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MAY 21-27, 2025



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A BURLESQUE PARODY

Temptation
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Photo: Denise Truscello

Whether you're a local or tourist, we always feature our favorite spots along with all the new and exciting things our city has to offer.

The Empire Strips Back made its sizzling Vegas debut at the Rio on May the Fourth, blending Star Wars parody with seductive burlesque. Nathan Kara, who stars as Han Solo, reflects on bringing charm, comedy, and heat to the galaxy's favorite scoundrel. Blending satire and seduction, Kara offers an inside look at the show's wild Vegas debut and his role in this interstellar striptease. This is a don't miss show!

Henderson Pride Festival celebrated its 5th year, returning to the Water Street District in downtown Henderson.

As the EDC crowd leaves, the Memorial Day Weekend crowd arrives. Don't miss the NGRA Big Horn Rodeo this weekend.



Russ White & Garrett Pattiani
Publishers, QVegas & QLife Media



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



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MAY 2025

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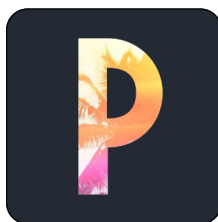
WYNN RESORTS



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Hotels

These hotels have a current HRC Corporate Equality Index score of 100.

CAESARS ENTERTAINMENT
caesars.com

Caesars Palace
The Cromwell
Flamingo
Harrah's
Horseshoe (formerly Bally's)
The LINQ
Paris
Planet Hollywood

THE VENETIAN RESORT LAS VEGAS
venetianlasvegas.com

These hotels have actively demonstrated support for the LGBTQ+ community but do not have a current HRC CEI of 100

MGM RESORTS INTERNATIONAL
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Bellagio
The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas
Delano
Excalibur
Luxor
Mandalay Bay
MGM Grand
New York New York
Park MGM
Vdara

WYNN RESORTS
wynnlasvegas.com

Wynn Las Vegas & Encore Las Vegas

PALMS RESORT & CASINO
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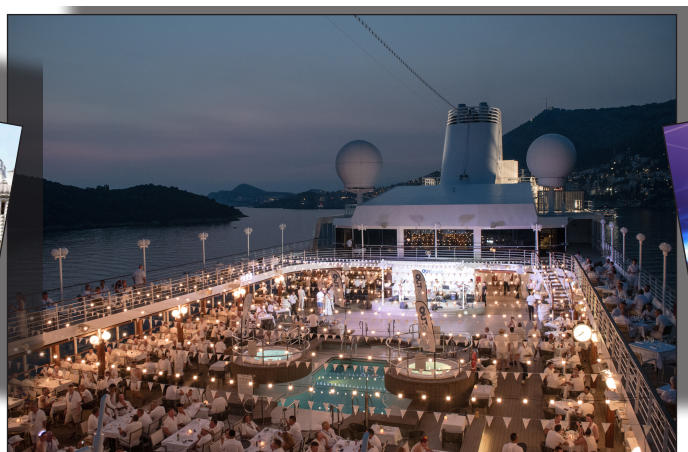


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A close-up photograph of two men kissing. The man on the left has a beard and is wearing a white shirt. The man on the right is shirtless. They are both looking down and smiling.

ZERO SHAME IN MY GAME

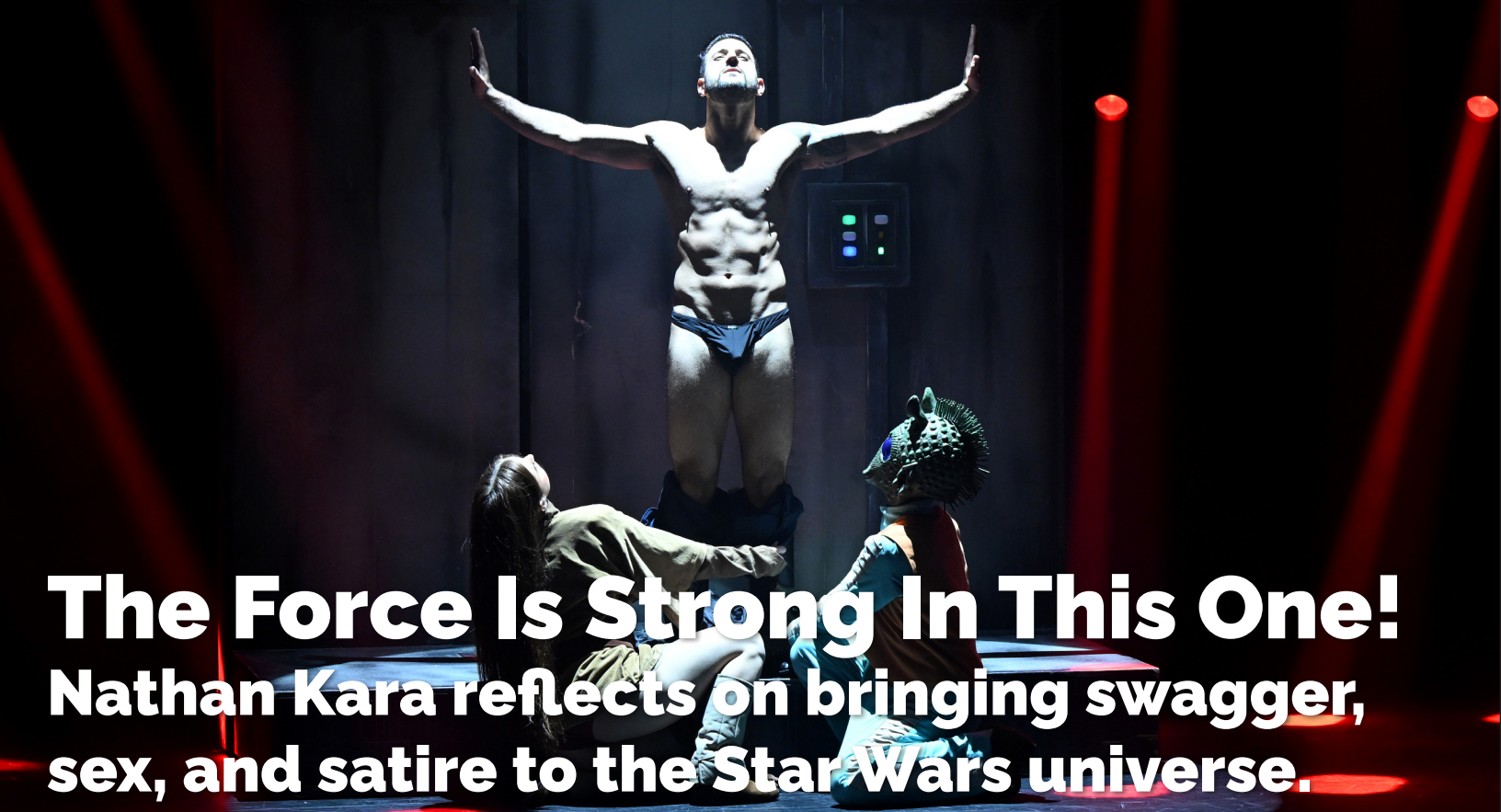
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The Force Is Strong In This One!

Nathan Kara reflects on bringing swagger, sex, and satire to the Star Wars universe.

It's hard to describe *The Empire Strips Back* – A Burlesque Parody in just one sentence, but if you imagine *Star Wars* collided with a disco ball *Death Star*, a dance battle, and a cheeky strip show in a galaxy far, far away—you're on the right track.

Now in residency at the Rio Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas, *The Empire Strips Back* is a gleefully risqué reimagining of George Lucas's beloved universe. The show strips away the serious space drama and replaces it with seductive choreography, comedic timing, jaw-dropping visuals, and plenty of surprises underneath the costumes (or lack thereof). From Stormtrooper stripteases to gender-bending Jedi, the production celebrates burlesque with a wink to fandom and a commitment to entertaining everyone from die-hard fans to the sci-fi-curious.

The show transports audiences to a galaxy far, far away into a world of burlesque fantasy, where menacing meets sexy, seduction meets slapstick, and iconic characters are reborn as dazzling, daring, and delightfully naughty. Beloved figures like Darth Vader, Princess Leia, and Jabba the Hutt take on new life in outrageous, often hilarious numbers—with everything from light saber duels to sultry dance battles. Even the droids you're looking for make an appearance. Originally staged in a 150-seat Sydney bar, *The Empire Strips Back* has since played to over 300,000 fans globally, with viral videos racking up millions of views.

This Las Vegas residency marks the first production to go beyond pasties in select numbers, dialing up the heat while maintaining the show's signature balance

of charm, wit, and full-throttle entertainment. It's part parody, part spectacle, and all celebration.

One of the stars of the show is Nathan Kara, a New Zealand-born dancer who brings swagger, charisma, and cheek to his burlesque take on Han Solo. We caught up with Nathan to talk about everything from growing up watching *Star Wars* with his dad to dancing alongside a wisecracking Chewbacca.

From Auckland to Alderaan

"It's pretty epic," Nathan laughs when asked what it's like playing Han Solo. "I grew up watching *Star Wars* with my dad, and Han always stood out. When they offered me this role, I was like, wait, I get to do what?"

Nate's journey to the Strip wasn't exactly hyperspace travel. He began dancing at age five in Auckland, New Zealand, training in everything from hip hop and jazz to tap and contemporary. By sixteen, he knew he wanted to pursue it professionally.

"My high school was big on helping people find a career path early. I figured out pretty quickly that I didn't want to sit behind a desk all day," he explains.

His early gigs included background dancing on shows like *The X Factor* New Zealand and performing with a hip hop crew in international competitions. A career breakthrough came when he landed a spot as a backup dancer, which led to three years of back-and-forth work in China.

Eventually, the suitcase lifestyle started to wear thin. "I loved touring, but I wanted to actually experience the places I was working in," Nathan says. That itch led him to a touring production of *Magic Mike Live*

in Australia, and from there, Cirque du Soleil came calling.

Nathan joined the cast of *The Beatles LOVE* in Las Vegas in 2022, stepping into a soloist role that combined breaking and contemporary movement. "It was my first real center-stage moment," he recalls. "I had three and a half minutes in the spotlight, which was terrifying at first but taught me a lot."

When *LOVE* closed in 2023, Nathan transitioned to a horror-themed burlesque show developed by director Bec Morris. That collaboration led directly to his casting in *The Empire Strips Back*.

Scoundrel Meets Striptease

So how does one channel the cocky cool of Han Solo into a burlesque number?

"It was great direction from Bec," Nathan says. The show's original choreography was created by James Barry in Australia, but Bec Morris helped tailor the routine to Nate's strengths—adding signature moves, comedic winks, and opportunities to play with the audience.

"We had preview shows, and afterward she gave me notes like, 'Try a wink here,' or 'Flirt with that person in the front row.' It's the little things that make the number really land."

And yes, there are guns. And yes, he licks one.

"There are definitely moments where I'm like, 'Did I really just do that?' But the audience loves it."

Han and Chewie, But Make It Burlesque

Nate's onstage partner is Joshua Bluhm, who plays Chewbacca—or as the audience

sees him, a towering, furry, dance-savvy sidekick with a mischievous streak.

"Josh whispers stuff to me through the mask while we're dancing," Nathan laughs. "We'll be doing the Backstreet Boys number, and he'll be like, 'Don't worry, I got you,' while he swings me around. Then he pats my head like we're in a buddy comedy."

Their chemistry is not only hilarious but surprisingly poignant. "We've known each other through the scene, but this is our first time working together," Nathan says. "It plays into that classic Han-Chewie bond. There's trust, there's humor, and there's a lot of physical comedy."

Costume Drama (In the Fun Way)

For all the swagger, performing burlesque isn't without its technical challenges.

"Props are one of the hardest parts," Nathan admits. "Costume malfunctions are always lurking. You're dancing, trying to be sexy, and in the back of your mind you're like, 'Is the gun still attached? Is my thong coming down with my pants?'"

Sometimes, the audience sees more than expected. "My girlfriend's a performer too, so she gets it. But yeah, there's always that moment of, 'Welp, the lights go out in two seconds... let's hope for the best.'"

Nathan also plays an additional role in the show that surprises most viewers: a hilariously grotesque version of Emperor Palpatine.

"Nobody knows it's me under the mask," he grins. "It's such a fun transformation. Even backstage, people are like, 'I can't look at you' without laughing."

Favorite Numbers, On and Off Stage

While his Han Solo number brings the house down, Nathan is quick to celebrate his castmates.

"The R2 and Leia number is amazing. It starts off contemporary, then Leia just busts out and owns the stage. The Jedi number has stunning lighting. And the Landspeeder number? Mocha kills it every time," he says.

As for behind-the-scenes moments?

"Too many to count," Nathan chuckles. "We're all helping each other move props, guide each other backstage, cracking jokes the whole time. It's a tight crew. That makes the show special."

Describing the Galaxy

Asked to describe The Empire Strips Back in three words, Nathan doesn't hesitate:

"Sexy. Funny. Inclusive."

"It's the first production to go full Vegas with no pasties in some numbers," he says. "But it's also hilarious. Even if you're not a Star Wars fan, you'll have a blast."

And the inclusive part?

"There's something for everyone. You've got duos, solos, gender variety, cultural variety,



everything. The cast represents so many backgrounds and body types. It feels like everyone belongs here."

From Desert Dreams to Desert Sushi

Though he arrived in Vegas in late 2022 with The Beatles LOVE, Nathan almost moved to Los Angeles this spring.

"Shows were closing left and right, and I thought maybe Vegas wasn't it anymore," he admits. "But then this came along. It's got staying power. It has that niche appeal but such wide reach. I hope it sticks around."

When he's not on stage, Nathan enjoys catching other shows and, surprisingly, eating sushi.

"Coming from New Zealand, I love seafood. But Vegas sushi? It's better than California's."

Han, Meet Young Nate

If young Nathan could see him now—shirtless, flirting with audience members, rapping on a Vegas stage—what would he say?

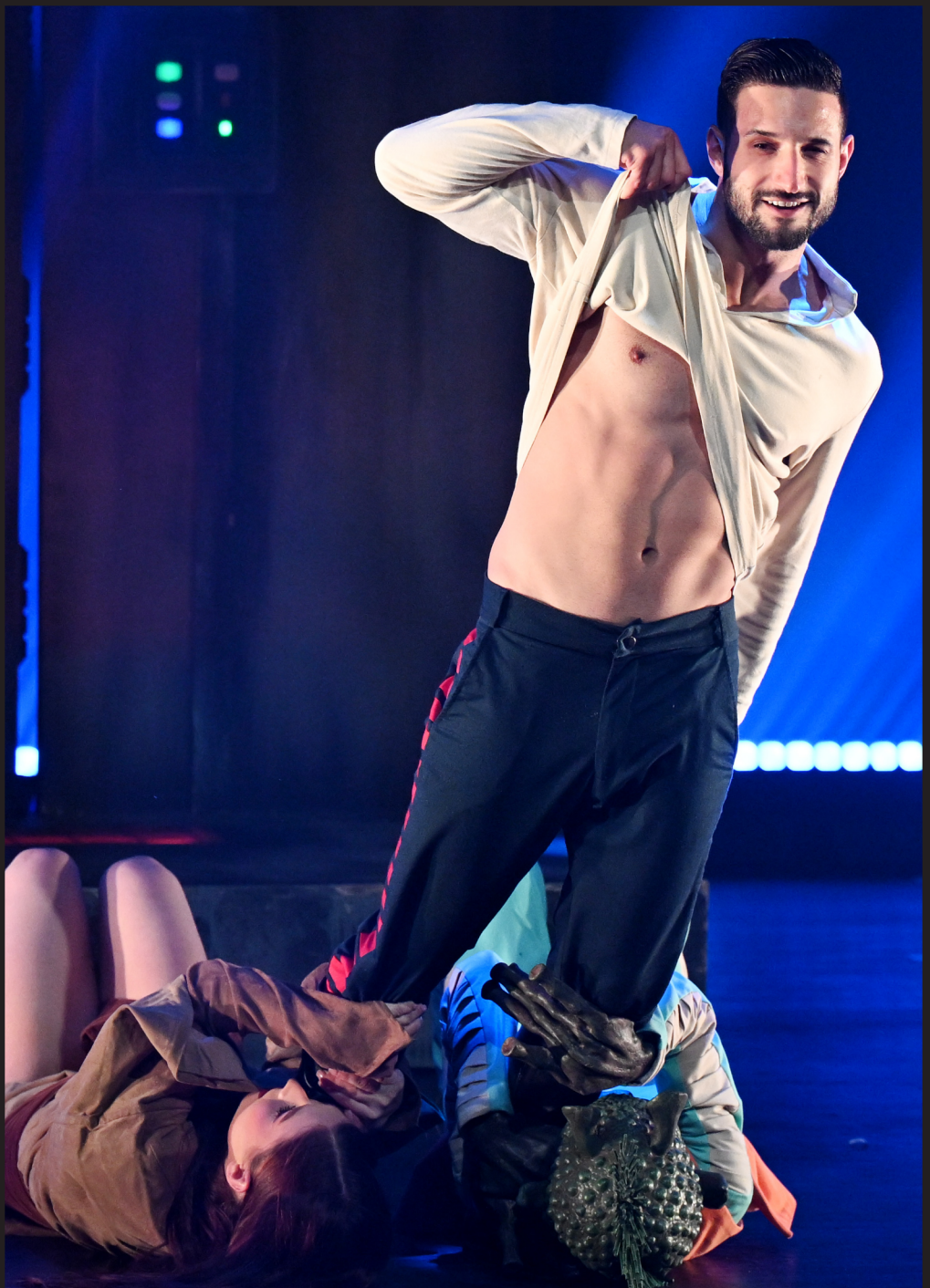
"He'd be shocked," Nathan laughs. "I was so shy. My dance teacher used to beg me to look at the audience. I didn't know how to talk to girls. I didn't even like talking much."

Now? He's a microphone-wielding, gun-licking, burlesque Han Solo.

"I've learned to just say yes to opportunities. Even when something feels scary or different, I try it. And I grow from it. I think little Nathan would be proud."

Whether you come for the lightsabers or the laughs, the intergalactic tease of *The Empire Strips Back* is a force to be reckoned with—and Nathan Kara is proof that sometimes, the scoundrel gets the last (shirtless) laugh.

The Empire Strips Back performs at Rio Hotel & Casino. For tickets and more information, visit theempirestripsback.com.







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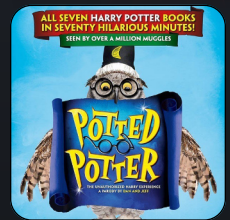
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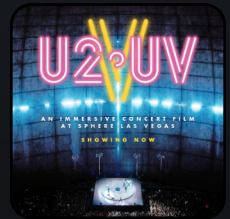
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LAS VEGAS PRIME TIMERS
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LEGACY COUNSELING
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MAMA DRAGONS
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THE PRIDE TREE
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SILVER STATE EQUALITY
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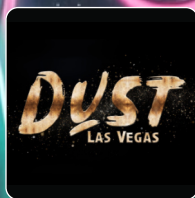
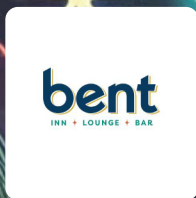
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MUSIC BY DJ V / DJ VAGO
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MUSIC BY DJ VAGO
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1:30 AM MAIN ROOM

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SHOWTIMES
12 AM FRONT ROOM
1:30 AM MAIN ROOM
HOSTED BY SHANELL WITH AJA

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Piranha NIGHTCLUB

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SUNDAY MAY 25 MDW

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2:00 AM LATIN STAGE

SUNDAYS

SUNDAYS