

A close-up portrait of Cher with long, dark, wavy hair, looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. She is wearing a black lace top with sequins. Her right hand is resting on her cheek, and her left hand is resting on a light-colored, textured surface in the foreground. The background is softly blurred.

qlife
MAGAZINE

THE FIRST ISSUE
JANUARY 2017

CHER

Returns to Las Vegas

QLIFE DEBUT

Las Vegas, Los Angeles,
and New York



qlife

JANUARY 2017

THE FIRST ISSUE

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

Happy New Year! We are so proud to be starting off 2017 with our new brand, new name, new website, and representing three iconic American cities! We are so excited to have QLife Magazine serving the LGBTQ community with content from Las Vegas, Los Angeles, and New York.

For those of you that we have never had the pleasure of meeting, we want to introduce ourselves. In Las Vegas, we have co-founders Garrett Pattiani and Russ White. In Los Angeles, we have Trevor Hansen, and in New York, we have Michael Barbieri.

QLife is the evolution of 39 years of LGBTQ publishing in Las Vegas that has been re-invented to a modern day system, reaching readers all over the world. This month we make our debut as QLife Magazine in Las Vegas, Los Angeles, and New York. Decide how you want to hear from us by visiting us in one of the following ways: You can read us online in web edition, Social Media editions, subscribe to our email editions, view our online flipbook, download a PDF, or order a printed copy. Each edition will vary slightly to represent content that serves the local communities.

We believe that no matter where you call home, we all have something in common and our goal is to connect our communities through a brand and voices that you can trust. Our magazine has contributors of all kinds, allowing all voices to be represented. We love diversity and think that all of the colors of our rainbow deserve to be celebrated.

What better way to announce our debut than with the fabulous Cher as she makes her return to Las Vegas in February for CLASSIC CHER. We attended the opening of the new Park Theater with Stevie Nicks in December, and we can't wait to go back and see Cher. You can't think of Cher and Vegas without thinking of Steven Wayne, one of the city's most famous Cher impersonators. We caught a few moments of his time offstage from Frank Marino's Diva's Las Vegas for an interview.

Longtime QVegas contributor Michael Barbieri brings us tastes of Vegas and New York with his features on Morimoto, Red Rooster Harlem & Ginny's Supper Club, and some of his favorite experiences living in The Big Apple. Norma Llyaman endears herself to the Las Vegas community in so many ways, so we're giving "the bearded lady of Las Vegas" her own space to rant (or sometimes rave) on Norma's Page.

Handwritten signatures of Garrett Pattiani and Russ White in black ink.

Garrett Pattiani
Russ White

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AN INTRODUCTORY POST ELECTION RANT

[by Dana Goldberg]

Soo...I'm just going to admit this right up front-- I've been day drinking since November 9th. As a professional comedian, the moment Donald Trump won the general election I lost a good 20 minutes of material from my act. But as a woman, a lesbian, and, well, a somewhat evolved member of society, I lost far more than that. I lost faith in the direction I thought this country was moving and that love, acceptance, and equality would overshadow the fear and hate that still exists in many parts of America. I know the pendulum swings both ways (just like that girl I made out with last summer), and when there is so much progress on social issues in such a short period, the pendulum is bound to swing back a little. I just didn't expect it to swing back to, oh, the 1930's.

Don't get me wrong—there were over 65M voters who believed Mango Mussolini shouldn't be anywhere near the White House, thankfully. However, there were also over 62M people who decided racism, misogyny, xenophobia, bigotry, and basic disgusting, inhumane behavior weren't deal breakers. And to be honest, one vote for a man who is completely unqualified to be the President of the United States is one vote too many. Unfortunately, when Trump won the general election (and lost the popular vote in historic fashion (#neverforget)), it told all of those people full of hate and fear, "You were right. Your beliefs don't need to be challenged. You don't ever need to learn the difference between you're and your. Just carry on with your lives."

As we have seen since the election, the lies and propaganda Trump ran on to get so many fearful Americans to vote for him are starting to unravel. He

no longer wants to lock Hillary up; he's stepping back from a repeal of ObamaCare, and he has now admitted on his "Thank You" Tour (wtf?) that "drain the swamp" was just for show. He's even said in an interview that he believes marriage equality has been settled by the Supreme Court and doesn't need to be revisited. I'm not taking particular comfort in any of this, of course. The man changes his stance on issues more often than he grabs p&'ssies, and by all accounts, he's grabbed a LOT of p&'ssies (<http://nymag.com/thecut/2016/10/all-the-women-accusing-trump-of-rape-sexual-assault.html>).

As his promises start to fall to the wayside, no one who voted for Hillary Clinton is going to feel duped. We all knew he was snowing the American people. We all knew he wasn't qualified for the position for which he was applying. However, there is a very large population

in this country who believed him. They believed he would be the change they were so desperately seeking; believed the lies he spread throughout his entire campaign. As Trump continues to break his promises, these are the exact people who are going to start to feel disenfranchised, angry, and lied to. It is not our job as liberal, loving, evolved people to say "I TOLD YOU SO! We knew this was going to happen, but you wouldn't listen!" Trust me, I want to yell that from the rooftop of every building in every city in America (well, mainly in the fly over states). Instead, I try and take the high road. "We get it. We've been there. We've been fighting against this sort of man our entire lives. Instead of standing against us, why don't you come fight with us now." And let me assure you, I am ready to fight.

It's hard not to get stuck on nostalgia for the current administration, even before President Obama has left office. The respect I have for the Obamas and everything they have endured while rebuilding our country over the last 8 years continues to grow. Obama has been a great President with a strong, articulate and poised First Lady and two beautiful, strong daughters. Then I think about what January 20th will look like. The sight of the Trump family literally makes my stomach turn and my skin crawl. I haven't been able to listen to any of the man's speeches yet, he's promoting his Stepford daughter to his Stepford wife (Ivanka taking over First Lady duties? Ew...I mean, just ew), and looking at his two oldest sons solidifies each and every day that I'm a lesbian. Can't we cut one of those famous Trump deals and trade Prince, David Bowie, Leonard Cohen, George Michael, Carrie Fisher and Debbie Reynolds for the entire Trump clan (pun intended)? Frankly, the family creeps me out, except maaaaybe Tiffany. I'm still not convinced she isn't being held hostage.

Fact is, we are stuck with a Trump/Pence administration at least for now. I wish I could tell all

of you that I feel hopeful about the next four political years. I don't. What does bring me hope are all of the people who are starting to mobilize, starting to get louder. I have to believe all is not lost. We have seen some of the worst of humanity over this last year, but we have also seen some incredible people step up and speak out when before they may have otherwise assumed someone else would do it for them. People are not just donating to organizations like Planned Parenthood, The Human Rights Campaign, and the ACLU; they are volunteering, making calls, and using

their voices to create change. This will be a time when the complacency stops and people get off their asses and do more than they ever have done to fight for the rights of immigrants, women, people of color and the LGBT community. For Pete's sake, Wal-mart of all companies will be offering health insurance

and benefits to same-sex couples and transgender employees! Hell has officially frozen over. Although if hell actually could freeze over, Republicans would probably use that as proof that global warming is a hoax perpetuated by the Chinese. Of course, hell will never freeze over because hell is a hoax perpetuated by the Republicans, but that's for another article.

People will be looking to comedians for levity during this incredibly dark time in history. I will do my best to keep you laughing when I'm not crying myself to sleep in the corner or drinking alone in my apartment at 11 am yelling profanities at the television. As much as I dislike the incoming President, it's important to remember that, somehow, it could actually be worse... only because Mike Pence is next in line for the position. It has to make you wonder when a man is that against the LGBT community. Why so upset, Mikey? The lady doth protest too much, methinks. In the one and only Vice Presidential debate, when asked about his faith, Pence said, "I try and spend a little bit of time on my knees every day." I'm sure you do Mike...I'm sure you do.

People will be looking to comedians for levity during this incredibly dark time in history. I will do my best to keep you laughing when I'm not crying myself to sleep in the corner or drinking alone in my apartment at 11 am yelling profanities at the television.



QLife Talks with Steven Wayne, Cher Impersonator!

QLife: Hello Steven. Thank you for talking with QLife for our very first issue. You are one of the most well known and well liked Cher impersonators in the world, so we are curious to get to know more about who you are and how you got to this point in your career. Please tell us more about your background. Help us see who is the person behind the makeup, the wigs and the persona(s). Let's start out with the basics, like where are you from? What were you like as a kid? You know, all of the questions you would cover if we were on a first date, LOL. Give us a background to start off this interview.

Steven Wayne: Hello, and thank you for this opportunity! I am honored. I was a weird and dorky kid, born and raised in a small town in West Virginia. I was given the greatest gift a child could receive, which is a childhood surrounded by unconditional love. I am thankful for the amazing family that I have. I Thank God for them because school was a horrible experience for me. I was bullied starting in the first grade, and it got progressively worse all the way through college. I received death threats and attempted suicide as a teenager, but I'm proof that it does get better. Here I am in Las Vegas, living my

dream.

QLife: Wow, that sounds intense. It shows how strong of a person you are. We are all happy that you are still here to entertain your fans. Now at some point you decided to start doing drag - did it start out as something fun or did you know that you wanted to make a career out of it early on? Tell us how you knew that drag was in your future and what your plans were.

I put together a costume and performed "If I Could Turn Back Time" in a nightclub, and that was the night this Cher impersonator was born.

Steven Wayne: I knew at an early age that I would become a performer of some kind. I loved music, and I would escape the pain of being teased daily at school by pretending to be a rock star in my room. I would pretend to sing in front of an audience composed of stuffed animals, a Wonder Woman doll, and the Lone Ranger. I first learned about female impersonators on talk shows and I was fascinated. Soon after that, I was dressing in drag and going to clubs with a fake ID. A couple of friends told me that I resembled Cher, so with their help, I put together a costume and performed "If I Could Turn Back Time" in a nightclub, and that was the night this Cher impersonator was born.

QLife: That is an amazing story. I'm sure that those stuffed animals were the perfect first audience! What genre of drag would you say you are now? Help our readers understand the categories and sub-categories of drag.

Steven Wayne: I think Cher impersonation is a genre in itself. What a wealth of costumes, hairstyles, and music for impersonators! There are so many men and women who impersonate her because who wouldn't want to be Cher? She is an icon, a superhero. In a way, I compare it to dressing up as Santa. There is only one Santa, but he has helpers all over the world who dress in a red suit to deliver gifts to boys and girls everywhere. It's similar with Cher. There is only one, but she has impersonators who help deliver her music and fashion to the ladies, gentlemen, and flamboyant gentlemen all over the world!

QLife: We all know you as a star in Frank Marino's Divas show in Las Vegas, what is that like for you and how did that change the trajectory of your life? What have you learned from being in the show and how do you apply it to your personal life?

Steven Wayne: I am so blessed to be making a living by doing something that I love, and I am thankful for the opportunity that Frank Marino has given me to be one of his Divas. Because of the show, I have traveled to so many places and met people from all over the world. One thing I have learned from this type of show business is that you have to be very consistent. We perform the same show every night, after night, after night. If I'm not careful, I might look bored, and I don't want that to happen. It's important to keep each performance fresh because although I may have performed it 1,000 times, an audience member might be seeing it for the very first time. Plus, I want good reviews on Trip Advisor!!

QLife: Naturally, being on in the spotlight night after night, after night, after night (lol) means that you become a role model to others out there. Can you give some advice to people who look up to you and tell them something that would be inspiring?

Steven Wayne: Yes and thank you for asking. I think there is way too much online bullying and shaming on social media and basically any website where you can leave a comment. People can be so mean. They develop such a false sense of power when they are typing on a device and it is so easy to become an a\$\$hole. So my advice is "Don't be an a\$\$hole!"

QLife: Seems so simple, huh? I mean it's much easier to pay attention to the things we like instead of bringing others down. Great advice! How many personas do you have? We know about the iconic Cher that you do, can you list out all the people you impersonate? Do you have your own drag character?





Steven Wayne: I also impersonate the amazing Celine Dion. It has been a work in progress and I am proud of how that number has evolved. I enjoy impersonating her so much and I have always felt a connection to her music. She and I are the same age and she hit the American charts at the same time I started performing. I have such a love and admiration for her strength. I would love to meet her someday. #hinthint #hookmeup

QLife: Ha Ha! We will try our best! Now, we bet you have some other projects you are working on, what can we expect from you in the near future? Do you have anything that you want to share with your fans?

Steven Wayne: Yes! I'm excited to say that Frank has big plans for Divas Las Vegas in the new year! We are revamping each number from top to bottom and it will be a brand new show in 2017!

QLife: Have you ever met Cher? If so, what was that experience like and what did you say?

Steven Wayne: If I could ever re-live one moment in my life, it would be the time I met Cher. I met her in 2001 at the Riviera. I was so nervous, I couldn't

I was trying to give her a photo of me, but she autographed it and handed it back to me.

speak, and I felt like I was going to vomit on her shoes. I tried to tell her that I impersonated her, but I was so choked up because I WAS STANDING NEXT TO CHER! I wanted a photo with her, and the batteries in my camera were dead. Luckily, someone else had a camera. I was trying to give her a photo of me, but she autographed it and handed it back to me. I guess she didn't want it! It was a disaster.

QLife: Oh my gosh, that's hilarious! She must have thought it was her! Well, I think that is the BEST compliment you can get. You know you are good when the person signing the photo thinks you are her. We aren't surprised. You truly are the best. Thank you so much for talking to us! It was so much fun, we wish we could "turn back time" and do it again! Cheers and we will see you in the new show soon!

Photos courtesy Steven Wayne

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CHER RETURNS TO LAS VEGAS

[by Russ White]

Cher is no stranger to Las Vegas. Her first residency was in 1979 at Caesars Palace and again nearly 30 years later in 2008 with a 3 year residency headlining at the Colosseum at Caesars Palace. In February, Cher returns to Las Vegas for a exclusive engagement with MGM Resorts as she debuts CLASSIC CHER at Park Theater at Monte Carlo. In May she appears at the all new theater at MGM National Harbor in Maryland.

An Oscar, Emmy, Grammy and Golden Globe Award-winner, the Goddess of Pop known for extravagant stage spectacles, breathtaking costumes and dynamic performance brings an all-new show featuring her chart-topping classics to MGM Resorts' newest live entertainment venues,

Cher launched her career in the '60s, initially as a solo career, but Cher suffered stage fright so she asked performer Sonny to join her on stage. The two became close friends, then lovers. They launched a career as the duo Caesar & Cleo, dropping the names about a year later in favor of their own names, Sonny & Cher. Their song "I Got You Babe" became their biggest single and their signature song, knocking the Beatles off the charts.

Though known for their musical careers, their popularity had subsided as their folk-rock sounded faded as harder rock became more prevalent and in 1971, CBS offered the couple their own TV show, "The Sonny & Cher Comedy Hour". The show was a ratings success. In 1982 the music and television star headed to Broadway and film production Come Back to the Five and Dime, Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean, and a year

later starred with Meryl Streep in Silkwood.

The gay community has long embraced Cher, and she has always returned that love and respect. For decades, she has been imitated by drag queens, played in gay bars and nightclubs, and the community flocks to her performances. That dedication to the gay community was questioned briefly when it hit close too home. Her daughter Chastity Bono came out as a lesbian and Cher was not initially accepting, but she later characterized this as "a very un-Cher-like reaction." and came to accept both Chastity's sexual orientation as well as her transition to Chaz Bono.

A worldwide superstar for more than six decades, Cher has sold more than 100 million records and conquered more challenges than a handful of other talents combined – recording, concerts, film, Broadway acting, television and directing. Cher's three-year 325-show world "Farewell Tour" from 2003 to 2005 played to more than three million fans and became the most successful tour ever by any female artist. Cher returns to the stage at age 70 with CLASSIC CHER, bringing a specially designed production that can only be seen at Park Theater and The Theater at MGM National Harbor.



"I plan to make this my best show ever. I am extremely excited about both of these new theaters – they are state-of-the-art and beautiful."





[by Jimmy Floyd]

We all know that the best part of a dinner party is meeting fascinating people. A good host will seat strangers next to each other so conversation can flow. Good food and cocktails connect people, and before you know it strangers are no longer strangers.

Two years ago Thomas John - psychic medium, realized that the dinner party formula would be a perfect vehicle for his work. Guests can not only meet others that are missing loved ones, but they can also share in the mystery and gift of actually getting MESSAGES from their loved ones during dinner.

"I look at DWTD as a way to give people a chance to enjoy a social activity with their loved ones that have passed. It is relaxed, warm and festive. It is a celebration of the fact that the ones we love are never far away from us, even after they leave this world"

Seating is limited to 25 guests so that Thomas John can work his way around the dinning table throughout the 5 course gourmet meal. Every guest gets personal attention from him, and guests are encouraged to ask questions.

Personal readings by Thomas John are booked a year in advance, so this is a wonderful way to contact loved ones from beyond while enjoying a beautiful evening out.

DWTD has taken place all over the country, and is a very popular event. The invitation has now come from the premier property of Mandalay Bay Las Vegas to hold DWTD in their ultra exclusive Foundation Room.

"The Foundation Room is an exquisite location, and we are honored to have such an amazing partner for DWTD in Las Vegas" Thomas John goes on to say "Foundation room sets the PERFECT mood for an evening with spirit".

The first set of Dinner With The Dead events at Mandalay Bay start with two big nights (with four seatings of 25 guests available):

Friday January 20, 2017 - 8PM seating and 10:30PM seating

Saturday January 21, 2017 - 8PM seating and 10:30PM seating.

Links for DWTD seatings can be found on their Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/DinnerWithTheDead>).

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The hit Broadway Musical Fun Home kicks off the 2017 leg of its national tour starting in Las Vegas. Based on Alison Bechdel's memoirs, the story recalls her early childhood with her father and her coming out in college. Bechdel struggles with the association of her coming out and her father's death. It is the first Broadway musical with a lesbian protagonist. The original Broadway production was nominated for 12 Tony Awards, winning five, including Best Musical.

QLife caught up with cast member Robert Hager for an interview days before the opening at The Smith Center in Las Vegas.

QLife: Hi Robert, welcome to Las Vegas. Tell us a little about Fun Home.

Robert: The story is centered around Alison Bechdel and a journey through her past at two different stages in her life. The story starts with childhood Alison at around 8 or 9 years old and the relationship with her father Bruce at that time. The second state takes place in college and her coming out story. Her father was a closeted homosexual. After Alison comes out to her parents, her father kills himself by stepping in front of a truck.

QLife: You are cast as multiple characters in the show. Where these different roles?

Robert: My characters fill out a little of each story in the flashbacks that she

has. "Roy" has a relationship with her father Bruce. "Pete" is a mourner at the funeral home looking for a casket for his mother how just died. You get to see the different personalities of Bruce through mi characters. I also play "Mark" who is a junior in high school who is offered a ride home by Bruce. Bruce offers him a malt beverage and gets arrested. Finally, I play "Bobby Jeremy" who brings joy to Alison in this really fun, and happy number called Raincoat of Love.

QLife: How did you get involved with the show?

Robert: I saw the original Broadway show about 6 months into the run. I thought it was a great show. Then my agent got me an audition so I went back and saw it and focused on Joel Perez who played the role

I play on Broadway and I fell in love with the role immediately. I did two auditions, and they went great, and I got the offer about three months before our first rehearsal, so I had a good relaxing summer

The original Broadway production was nominated for 12 Tony Awards, winning five, including Best Musical.

Tony Award Winning Musical Tours Las Vegas and Los Angeles



before traveling the country for a year and a half.

QLife: How did you get your start in theater?

Robert: I'm from Mexico City. I started theater there. I was 13 when I did my first professional gig in the international tour of the Radio City Christmas Show with the Rockettes. They came to Mexico, and I auditioned just for fun—and got it! Right after I graduated high school, I got *Spring Awakening*, and that was my first big show. From there I kept going. I did *Bye Bye Birdie* with John Stamos and Gina Gershon.

QLife: When did the tour start?

Robert: We officially opened in October. It's crazy to think we've already finished 3 months.

QLife: Have you been to The Smith Center in Las Vegas before?

Robert: No. The last time I was in Las Vegas was around 2008. I saw *The Phantom of the Opera*. But one of our orchestra members is from Vegas, so he's going to be giving us a nice tour.

QLife: What are you looking forward to most about being in Vegas?

Robert: Well, I'm renting a house instead of company housing which is usually a hotel near the theater. I decided I wanted to "live in Vegas" and see what it's like. I'm sharing it with my understudy Anthony Fortino. Obviously, we'll do The Strip, but I wanted to get a sense of the urban lifestyle of Vegas.

QLife: Where are you off to after Las Vegas?

Robert: We're in Denver for two weeks, then San Francisco and LA. Then it's a busy spring and summer.

QLife: Have you been on tour before?

Robert: I did *Spring Awakening* on Broadway and joined the last 3 months of the tour, so I was mostly in the South East by then. That was fun. The difference here is I'm originating the tour. That's a cool fun thing to do.

QLife: Where has been your favorite place to perform so far?

Robert: I have to say Chicago. I had never been, and it was beautiful. It reminded me a little bit of New York, but cleaner. That's what is exciting about touring, though. You get to see new theaters, old theaters. In Detroit we saw late 60's/early 70's architecture. I love getting out and meeting people.

Tour Schedule

Las Vegas	The Smith Center	Jan 3-8
Los Angeles	Ahmanson Theater	Feb 21-Apr 1

Additional cities and dates available at funhomebroadway.com



LG_T NEW YEAR NEW YOU

[by Anonymous]

New Year's resolutions. Almost everybody makes them but very few see them through. As we approach a new year the idea of a new beginning, a fresh start, or a positive change in our lives is very appealing. We have this idea that we can be a new and improved version of ourselves – eating better, exercising, etc. That lasts about 2 weeks and then we go back to “normal”.

Maybe our thinking is wrong. Do you really need a “new” you? I propose that we go to the older version of ourselves. And when I say “older version” I’m talking about going way back. To our childhood selves. We saw the world differently. I had friends of all nationalities and races. It didn’t matter. I didn’t even realize it at the time. Then as we grew up, something happened and we changed. We became more cynical. We started to classify people (often unconsciously). And, we do it in our own community! Our very name, LGBTQ+, creates separation one from another. Just this week I spoke with someone who said, “Oh yeah, if you went to a gay man’s support group and admitted you were bisexual you wouldn’t be welcome.” Disheartening because I’m at a place where acceptance in the LGBT community is important and vital to me. It is the interactions like this that keep me “anonymous” (for the most part). The rejection would be hard. I admit it, I LIKE my label – Bisexual! It’s an identity and a core part of my being that I only stopped trying to change, stopped judging and stopped running from a few years ago. I always knew I was but I never accepted or embraced it. So I get the importance of our identities. But how beautiful would it be if all of those labels – straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual – all went away because we all just realized that we are all sexual? If we all accepted that sexuality can be expressed in many different but equally valid ways?

My acceptance of myself has opened the door wide open to allow me to accept others (a side effect that I never considered would happen). The freedom I feel defies explanation. No longer shackled with self-judgment, I no longer find myself judging others. In a

very real way I’ve found that innocence that I had as a child. Black, white, Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, atheist, straight, gay – I’m sure that I had friends in every category but those categories never even entered my thinking. I find that to be my thinking again as an adult.

2017 is here. Do you want to eat better? Then do it. Do you want to exercise to look and feel better? Go for it. But do yourself a favor. Be you. Be the “first you” when you looked at the world through eyes of wonder as a child. When you embraced your friends because of who they were on the inside, not external, superficial characteristics. Start with our community. Do you really embrace EVERYBODY in it? Or do you question and judge those who are different than you? Make new friends. Open up. Talk to whatever “letter” you are not. We are not all that different from one another. We can make it easier for those who are struggling with self-identity and self-judgment to come out. The first place they would probably do it is within the LGBT community. If they come out to me, they will find complete and unconditional love and acceptance. Can we all say that today? If not, let’s make THAT our goal in 2017.

Sincerely Yours,

Anonymous

As always, feel free to email me at coolwithbeingbi@gmail.com



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THE IRON CHEF OPENS AT MGM GRAND

[by Michael Barbieri]

I may never eat anywhere but Morimoto from now on! The food was beyond sublime, the service was impeccable, and the space was slick and modern, yet still comfortable.

Morimoto Las Vegas, in the MGM Grand, is the latest in a successful collection of restaurants by renowned Iron Chef Masaharu Morimoto. Born in Japan, Chef Morimoto's style combines traditional Japanese cuisine with Western influences, and he now owns restaurants in Philadelphia, Mumbai, New Delhi, Tokyo, Boca Raton, the Napa Valley, Waikiki, Walt Disney World, and New York City.

Located in The District; MGM's dining and shopping area, the enormous glass-fronted space turns the Morimoto experience into theater for passers-by, showing off three distinct dining areas - an open, yet intimate lounge, a primary dining room, dominated by a wall of dramatic, backlit photographs by Yasumichi Morita as a backdrop for the signature sushi bar, and a secondary dining room featuring a Teppanyaki grill.

I had dined at Morimoto in New York's Meatpacking District, so I was excited to sample the fare in Las Vegas. Accompanied by my dear friend Rhiannon, what we experienced was beyond my expectations!

Cocktails first: Rhiannon had the appropriately named Las Vegas Fizz, made with gin, Tuaca - a sweet brandy liqueur, cava - a sparkling wine from Spain, blackberries and fresh lemon. The gin gave the drink a slightly herbal, woody quality, while the sweeter elements balanced out the flavor, making it mild and

refreshing. I chose the Devil's Advocate, a nicely spicy mix of tequila, yuzu, pomegranate, and habanero pepper.

We split several appetizers. First, the orgasmic Wagyu Beef Carpaccio - slices of tender raw beef, pounded flat and dressed with yuzu soy, ginger, sweet garlic and a mouth watering combination of warm olive oil and sesame oil. The exotic flavors and butter-soft mouth feel of every bite, made this a dish I never wanted to end! The Spicy Tuna Tacos had clean, bold flavors, with a hint of spice. The crunchiness of the taco shell contrasted nicely with the silky texture of the tuna, and the accompanying house made guacamole was creamy, with yuzu adding a lighter citrus note than the usual lime or lemon. Next came the Sticky Ribs - meaty baby back pork ribs in an irresistible sweet & spicy tamarind glaze, with a touch of sriracha to add a satisfying heat; like the best American barbecue with a tongue-tingling Asian flair. Finally, the astonishing Oysters Foie-Gras - deeply cupped Kusshi Oysters, topped with a sliver of uni (sea urchin,) a morsel of seared foie-gras, and a dollop of house made teriyaki. I had tried these in New York, and found them to be the most decadent thing I had ever eaten! Here in Vegas, they didn't disappoint! The oceanic flavors of the oyster and uni - sometimes called the "liver of the



ocean," played beautifully against the true liver of the foie gras, and the sweet/salty teriyaki brought all the elements together, for a rich flavor and texture that had our eyes rolling back in our heads with delight!

We ordered individual entrees, but shared them both. The Ishi Yaki Chashu Bop, a refined take on the traditional Korean Bi Bim Bap, came to the table in a stone bowl heated to 450 degrees. The dish consisted of rice topped with thinly sliced braised pork known as Kakuni, various pickled vegetables, chili threads, spinach, and a raw egg. Seasoned with a spicy citrus mix called yuzu kosho and sweet soy, the ingredients were stirred together, cooked by the heat of the bowl. The interplay of flavors - sweet, salty, spicy, and a touch of acidity from the veggies, made for a dish that was comforting and homey, yet still elegant enough to be considered fine dining! Even better was the Duck Duck Goose - a platter laden with a bowl of duck confit fried rice, topped with a fried duck egg, a small portion of roast duck breast in gooseberry compote, a confit duck leg, and a demitasse of duck meatball soup. The shredded duck meat gave the fried rice a luxe texture, and when mixed with the runny egg yolk, the flavor was rich and explosively ducky. The duck breast was slightly rare and paired perfectly with the sweet/tart taste of the berry compote, the leg was tender, yet hearty, with just the right touch of gaminess, and the soup was delicate, with the meatball adding a subtle heat.

Just as we felt our meal was coming to an end, our server suggested we try the sushi for which Morimoto is known. Oh, okay! Twist my arm...! We let him make the selection, which was simple, yet perfect - rich, melt-in-your-mouth toro, or fatty tuna, which I had never tried before, being more accustomed to maguro,

the leaner, meatier cut. There was also fresh, delicately flavored amberjack, sweet, tender kinmedai (Golden Eye Snapper,) a toro maki roll, and two pieces of nigiri sushi, showcasing the best uni I've ever tasted!

Our sushi was paired with four very different and distinct sakes, as well - the first with a fruity finish, the second had a rather grassy, herbal profile, the third had notes of anise, which complemented the fish very well, and the fourth was bold, strong, and almost whiskey-like. Although I'm not a fan of sake, I had to admit that I enjoyed these very much, particularly the first two.

We wrapped up our meal with two absolutely fabulous desserts: The Fiery Chocolate Tarte - a sphere of chocolate set afire with 151 proof rum, which then melted down to reveal a hidden treasure of marshmallow, salty caramel ganache, and dark chocolate sorbet. A chocolate lover's dream, it was creamy, deeply chocolatey, with a vague saltiness and the flavor of the rum preventing it from becoming overly sweet. We also tried the Doughnuts - light, airy doughnut holes, pierced by pipettes filled with luscious vanilla pastry cream. We squeezed the pipettes, filling the doughnuts with the delicious cream. They were a do-it-yourself dessert!

Our meal at Morimoto Las Vegas was extraordinary. I was able to sample a much wider spectrum of dishes than I ever had in New York, and aside from the incredible flavors, the thing that was most evident to me, was the lovely balance between delicate and bold - some dishes had bold flavors and delicate presentations, others had showy presentations, yet subtle flavor profiles. But we always got the best of both worlds.

Dine at Morimoto Las Vegas, and experience the delectable art of the Iron Chef with a delicate touch!



When I found out about New York 360, I couldn't wait to write about it for the first issue of QLife New York. This Facebook page is the creation of New York photographer Irina Smirnova who is on a mission to bring 360° experiences of New York to the world.

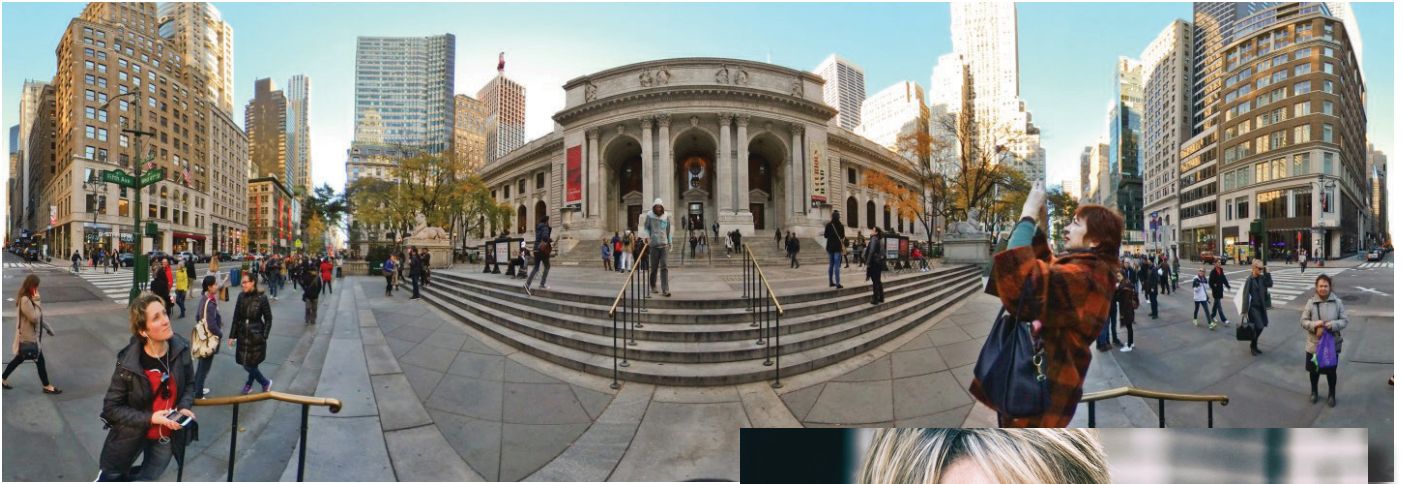
"I love the technology! I'm a geek. I saw what my friends in the Ukraine were doing with 360 cameras, I wanted to do that for New York," said Irina. "I love New York City and I know a lot of other people love it, too. People who have been, people who want to come back, and even the people that live here and don't know what they are missing every day."

People are fascinated with 360 images. Facebook and other social media sites have made 360 experiences very easy. With cell phone cameras, you can only capture a fraction of a panoramic shot. With a 360 camera you pretty much shoot and upload and Facebook and Youtube automatically recognize the file type and let you create a 360/VR experience for the viewer.

Irina started taking 360 shots about two months ago. "You can produce 360 shots with any D-SLR and a super wide angle lens or fisheye lens," said Irina. "But the problem is stitching it, and you have to inject metadata into the file for the social media sites to recognize it as 360 picture."

"Do you know how many friends I have in the city that have never been to the new Brookfield Place? To the new Oculus? I'm taking people on tours to these





People who have been, people who want to come back, and even the people that live here and don't know what they are missing every day.



places with this new technology!"

VR headsets are becoming more affordable, too. "I have a bunch of friends who enjoy my 360 videos while using their VR headsets and get the experience of actually being there with me, taking a walk around Grand Central terminal etc.," said Irina.

New 360 cameras have 2 lenses facing opposite directions, each capturing an 180° view in a single shot. The resulting photo looks like a panorama, but by using some proprietary software you can stitch them into globes or avant-garde pictures. Irina continued my education in 360 tech, "The camera software stitches the images together into one panoramic file that Facebook and YouTube automatically recognize."

The 360 images and videos are truly immersive. The capabilities go far beyond what your cell phone can

capture.

Irina has already catalogued dozens of iconic views of New York in the New York 360 Facebook page, as well as several videos, including Times Square, Union Square Park, the New York Stock Exchange, Broadway, Columbus Circle, The Oculus, and Central Park.

Some of the globe images have gained popularity for their artistic look and Irina has started selling the prints to help fund the project.

Visit <https://www.facebook.com/NewYorkCity360> and view New York like you've never seen it before.



Photos: Irina Smirnova



Today's topic - What is a new year? #whyallthefuss #resolutionsandgratitudes
#reflectionsfromthecountessofcrazy #whyallthehashtags

Is it really a New Year or is just a new date to mess up when we write the date on our checks? OMG! I know, right! Who writes checks anymore? Norma does! I love checks. Checks make me nostalgic! #oldschoolbillpaying #donttrusttheinternet

Is a New Year like a new pair of fabulous shoes #discountstripper.com that can't wait to be worn or is a New Year like a new policy at work that you have to acknowledge because your insurance rates are going up because you are well fed? #bigbonedgirlissues

I'm not sure how a New Year is supposed to feel because I've never thought about it before. How do you feel? Do you change when the date changes? #modernmidlifecrisismode #firstworldissues

Well it's here - 2017! I refuse to get political but I am ready to get sassy!

Here we go! Get Ready.....as Bette Davis once stated in the ever so best role that Norma could debut (besides Norma Desmond in Sunset Boulevard)that infamous line from the film All About Eve -

"Fasten your seatbelts. It's going to be a bumpy night!"

I'd change the word night to YEAR! I do believe that it will be a bumpy year!

My grandfather used to say "Lord bear down on us sinners, but not too hard, just kind of easy like!"

Well, the Lord better be watching over all of us! Especially those of us who are LGBTQ, a minority, women, or Muslim, pee sitting down, left handed..... etc....etc....etc.... #can'tbelieve whatjusthappened #I'llbuil kdafreakingwallaroundyou!

Gloria Gaynor says it all in her classic disco hit, I WILL SURVIVE - "At first I was afraid, I was petrified.....

And then she says... (Please sing out loud!)

Go on now, go, walk out the door

Just turn around now

'Cause you're not welcome anymore

Weren't you the one who tried to break me with goodbye

Do you think I'd crumble

Did you think I'd lay down and die?

Oh no, not I, I will survive

Oh, as long as I know how to love, I know I'll stay alive

I've got all my life to live

And I've got all my love to give and I'll survive

I will survive



WE WILL SURVIVE! #thefightaintoveryet!
#moveoverrosaparkswereallsittinginthefrontwithyou!

As I go into 2017 I will count my blessings for who I am and what I am grateful for! I took the time and wrote a few things down on a piece of paper that I put in my purse (wallet) and when it gets crazy all I have to do is pull out that piece of paper and reflect on these things. I encourage all of you to do the same. It is very easy and helps with clarity and focus in these times of chaos.

Let me share.

My Life! My Husband, Derek Guerrero, and the life that we have built together. Our countless friends and family. The CRAZY Sin City Sisters. The Just You Family. Mark and The Space. MISBEHAVIN' in March. Craig and Lee in Pahrump. Eric and Gustavo being in Love. Getting slapt by Ida. Katrina (60) is still 10 years older than Norma. Madame Leota for purring so loud. Roses blooming in December. Our wonderful LGBTQ Home -The Center. Arlene. Gnocchi at Gina's restaurant! #Iso undlikeMariafromtheSoundofMusic(whiskersonkittens)

HAPPY NEW YEAR KIDDOS! Thank you for allowing Norma to ramble!

Until next month - ARRIVEDERCI Kittens!





Certainly 2016 was not as a predictable year as many of us expected it to be. The advances the LGBTQ community had seen during the Obama Administration peaked in mid-2015 with Marriage Equality. Yet significant equality gaps were left wide open, especially for the T in LGBTQ.

President Obama and his Administration made historic strides to expand opportunities and advance equality and justice for all, including Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Americans. From major legislative achievements to historic court victories to important policy changes, the President fought to promote the equal rights of all Americans — "no matter who they are or who they love".

In 2016, state legislatures across the country proposed nearly 200 anti-LGBT measures, many of which the LGBTQ community and organization, and our allies and major corporations, managed to beat back. However, as the year closed, we saw North Carolina's controversial House Bill 2 law restricted bathroom access for transgender individuals still dominate the headlines. The N.C. General Assembly toyed with and then punted on HB2 repeal. That law has cost the state millions of dollars, hundreds of jobs, numerous entertainment and sporting events and its Republican governor. But while the financial cost is mentioned

there is hardly any media coverage on the lives who the bill impacts, namely the transgender community who now, could be harassed and even arrested simply for using the bathroom based on the gender they identify with. We will see similar restrictions play out in other state legislative houses in 2017, most notably that of Texas.

We can safely predict that in 2017 more of the same antics will be adopted by several anti-LGBTQ legislatures across the country. And it could get worse as many of the Federal advances made via either Presidential Executive Orders, or Federal Guidelines such as those issued by the State Department, HHS or HUD could be eliminated overnight by the new administration.

Ultimately, we don't have a clear picture where Donald Trump stands on the broad range of LGBTQ issues. For example, he has shifted to state that he is for "traditional marriage", and within a 24-hour period he went from stating he had "no problem with Caitlyn

Jenner [a transgender woman] using the women's restroom at Trump Tower" to stating that bathroom access should be left to state legislatures to decide. What we do know is that Trump is unpredictable and erratic, and likely a few other adjectives come to your mind too. What we do know is that he has surrounded himself with a heavy weight class of anti-LGBT leaders and this may not bode well for the LGBTQ community. Check out this list on Trump's public positions: <http://www.hrc.org/2016RepublicanFacts/donald-trump-opposes-nationwide-marriage-equality>

Trump has said that one of his first big policy areas will be to affirm his election pledge to sign anti-LGBTQ 'First Amendment Defense Act'. It was first introduced in the House on June 17, 2015 and would effectively legalize anti-LGBTQ discrimination by employers, businesses, landlords and healthcare providers, as long as they claim to be motivated by a firmly held religious beliefs. The Evangelical and far right Christian Conservative communities are eager to ensure this happens with a Republican-controlled Congress in place.

Amendments to, or elimination of, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) will have a significant impact on the health coverage for many in the LGBTQ community. Especially transgender people and those living with HIV.

We should be prepared for a significant reduction or complete stoppage in the advancement of LGBTQ issues and actions as part of public policy. While a Supreme Justice pick by Trump could tilt the court towards the right, it will have limited impact on already established cases such as marriage equality. The justice however, could have dire impact on the progress of equality for new cases, especially when

"The way we're going to keep moving forward is for people to keep engaging, to keep fighting, to keep demanding justice. I know we can get there sooner rather than later, but the only way that's going to happen is for people to continue to demand it."

David Stacy, Government Affairs Director for the Human Rights Campaign

Within a 24-hour period he went from stating he had "no problem with Caitlyn Jenner [a transgender woman] using the women's restroom at Trump Tower" to stating that bathroom access should be left to state legislatures to decided.

the Supreme Court takes up school bathroom rules for transgender students.

So is it all doom and gloom? It took me several weeks to get over the results from the U.S. election. But as I gathered my thoughts I felt just as emboldened as those who aim to discriminate against us. I knew that once again I will stand up and speak out against their hate. Harvey Milk said, "Burst down those closet doors once and for all, and stand up and start to fight." Each of us, should be prepared to stand up and speak out. Whether to family, friends, neighbors or via testimony in state houses. Support pro-equality officials. Elect more of them. If you haven't done so already, join your local, state and national equality organizations. Sign up for their email alert notifications. Track pro-, and anti-, LGBT bills in your state legislature. Be prepared to testify about the harm a bill could do to you, your family, or your friends and neighbors. Speak up loudly and vocally as to why discrimination is bad. If you are a person of faith, work with your local faith leadership.

Regardless, we should brace ourselves for an onslaught of anti-LGBT legislation in 2017; more bathroom bills, more religious objections, and more discrimination. But how we stop this is up to each of us. If we sit back and do nothing, then we allow the haters to hate.

As my good friend David Stacy, a government affairs director for the Human Rights Campaign said, "The way we're going to keep moving forward is for people to keep engaging, to keep fighting, to keep demanding justice. I know we can get there sooner rather than later, but the only way that's going to happen is for people to continue to demand it."

So let's do just that. Engage, fight for equality and demand justice for all.



It took a while, but Las Vegas fitness options have exploded in the last few years with Pilates studios, Cross Fit, Barre classes and more, giving the big box gyms a run for their money.

This December, a new high-energy option opens in the Mall at Grand Canyon Parkway (Grand Canyon Parkway at Flamingo Road) called THE RIDE, a premium indoor cycling studio unlike any other in the valley. Cycling studios have been a huge success throughout the U.S., with Las Vegas several years behind. THE RIDE offers an experience that combines stationary indoor cycling, creative choreography, free weights and core strengthening, all set to carefully designed music in a setting that is sure to motivate any fitness enthusiast and even those starting an exercise program for the very first time.

The Ride is the first business venture from partners Shannon McBeath, Mark Cornelsen and Milo Miloscia. Joining the trio is nationally known fitness, health and wellness expert Brandon Mills. Mills is overseeing The Ride's extensive training program and has played a huge part in selecting and their instructors.

"All three of us have been exposed to indoor cycling classes all over the world. We found that most were an intense workout but were lacking fun and attention to detail," Cornelsen said. "When deciding on our studio, we knew we wanted to create a one-of-a-kind fitness experience for Las Vegas because we honestly believe the Las Vegas community deserves it! Then

we spent close to 2 years on research & development and creating a beautiful state-of-the-art studio, selecting the highest quality stationary bikes, hiring and training instructors to help our riders achieve maximum performance, all while having a great time."





Walking into The Ride studio is like stepping into the opening night of a high-end nightclub. In addition to high-tech lighting and sound, this pristine venue includes THE RIDE Theater, shaped in a semi-circle and constructed with curved walls. Inside are three rows of Stages SC3 bikes, ergonomically engineered for simplicity and function, offering quick fit adjusting, a carbon fiber belt to resemble a natural road feel providing a smoother ride, power meters to enable accurate feedback on performance and sprint shift custom resistance to help riders feel in control.

Outside THE RIDE Theater is a lounge and retail area where logo-wear, cycling apparel and grab 'n' go drink items, including cold-pressed juices are sold. The incredibly beautiful locker rooms include lockers with digital locks, changing areas, bathroom, showers with fresh towel service and premium hair and skincare products from MALIN+GOETZ. The acute attention to detail throughout the facility will leave guests refreshed, both physically and mentally.

Beyond the bells and whistles, however, are the inspirational instructors who spent months with Mills being trained on every aspect of indoor cycling and form, to how to create a playlist, inspirational direction, choreography, entertainment and showmanship.

"Classes at THE RIDE are for all fitness levels," Mills said. "The instructors are there to teach the basics to those who have never taken an indoor cycling class, while at the same time motivating and inspiring high-level fitness participants. We've spent a lot of time teaching our instructors every detail to ensure our clients have a great workout, while at the same time having an enormous amount of fun."

For details on class fees, memberships and class schedules, visit www.theridecycling.com. The Ride is located at 4245 Grand Canyon Drive, Suite 116, Las Vegas, Nevada, 89147. For questions, please email info@theridecycling.com.



Photos:



[by Sal Calandra]

Tony Moran drew inspiration from his thirty years in dance music for Moodswings, his new double album of pop anthems. "I've been honored to work with hundreds of talented artists throughout my career," he says. "Singers, songwriters, producers from all musical genres. It's been an amazing spiritual journey that has allowed me to discover how soothing, stimulating, challenging and empowering music can be."

It's why Tony divided Moodswings into two collections — a down-tempo "Feel" set followed by a high-energy "Move" side, reflecting his dual musical styles. "I've always expressed myself through music and I'm proud to have helped people discover their hearts and souls in my music."

The two volume set features 14 original dance songs and 14 original pop, R&B and alternative productions, sung by Tony's favorite vocalists including Martha Wash, Kimberly Davis and Jason Walker.

"So often in today's digital world, artists work remotely," explains Tony from his Jersey City studio. "It's convenient to be able to collaborate with people from all around the world but I prefer face-to-face collaboration, over dinner, in a studio, or any place where the artist and I can look into each other's eyes and connect."

Tony connected in-person with many amazing collaborators on Moodswings, including out musician Matt Zarley and former American Idol judge Kara DioGuardi. He counts them as part of his collaboration bubble that he describes as a mutual admiration

society. "We have a strong belief in each other's talents," Tony explains.

He also enlisted his select stable of vocalists for Moodswings, including Zhana Roiya, a background singer for Mary J Blige, Bette Midler and P. Diddy. On the album, Tony offers Zhana the opportunity to step up to the lead mic in the pulsating and hypnotic single about soaking in pleasure, "Lick Me Up". "She is ready to take the spotlight," Tony confirms.

Jason Walker appears twice on the album; in "So Happy" and "Say Yes", two songs that both reached #1 on Billboard in 2016.

Ryan Shaw sings "Let's Start Again Tonight", Tony's favorite track on Moodswings. "It has a touching story line that applies to how I pursue my personal vision and dreams," Tony explains. "Of course I've had my share of failures and disappointments, but I never let them stop me from starting again and learning as I go."

Tony Moran began his career in Brooklyn where he teamed up with childhood friend Albert Cabrera in the production duo, The Latin Rascals. Their re-edited versions of hit songs spliced together gained major



airplay on New York City radio, bringing them to the attention of acclaimed music producer Arthur Baker. Baker hired The Latin Rascals to remix hits by Diana Ross, Bruce Springsteen and Cyndi Lauper.

Soon after, Tony and Albert were offered a contract with Fever Records to write and produce a song for the label's new act, The Cover Girls. The result was "Show Me", Tony's first top 40 gold record. It helped establish Tony and Albert as leaders of Freestyle, a movement in music that expressed the voice of a new generation of Latinos.

As Tony grew and evolved, so did his ability to produce music that continues to electrify audiences all over the world. Tony has worked with Cher, Rihanna, Michael Jackson, Gloria Estefan, Luther Vandross, Barry Manilow, and Patti Labelle, among others, yielding more than fifty #1 Billboard dance chart hits.

He takes great pride in discovering new talent, too, and is especially thrilled to introduce his latest find, Kimberly Davis, on Moodswings. Kimberly — a talented singer who tours the world as the lead singer of Nile Rodger's group, Chic — appears in six tracks on the album, more than any other vocalist, and is the only one with songs on both the "Feel" and "Move" sets.

"The greatest thing about working with an amazingly gifted independent artist like Kimberly is having the freedom to create something wonderful without the restrictions of a time clock or the worry of a budget,"

says Tony.

"You're Good For Me" featuring Kimberly Davis is scheduled to be the next single release from Moodswings and Tony says it was birthed from pure, spontaneous creativity.

"The entire album has allowed me to explore a wide range of ideas I believe in. I have discovered that whether a song is down-tempo or high energy, the overall theme of all of my music is love. Music is love. No matter what mood a person is in, music has the power to sweep us down to the deepest lows and swing us back up to the highest heights.

"My goal with music and in life is always to end high," he says.

Moodswings is being distributed nationally through Mr. Tan Man Music and globally via The Orchard/Sony. It will be available this month on iTunes and everywhere music is sold. For more information on Tony Moran and Moodswings, visit <http://www.mrtanmanmusic.com>.



TRANS FORMING FASHION



[by Jerry Fleishman]

Now more than ever before, the trans community is enjoying increased visibility in the world. It's no wonder, then, that a fashion industry known for reflecting the sign of the times is undergoing a transition all its own.

The early nineties ushered in the "supermodel" era with Cindy Crawford. Crawford was revolutionary for her day, not only because of the giant mole above her lip, but because her brown hair and eyes stood out in the sea of blonde-haired-blue-eyed Christie Brinkley clones before her.

By the turn of the millennium, however, the skinny-girl waif look had taken over, led by Kate Moss. It wouldn't last. The average-size every-women fought to be represented and soon the plus-sized craze, led by Crystal Renn, was born.

As we near the end of a second decade, a new group of ladies (and men), who have fought long and hard to be seen, are emerging. Transgendered models like Arisce Wanzer began taking over the runways last year. According to industry insiders, girls who charged around \$150 an hour two years ago are now commanding high profile ad shoots at \$10,000 a day. And some, like Wanzer and her transgendered boyfriend, male model Laith Ashley, are even becoming household names.

Are trans fashion models the next trend in fashion or are they simply a passing fad?

"Trans models are not a trend," contends Wanzer.

"We are another check mark for diversity in the fashion industry. We are being celebrated for who we are and the beauty we exude. We are finally being seen as people."

Ren Spriggs, a model with Slay Models, the agency that handles many of the leading trans talent including Wanzer, agrees. She believes the longevity of transgendered models will be due to their ability to transform. "We can be anything from hyper feminine to hyper masculine to androgynous. There are no limits, other than how far society will allow us to go."

She says the past year was a breakthrough one for her and other trans models. "After years of fighting, it feels like we've reached the final frontier. It's such an incredible honor to finally be able to walk the runways alongside the top tier girls."

Isis King, who first gained national attention when she competed on Tyra Banks' America's Next Top Model show in 2008, recently landed her dream job, walking the Betsy Johnson show at New York's Lincoln Center. "Betsy Johnson is one of my design idols. Growing up, I never imagined I would one day walk and be touched/pinned by fashion royalty!"

It's not only the runways that transgendered models



Are Transgender Fashion Models a Trend or Fad?

are dominating. They're landing some of the most coveted print and advertising jobs, too.

In addition to her recent spread in *Vogue Germany*, Arisce Wanzer made history by being the first trans model to grace the cover of the *Spiegel* catalogue.

Model Sabel Gonzales is the new spokeswoman for the I AM VODKA liquor brand. She appears in their latest campaign, "The Price of Being Me". "It was always my dream to become a fashion model," says the former beauty pageant contestant. "The most important thing I've learned from this experience is to have courage and be ready to work for what you hope to achieve. Nothing comes easy."

"Modeling is such a hard and inconsistent job," agrees King.

"You never know what lies in the future," echoes Spriggs, who longs for the day when she sees herself on billboards. In the meantime, though, she's enjoying living and working in sunny Los Angeles.

"I love the weather and the restaurants!" Despite being a model, Spriggs is a self-proclaimed foodie and makes it her mission to try as many new places as she can. Her favorite spot is Tatsu Ramen and her current delicacy of choice are pho burritos.

Wanzer also loves LA for its weather. "I'm a social butterfly who loves her day-time pool parties."

It's not all fun and games, though. The girls recognize they have been given a rare opportunity to spark change in the world. They see themselves as role models for the next generation of transgendered men and women.

"I want to be an inspiration," confirms Gonzales.

"The more transgendered personalities there are in mainstream, the better treatment the trans community will receive," says Ren. "Eventually, we will see full integration."

King loves when fans from America's *Next Top Model* and *Strut*, the Oxygen show about transferred fashion models that she appeared on this fall, approach her on the street. "When I hear things like, 'you saved my life' or 'because of you, I moved to America to pursue modeling', I think...wow, girl, you did it."

"Now, if only I can get my bank account to reflect that success," she adds with a smile.





[by Garrett Pattiani]

WASH EM, FEED-EM, SPOIL-EM

I was at my cousin's wedding when I spotted a guy toward the end of the night, dancing on the dance floor. We wound up chatting and he told me that him and his wife owned a pet shop. I introduced him to my fiancé and we both started sharing pictures of our pooches. He invited me to bring our dogs in to experience their brand new Wag N' Wash natural food & bakery, along with dog grooming services.

About a week later, I brought in my two furry ones. Dallas & Delilah got excited as we walked up to the front. I think they could smell the yummy treats inside. We were greeted at the door by our new friends and owners, Jeremiah and Christie. This Las Vegas location offers self grooming options, but I decided to let the professionals do their thing. I sent them with the on-staff groomer and we continued with the tour of the facility.

Our first stop was the Bakery where we were introduced to Remo's Gourmet Treats™. These delicious dog treats are hand-made, gourmet dog biscuits that are baked fresh. The biscuits are made with only top quality ingredients. Unlike many commercially produced dog treats, Remo's Gourmet Treats™ do not contain artificial flavorings and colors and they do not add any chemicals or preservatives. In fact, you won't find anything in the biscuits that humans wouldn't eat! Remo's Gourmet Treats™ come in a variety of sizes, shapes, and flavors that are sure

to please even the pickiest pooches. Of course, every recipe has been tested and approved by their dogs, but don't take their word for it. Let your own canine critic be the judge. Stop by and grab a few. Heck, they even do doggy birthday cakes! How cool is that?

Next we looked at all the dog accessories and toys. They have everything you can imagine and more. They've got cuddly toys, tough toys, frisbees for indoors and out, fetch toys, tennis ball launchers, durable rubber toys, large balls, small balls, almost indestructible balls, rope toys, talking toys, and on and on and on! They even have "intelligent" and interactive toys that help to keep your pet's curiosity occupied even when you can't.

Then we went to the food section. I explained that Delilah is overweight and that I was looking to help her shed some of those extra pup-pounds. Jeremiah was so awesome. He later sent me a detailed spreadsheet with specific instructions and schedule along with



some new top-quality food. I brought it home and they love it. Every dog is different and has different needs, so I liked that he did all of the work for me. His information and attention to my dog's needs really won me over. I will be scheduling monthly grooming for the dogs. I am so happy that I found this place and hope that you give it a try. Tell them you saw this article in QLife and that you want the "QLife Experience". You will be happy you did!



Dallas & Delilah get pampered at Wag N' Wash!



I'm not a native New Yorker, but I've lived in New York City since 1981. I've lived in most NYC neighborhoods, from the West Village, to Washington Heights; from Kips Bay on the East Side, to Hell's Kitchen, west of the theater district. It's been quite a ride, and regardless of neighborhood, New York's my home!

For the last 17 years, I've resided in the Flatiron District - the area surrounding the famous wedge-shaped Flatiron Building on 23rd street, where Broadway and 5th Avenue intersect. By way of introduction, I thought I'd share some of the local sights, businesses and eateries in my little corner of the city.

Let's start with the area's namesake landmark, the Flatiron Building. Located at 175 Fifth Avenue, this triangular, 22 story steel-framed structure is considered a groundbreaking skyscraper, and when completed in 1902, was one of the tallest buildings in the city. Today, it's a NYC icon and one of the most photographed buildings in the city. Designated a landmark in 1966, its name comes from its resemblance to a cast-iron clothes iron. The strong wind currents around the building's base gave rise to a popular story that men in the early 1900's used to gather at the 23rd street corner to watch the winds lifting ladies' skirts, prompting policemen to hustle the men out of the area, known as "giving 'em the old 23 skidoo!" Currently, there are plans to convert the Flatiron into a luxury hotel.

As you look toward the Empire State Building, to the right is Madison Square Park. The site of the first two

iterations of Madison Square Garden, the park was run down, and a bit dangerous when I first moved to the area. Efforts to renovate the park began in 1986, with the north end completed in 1988. Between 1998 and 2001, funding was finally raised to complete the restoration, and now it's a thriving scene, featuring a popular dog run, a children's playground, twice-yearly art installations, concerts, and the hugely successful Shake Shack. Still, with all that activity, Madison Square Park remains a lovely place to escape the steel and concrete of the city.

West of the park, across Broadway and Fifth Avenue, is Eataly, a huge indoor Italian marketplace, popular with tourists and locals alike. Conceived by an Italian businessman, partnered with Mario Batali, and Linda & Joe Bastianich, Eataly's 50,000 square feet of space features fresh cheeses, produce, seafood, olive oils, breads, pastas, meats, even cooking utensils. In addition, there are mini-restaurants, where you can sample the fare. Eataly has marketplaces across the world, and in 2018, there are plans to open a location on the Las Vegas Strip. The crowds - mostly tourists - can be daunting, so my partner and I tend to go only when we need one or two items, but rest assured,



the quality of the foods is amazing, so I'd certainly recommend it for a specialty product or a quick bite for an open air lunch in the park. Mangia!

Want to look your best? On 21st street, you'll find Barber Bart, a classic barbershop with a modern edge. Barber Bart is the brainchild of Polish-born Bart Trybala, who learned his trade in Krakow, came to the U.S. in 2000, and made a name for himself at Chelsea Barbers, before opening his own establishment in 2004. Appointments can be made online, but you know you're in for an old-school barbershop experience when you see the iconic wooden barber pole out front. Inside, you'll be offered refreshment, sit in \$8,000 chairs with heating and massage elements, and listen to music by well-known jazz artists, while being treated to expert haircutting, straight razor shaves with hot lather and hot towels, and a selection of colognes and pomades to finish off your perfect look. Every time I walk into Barber Bart, the entire staff, including my barber Eddie, and Bart himself, greet me like an old friend. Try Barber Bart and those personal touches will keep you coming back again and again!

Of course, this area has its share of wonderful restaurants - acclaimed fine dining establishments like 11 Madison Park, Gramercy Tavern, and Tom Colicchio's Craft. But I tend to gravitate towards smaller, neighborhood joints. One of the newest additions to the area is Wagamama, one in a chain of popular noodle houses, first opened in the U.K. in 1992, with locations worldwide, including Boston and now the NYC locale on 5th Avenue. I had spotted lines of diners waiting patiently outside in the cold, which was a good omen, so on a damp, rainy afternoon, I went for a late lunch. A narrow, bustling space, the menu featured ramen, dumplings, curries, teppanyaki, and more, with the option to customize nearly everything. The Gyoza were yummy - mine were steamed and filled with minced pork and water chestnut, and the signature Wagamama Ramen - a bowl bursting with noodles,

chicken, pork, prawns, mussels, chikuwa and half a tea-stained egg, ordered with a spicy broth, was tasty and perfect for the chilly weather. For more conventional American fare, try Big Daddy's Diner, a colorful spot with a retro-70's and 80's feel. Serving burgers, fries, hot dogs, all-day breakfast, outrageous milkshakes and other comfort food staples, Big Daddy's is a neighborhood favorite. The decor is classic diner - a long counter with swivel stools, booths with vinyl banquettes, and old neon everywhere. A mural on one wall, features images from the 60's, 70's and 80's - logos from Pan Am, Pac-Man, The Love Boat, TRON, the cover art from Kiss' album Rock and Roll Over, and the old animated character Hong Kong Phooey, among others, while behind the counter, you'll see vintage toys like a Greg Brady bobble-head, lunch boxes a collector would die for, and a white go-go boot emblazoned with a peace sign! I recently lunched there and had their excellent Mac & Cheese appetizer, and the aptly named Big Mac Daddy - their take on the burger from that popular national chain. My friendly server, Selma, insisted I try the Cookie Monster milkshake, loaded with vanilla ice cream and Oreo cookies! Oh, okay! Twist my arm!!

Take some time to explore the Flatiron District. If you're planning a visit, you might stay at the Edition Hotel, a luxury hotel housed inside the landmark Met Life Tower, with fabulous views of Madison Square Park. Check out the Museum Of Sex - a space which preserves art and artifacts detailing the history of human sexuality. Have your make-up done at the MAC Store in the base of the Flatiron Building, or see a cabaret show at The Metropolitan Room, the last nightclub in which I worked, with a lighting system designed by...me!

Make my NYC your NYC!

Photos:



RED ROOSTER HARLEM & GINNY'S SUPPER CLUB

[by Michael Barbieri]

Near the corner of 125th street and Lenox Avenue, you'll find a bustling hot spot where you can dine, drink, enjoy live bands, or experience performances in an intimate downstairs cabaret. Welcome to Red Rooster Harlem and Ginny's Supper Club!

Created by Andrew Chapman and Celebrity Chef Marcus Samuelsson, the aim of Red Rooster, is to elevate and celebrate the historic Harlem neighborhood by hiring from within the area, showcasing local artists, and supporting local purveyors. Named after a legendary speakeasy during the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920's and 30's, this Red Rooster is emblematic of today's Harlem - diverse and inclusive. It's more than just a restaurant, it's a sort of living history lesson.

My partner Vincent and I had been to Red Rooster before, but this time there was more to see, hear and experience - from the front bar, which takes up about half the floor space of the upper level, to the dining area, the entire place was packed for a Monday! To our left as we entered, a live band played R&B hits by Prince, Michael Jackson, and Pharrell Williams, a tall gentleman wearing voodoo skull face paint roamed the bar, and hungry diners waited for their tables while enjoying the entertainment. There was art everywhere: I spied a bookcase filled with old books, toys, and trophies. Vintage dresses, jackets and hats were hung around the room, reminding us of the elegance of days gone by. Shelves behind the bar held pictures in antique frames, vintage lamps, old handbags, and

other tchotchkes, and there was fabulous visual art - gorgeous framed photos by Pontus Hook, and a dazzling painting of Little Richard by Mark Leckey, above the open kitchen.

As crowded as it was, we managed to snag a great table, and we began our evening with cocktails; the spicy, fruity Caribbean Punch for Vincent, while I chose the Yes, Chef - vodka, fresh mint, ginger, honey, pineapple, and a lemon slice garnish, dusted with berbere; a fiery Ethiopian spice blend. Both drinks were refreshing and well balanced, with a touch of heat that prepared us for the meal ahead.

We ordered two of the Snacks: the Cornbread - light, warm, and delicious, with whipped butter and cranberry jam, and the Deviled Eggs - smooth and tangy, on a bed of creamy hummus, each garnished with a morsel of duck salami, which played nicely against the tang of the egg yolk. Our appetizers came next: Vincent had the "Hot" Chicken & Waffle - a crispy half-waffle with juicy fried chicken, topped with a black bean chili syrup, and pickled daikon. While the chicken's crust may have been a tiny bit overdone, it was still very tasty, with a touch of heat from the chili syrup and contrasting acidity from the radish. I went with the Shrimp & Calamari Hot Rice. Resembling a



marriage of shrimp & grits and calamari fried rice, this was stunning! Perfectly cooked heads-on shrimp atop nutty, soy tinged fried rice, with a hint of chili oil, and a ribbon of fermented cabbage, this dish hit all the flavor profiles: sweet, salty, earthy, and spicy, with the cabbage providing a bite of acid. If it were available, a full order would make a fantastic main course!

Speaking of main courses, ours followed soon behind. I opted for the 310 Steak Frites - succulent, coffee rubbed flat-iron steak, paired with a sinfully rich ox marrow pudding, a bright, herbal mustard green cream, and zingy Bermuda onion jam. The coffee rub gave the beef a nice earthiness, while the marrow brought to mind the lovely fattiness of a great foie-gras. I tried to get a bit of everything on each forkful, to create a perfectly balanced bite. Vincent ordered Helga's Meatballs; Ethiopian-born chef Samuelsson's nod to his adoptive Swedish heritage - a tribute to his grandmother Helga. Deliciously light meatballs, made from beef, pork, and veal, sat on a bed of braised cabbage, smothered in a slightly tart sauce made with cream, chicken stock, lingonberry preserves and pickle juice! Paired with buttermilk mashed potatoes, Samuelsson has called this the most popular dish on

his menu. I could see why!

Finally, a subtle, but yummy dessert: the Blueberry Hill - a creamy mix of cardamom custard, blueberries, and a crispy ginger cookie crumble. This was a delectable, yet not too sweet end to a fantastic meal!

One final note: To one side of the dining room, a staircase leads down to Ginny's Supper Club, an intimate cabaret-style venue that's a true throwback to the speakeasies of yesteryear - white tablecloths, elegant banquettes, amber-tinged lighting, and candles on every table, the vibe is captured perfectly. On Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings, you can dine on Marcus Samuelsson's fabulous Red Rooster cuisine, while enjoying music that harkens back to the days of classic jazz and big bands, or stop by on a Sunday for their Gospel Brunch!

We had a wonderful time at Red Rooster Harlem - our servers were friendly and efficient, especially considering how crowded it was, the atmosphere was lively and fun, and the food was fantastic, presenting us with plenty of "wow" moments! So head uptown to Red Rooster and Ginny's Supper Club, and get a taste of old Harlem...and of the new Harlem!





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