, others that are more cerebral, and then the very physical pieces like the underwater escape."

At The Magicians Room, he performs that escape every night, spending two to three minutes underwater in a tank, five nights a week with plans to increase to seven. It's a routine he once performed on a larger scale at the Tropicana, where his show featured big sets, projection mapping, and pyro.

"All that technology was just there to support the story," he says. "For me it's always been about balancing the body and the mind—the physical danger and the poetic moments where you touch people in a different way."

That balance has become even more important in an age where explanations for

everything are a click away.

Keeping mystery alive in the age of spoilers

In 2025, you don't have to hunt for secrets. They hunt you. Magic trick breakdowns are a cottage industry on YouTube. Exposés trend on TikTok. If you really want to know how something is done, odds are someone has uploaded a step-by-step video for you.

David is realistic about that reality.

"It's inevitable," he says. "If you want to find out how something works, you'll find it. There's everything online. Years ago, a friend's seven-year-old was building a bomb in their garage because they'd found instructions on YouTube. That's the world we live in."

Rather than waging a losing war against spoilers, he focuses on something more personal: choice.

He even had coins made that say "Keep the mystery alive." One of the bartenders at The Magicians Room, Yari, has fully embraced that philosophy. "She always tells me, 'I don't want to know,'" he says with a smile. "And that's her choice. She wants to preserve the experience for herself."

For the determined skeptics, he isn't offended. "Everyone has to decide for themselves," he says. "My job is to make the show so meaningful, so magical, that after a few minutes they stop thinking about how it works and just experience it. Like going to the movies—you know there's CGI, but you don't pause the film to research which software they used. You accept it as fiction for the sake of the experience. I want magic to be the same."

Tech, AI, and knowing when to hide the wires

Technology has always moved in parallel with magic. Some of the earliest mentalism feats used secret electronics long before those tools were available to the general public. Today, illusionists have access to everything from high-powered projection mapping to AI-generated visuals.

David is clear-eyed about both the opportunities and the dangers of that toolbox.

"Technology is important," he says. "In entertainment in general it's huge. Look at the shows on the Strip—it's phenomenal what you can see."

But in magic, there's a line.

"Tech should support the magic, not replace it," he insists. "If I do a trick with my cell phone, even if your explanation is wrong, you'll think, 'Oh, it's an app.' You'll give yourself an answer and the mystery is gone. It doesn't matter whether you're right—what matters is you've stopped wondering."

So he uses technology carefully—sometimes invisibly. And yes, like most creatives in 2025, he's experimenting with AI.

"I see colleagues using it for scripts,

posters, social media, marketing strategies—all of it," he says. "We're only at the beginning. But for me, the live connection, the human presence, still has to be at the center."

A new home at The Magicians Room

That live connection has taken on a new intimacy at The Magicians Room, where David is now headlining on the LINQ Promenade. The venue itself is a playful concept: a modern, crane-only arcade conceals a hidden entrance to a speakeasy-style magic theater. Guests enter via a "human crane" elevator or descend a secret staircase into a compact 220-seat room where the stage is barely twenty feet across.

For a magician used to large theaters, adapting has been both a challenge and a creative spark.

"Performing an illusion show on that stage is... let's say interesting," he says, laughing. "At the Tropicana, we had big props, big sets, fire, pyro. On a stage this size, that would feel wrong—not just logistically, aesthetically. After a couple of performances I realized there was one piece I had to tone down because I was still playing 'big.' On this stage, it needed to be more intimate."

Rather than scaling down the magic, he's reshaping it to fit the room, creating new material and re-staging existing pieces so the proportions feel right. The Magicians Room—by design—puts the audience close enough to study his hands, his eyes, his breath. It's a test few magicians would willingly take on, but for David, the proximity is a feature, not a flaw.

What hasn't changed is the audience he wants in the seats.

"I was voted gold Best of Las Vegas for family-friendly show," he says. "This show is just as family-friendly. I believe magic should be accessible to everyone, all ages."

The venue itself alternates between family-friendly programming and adults-only late-night shows with other performers, but David's own production remains firmly in the "bring the kids, bring grandma" category—without ever talking down to them.

Life in the Vegas "trap"

For many performers, headlining on the Strip is the dream. For David, it's also a complicated kind of homecoming.

When he moved to Las Vegas in 2017, he became close with Siegfried of Siegfried & Roy. Both Siegfried and fellow legend Lance Burton gave him the same warning: "Las Vegas is a trap. A golden cage. Once you're in, you won't want to leave."

"At the time I thought, 'Come on,'" he says. "And they were right. Once you're part of the family, part of the industry, part of the scene—it becomes home."

He's deeply aware, though, of how fragile that home can be. The Tropicana, where he



once starred, is now an empty lot in the middle of the Strip.

"When we got the call that we were the ones they wanted for that room, I thought about the whole history of the Tropicana," he says. "The Folies Bergère, Siegfried & Roy, Lance Burton—all the shows that had been there. To open a show on that stage felt like stepping into a piece of Vegas history. And now you drive by and it's gone. Just like the Riviera, and so many others."

For him, it's a reminder of how ephemeral everything in Las Vegas can be—buildings, shows, careers. The transience of the city makes the connection with each audience feel even more precious.

Danger, discipline, and the cost of illusion

Some of David's most memorable effects flirt openly with danger. Unfortunately, he knows better than most how real that danger can be.

On October 15, 2015, a large structure collapsed during a performance, with David and his then-wife on top of it. She broke her neck. He still lives with lingering nerve and muscle damage.

"These things happen more than people think," he says quietly. "We saw it with Siegfried & Roy. Other performers on the Strip have had accidents. Sometimes it's the staff who get hurt. You just don't always hear about it."

Today, he approaches every high-risk routine—including his nightly water tank escape—with a mixture of respect and

pragmatism. When fellow illusionist Criss Angel asked him how he could possibly do such a dangerous stunt every night, David gave a simple answer: the same way Criss does his straitjacket escape—preparation, rehearsal, and relentless contingency planning.

"You anticipate," he says. "You think about what might go wrong and how to keep it from happening. You have Plan B, C, D, all the way to Z if you can. You never eliminate risk completely, but you do everything in your power to keep people safe."

Offstage, that commitment to his body shows up in a more mundane way: the gym. After his accident, regular exercise stopped being optional.

"If I don't go to the gym, I wake up limping," he says. "The workouts keep me functional. It's not about vanity—it's about being able to do my job."

He balances that physical discipline with quiet, solitary pleasures: reading when he can, the occasional movie, and a social life that's much smaller than people might expect.

"I'm not very social," he admits. "Never have been. Crowds, masses of people—they make me uncomfortable. It's paradoxical, but I know I'm not the only entertainer who feels that way. The stage is different. It's structured. I know my role, the audience knows theirs. There's a kind of safety in that."



The impact he never saw coming

If the technical side of magic has become second nature to David, the emotional impact he has on audiences is something he's still learning to fully grasp.

When word got out that he was returning to the Strip with a new show, the response surprised him.

"People started reaching out—'We saw you at the Trop, we saw you at Notoriety, we've been waiting for you to come back,'" he says. "It was humbling."

One night, while attending 'Awakening' at Wynn to support a friend, an usher approached him in the aisle.

"She said, 'I don't remember your first name, but you're Goldrake, right?' She told me she'd seen my show at the Tropicana, and that they were going to come see me again. It was such a small moment, but it made me realize: people remember. You leave a mark."

Those encounters have changed how he moves through the world.

"As performers, politicians, people in the service industry—anyone who deals with the public—we have an immense impact on people," he says. "It's taught me to try to be kind, even when I'm having a bad day. It's not anyone else's fault if I'm tired or stressed. They still deserve the best of me."

That philosophy carries onto the stage as well. David calls his productions "you-focused shows."

"It's not about how great I am," he says. "It's about what we experience together. The audience is giving me their time, their attention, their energy, their money. I may have told a joke ten thousand times, but I want it to feel like the first time for them. That's my responsibility."

Dream flights and new generations

For all he's already accomplished, there are still dreams David hasn't realized. One of them is deeply sentimental: he would love, one day, to perform David Copperfield's legendary "flying" illusion exactly as it was done in the early 1990s—the very routine that inspired him as a young man in Frankfurt.

"Not in front of an audience, just for myself," he says. "In a warehouse somewhere, doing the whole choreography, the whole piece. It was so perfect, so beautiful. I understood how it worked and still got goosebumps. That, to me, is the highest level of magic."

When he talks about young magicians who look up to him now, he doesn't sugarcoat the realities.

"As long as it's just your passion, your hobby, you do it on your terms," he says. "The moment it becomes your profession, it also becomes a responsibility. There will be days when you're sick, exhausted, heartbroken—and you still have to step onstage and deliver. You need to be ready for that."

His other piece of advice is simpler, but harder to practice: listen.

"I'm very sensitive to audiences' reactions," he explains. "I think of it as two heartbeats—mine and theirs. The audience will tell you if a joke works, if a line lands, if a movement feels right. A lot of performers ignore that because they're too focused on themselves. But the audience is almost always right. Listen to them. They're your best teacher."

At The Magicians Room, where he shares backstage space with fellow performers like Farrell Dillon, Douglas Leferovich, Hollie England, and Bizzaro, that philosophy has helped foster a sense of camaraderie rather than competition. They cover for one another, cheer each other on, and build something new together in a tucked-away theater behind a wall of claw machines.

For now, that's where you'll find David Goldrake most nights—stepping onto a small stage in a hidden room, inviting a few hundred strangers into his world for an hour of danger, storytelling, and wonder. The buildings around him may change, casinos may rise and fall, marquees may be replaced, but one thing hasn't changed since the day he learned to vanish a thimble:

He's still here to keep the mystery alive.



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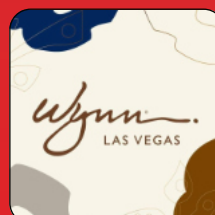
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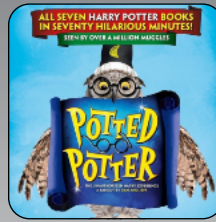
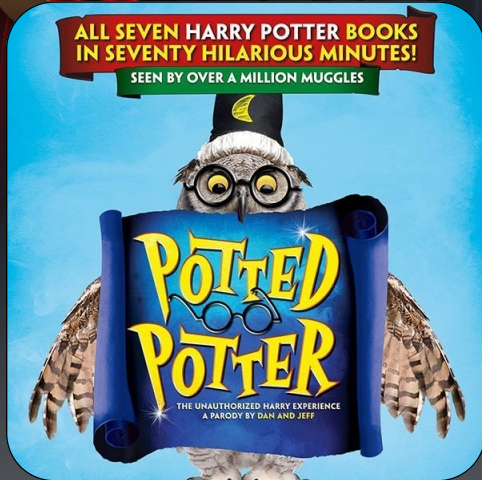
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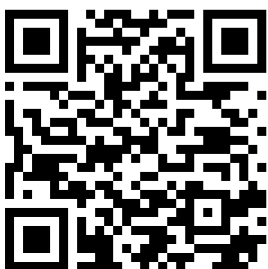
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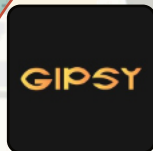
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