

CHILI PRODUCTIONS



**EVENTS
FROM
1985 TO 2001**

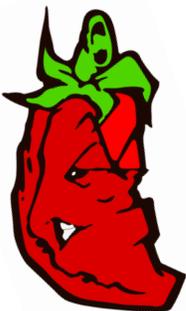
A collection of stories and
timelines with EVENTS

By: Gil Ortega aka CHILI
aka Rick Bliss

MÉMOIR

www.CHILI.us.com/cp

FROM THE EDITOR



Dear Reader,

Welcome to a brief collection of stories that chronicle my journey from 1985 to 2001 during my time operating **CHILI Productions**. What started as a simple project, annotating flyers to give them context, has expanded into this prologue of the stories I will one day tell in more detail. These anecdotes capture the essence of my experiences in the nightlife and entertainment industry, offering glimpses into the vibrant and sometimes chaotic world that shaped my path.

Throughout these stories, you'll notice that I'll be name-dropping like a Hollywood wannabe. For the most part, I was. I often wish I had "selfies" with all the famous people I encountered during this time, but back then, selfies and readily available cameras weren't as fashionable or common as they are today. This collection is intended to give you an insight into the origin story of my artwork. Each story is a stepping stone that led me to discover my passion for art and creativity. As you read through these tales, I hope you find them as entertaining and enlightening as they were for me to live and recount. Enjoy this journey through my memories, and I look forward to sharing more in-depth stories with you in the future.

Sincerely,
Gil Ortega (aka CHILI & Rick Bliss)

I found his bumper sticker as a teenager. It became my life long motto.

I'VE DONE SO MUCH
WITH SO LITTLE FOR SO
LONG, THAT NOW I CAN DO
ANYTHING WITH NOTHING



The Early Years

I grew up in the heart of the countryside on a farm bustling with every farm animal you can imagine and probably a few you can't. This was in a rural little town called Jamul, California, about thirty minutes from downtown San Diego. My dad owned a successful automotive paint & body shop and hit it big, becoming a multimillionaire. So, I had a silver spoon firmly planted in my mouth until I hit thirteen. Then came the plot twist: Dad made some bad real estate investments and lost nearly everything just as I was starting high school.



I ended up at a public high school where most of the student body seemed to have rolled off the set of a Beverly Hills drama, judging by the fleet of European cars in the student parking lot. I was one of a handful of Hispanic kids, and there were even fewer Black students. Diversity wasn't exactly our school's strong suit. Nonetheless, my High School experience was excellent. Some of my teachers were truly great, leaving a lasting impression on me.

1984-1987

In tenth grade, I enrolled in an Entrepreneurship class, though up to that point, I had grand plans of becoming an orthodontist. With no family fortune to fall back on, I was laser-focused on high-earning careers. Unfortunately, I was a terrible student. My grades hovered around a C+, and I barely graduated, relying on some serious begging and a bit of extra credit to scrape by. I suspect I have some form of dyslexia since I constantly invert numbers and have to concentrate intensely to learn new things. Neither of my parents graduated high school, and part of me thought I didn't need to finish either. College? Forget it—I had zero interest.

But then there was Mr. Kraft and his tenth-grade Entrepreneurship class. I'm forever grateful to Mr. Kraft. His class was a game-changer for me, and I feel incredibly lucky to have had the opportunity to take it. My dad had been instilling entrepreneurial lessons in me my whole life through a sort of osmosis. When Mr. Kraft started teaching us about entrepreneurship, all those scattered ideas suddenly came together in a way they never had before.

Tijuana México



Ah, 1985. Tim, Mike, and I were three 15-year-old kids with a grand idea. Tim, fresh off getting his driver's license less than a week prior, suggested, "Let's drive down to Tijuana, Mexico, in my mom's brand-new Toyota Supra." Mike and I, being the wise teenagers we were, thought it was a brilliant idea. Forty-five minutes later, there we were, crossing the southern border into Tijuana, Mexico, where the drinking age was a generous eighteen years old.

We only kind of knew where we were heading. Mike spoke Spanish and asked for directions to Revolution Ave, the hotspot for all the nightclubs and bars. We eventually found Margarita Village, one of the oldest bars on Revolution Ave. My dad had even told stories about this place from when he was a kid. So, we parked across the street and decided to see if we could get served some beers.

We entered Margarita Village, went downstairs, and scoped out the scene. It was half full at best, so we grabbed a table and sat down like we owned the place. The waiter brought us chips, and Mike casually asked for three cervezas with some smooth Spanish small talk. Next thing we knew, we had three brewskies in front of us, and we were on cloud nine.

Before we even finished half our beers, Mike and Tim decided it was time for me to try a Popper shot—a fizzy tequila shot. We'd seen people around us getting them, and it looked like a rite of passage. The waiter smacked the shot glass on the table, making it fizz, then grabbed your head from behind with a towel to stop you from spitting out the shot. He'd load the shot into your mouth, cover the glass and your mouth with the towel, and shake your head like a maniac as the shot went down your throat. The result? Your head spun from the shaking and the fizzy tequila.



The Mind of a 15 Year Old

Tim and Mike were in hysterics as the waiter approached with not one but two Popper shots for me. The whistle ceremony began, signaling that Popper shots were about to go down my throat. The waiter smacked the two shot glasses on the table to start the fizzing, placed his towel over my mouth, and secured my head for the ride. He slid the first Popper shot down my throat, then released me to come up for air before delivering the second.

But then things took a horrifying turn. Tim and Mike's laughter turned to jaw-dropping shock. My head was still spinning when I saw their faces change. They pointed at my face, and I touched my mouth—blood was on my fingertips. The waiter came around from behind me, and I saw blood all over his towel. One of the shot glasses had broken when he smacked it on the table, and the waiter, not realizing, had delivered the Popper shot to my mouth with a broken glass, slicing up my mouth with every shake.

Panic set in. I tried to speak, but it was difficult as I was spitting up shards of glass and blood. I bolted to the bathroom. If you've never been to a men's bathroom in a Tijuana bar, let's just say it's not the most sanitary place. I was spitting shards of glass and blood into the sink, feeling my throat—it felt like it was full of glass, and more was working its way down. I spent about 15 minutes in the bathroom trying to clean my mouth and throat of the glass shards.

I patched myself up as best as I could and went back to my buddies. Talk about a buzz kill. We knew it was time to leave, so we got out of there as fast as possible.

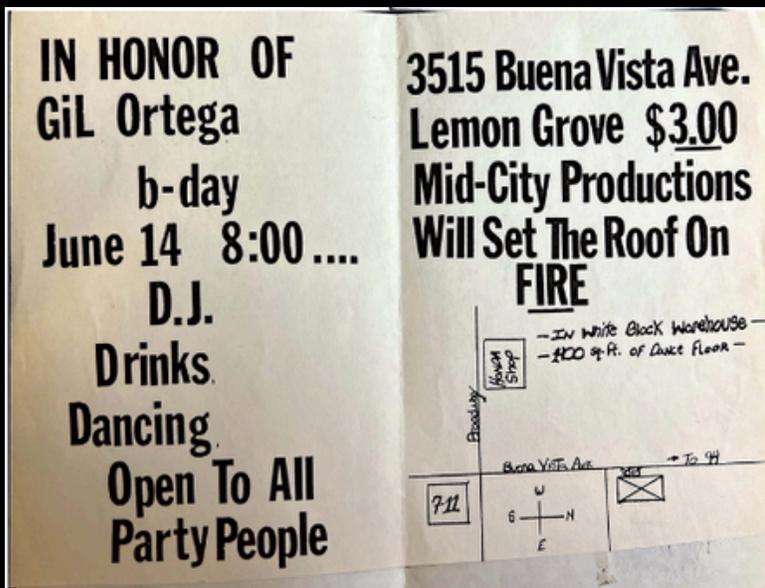
The ride home was agonizing. My mouth looked like Edward Scissorhands had been my dentist, and it was swelling up. I could feel pieces of glass inside me. I had no idea what to do. When I got home, I concocted a story for my parents. I told them I got in a fight at the mall and that the other guy looked worse. There was no way I was going to tell them the truth. For an entire week, I felt the glass in my body. It hurt, but I toughed it out. That one week, I had all kinds of dreams about what I wished to do with my life, seriously thinking I might die. Thank God I didn't.

On the upside, we figured out we could get served in Tijuana. Score!

MY FIRST PARTY



Front & Back



Inside



MID CITY PRODUCTIONS DJs

I was fifteen when I first dipped my toes into party promotion and production. For my sixteenth birthday, my dad generously let me use his paint & body shop warehouse to throw a bash. I wasn't even legally allowed to drive yet. When I got my driver's permit, I snagged a scooter. That little scooter became my ticket to freedom, zipping between nearby high schools to hand out flyers. I knew people from at least four different schools, so I had plenty of invitations to distribute.

Here's the flyer for my very first party—my sixteenth birthday bash. I sold tickets for \$3 a pop. I had top-notch DJs from Mid-City Productions and friends who provided plenty of kegs. To keep things under control, I even hired professional security to deal with the cops when they inevitably showed up. The party lasted all night, and I made a \$2,000 profit. That cash allowed me to buy my first car, a Datsun 280Z 2+2, which I loved.

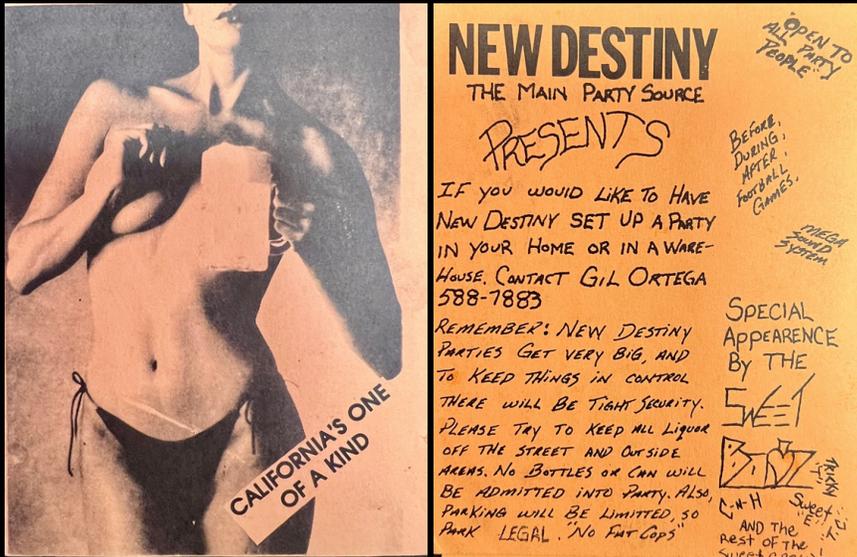
After the party, people kept telling me I should throw another one. I took their advice to heart and started producing parties almost monthly for the next twelve years.

*Happy
birthday!*

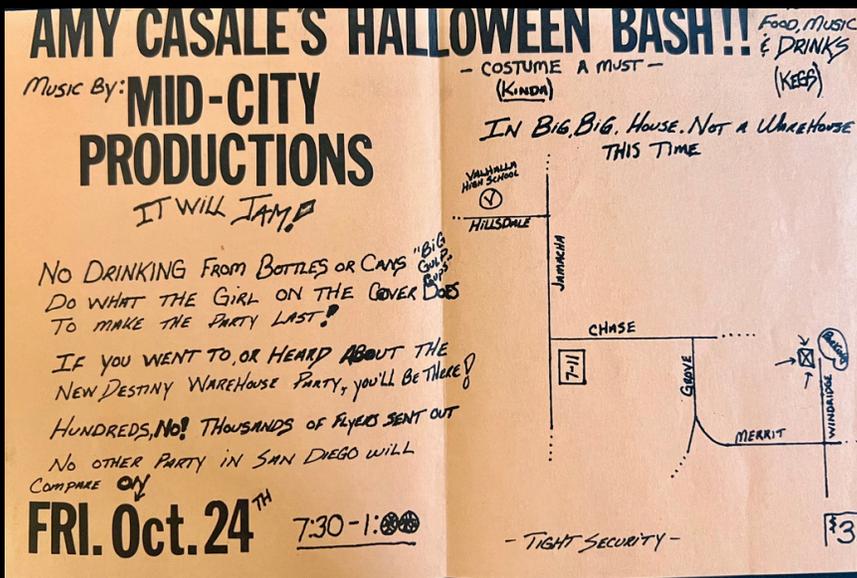
1985

800-1,000 People Attended

PAID TO PARTY



Front & Back



Inside

I can't help but laugh when I read this flyer. I was only 16 years old when Amy's mom hired me to produce a Halloween party at their house. Looking back, I still wonder how I convinced her Mom to hire me. Honestly, I'm not sure I would have hired me at 16!

I came up with the idea to create a company brand called "New Destiny - The Main Party Source." and I boldly advertised that people could hire me to produce their parties. And believe it or not, it worked.

1985

500 People Attended

THE MAIN PARTY SOURCE

After my 16th birthday party, I had a few more under my belt and started getting requests to produce birthday parties for other people. That's when I decided to turn this into a business. I made an "official" flyer and started distributing it at my high school and the other nine high schools in the district. I also began managing DJs and bands, booking them for my parties and others.

One day, my mom got a call from the vice principal of my school. He told her I was handing out party flyers around campus. She responded, "And?" He asked her to get me to stop. My mom said, "Well, it's his business." The call didn't go well for the vice principal after that. My mom was awesome. She always had my back. Love you, Mom.

1985

New Destiny
productions

Promotional Sales Rep
Gil Ortega

THE MAIN PARTY SOURCE

- Professional D.J.'s
- Warehouse Parties
- Laser Light Shows
- New Shuttle Bus Parties
- Professional Security
- Dynamic Rappers
- Professional Flyers
- ? You Tell Us What You Want

Let New Destiny set up your next party in honor of you. For any occasion! New Destiny has produced up to 700 people at one dance party, or as few as 20-100 people in your backyard, in a mini-circus tent. Invitation only or open to all, it's your choice. No matter the size, nor extravagance...New Destiny will provide the style and showmanship to turn your party into a concert.

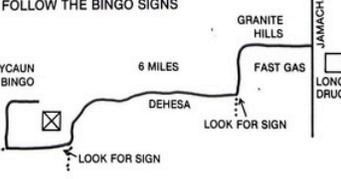
When the weather gets warmer, look for promotional Mission Bay Beach parties, and the "New Destiny Meets Magic Mountain" trip. Also, be on the lookout during Spring Break for New Destiny at the young adult night club, STRATUS

New Destiny
588-7883

BINGO

This party was a game-changer for my business. I rented the bingo hall on the Sycuan Indian Reservation. I went to school with many of the kids who lived there, but I had no idea that an Indian Reservation is considered a nation within a nation, with its own laws. I quickly learned that the cops couldn't break up our party for loud noises, underage drinking, or any other usual reason. This was before Sycuan had built the casino, and the party was wild with over 20 kegs. It made the SDSU frat parties look like tea parties.

My gears started turning. I began thinking about how many other Indian Reservations there were in San Diego.

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| <p>\$3 G U Y S</p> <p>WHY: BECAUSE YOU JUST CAN'T GET ENOUGH!</p> | <p>NEW DESTINY THE MAIN PARTY SOURCE</p> <p><i>PRESENTS</i> THE REQUEST BOYS</p> | <p>\$3 G I R L S</p> <p>GIRLS MEET BOYS. BOYS MEET GIRLS. EVERYBODY MEET THE BASH OF THE YEAR!</p> |
| <p>IF YOU WENT TO, OR HEARD ABOUT THE NEW DESTINY WAREHOUSE PARTY, YOU'LL BE THERE.</p> <p>NOW IT'S IN A BIG HALL, OUT IN MIDDLE OF PARTY LAND.</p> <p>THE Party IS FINALLY HERE</p> |  | <p>HUNDREDS, NO! THOUSANDS OF FLYERS SENT OUT.</p> <p>NO PARTY IN SAN DIEGO WILL COMPARE.</p> <p>OPEN TO ALL PARTY PEOPLE.</p> <p>DON'T LET IT PASS YOU BY... OR YOU'LL HEAR YOU MISSED OUT</p> |
| <p>SPECIAL INVITE 2-U THE PEOPLE WILL MAKE IT JAM</p> | <p>Saturday Dec. 13 8:00 pm</p> <p>FOLLOW THE BINGO SIGNS</p>  <p>SYCAUN BINGO 6 MILES DEHESA GRANITE HILLS FAST GAS JAMACHA LONGS DRUGS</p> | <p>"4"-TAPS OF THE SILVER BULLET NO BOTTLES OR CANS IN PARTY. BRING BIG GULP CUP"</p> |

TO HAVE FLYERS DESIGNED OR TO HAVE NEW DESTINY SET UP A PARTY-588-7883-GIL ORTEGA

1986 / 1,000+ People Attended

BINGO X2

The follow-up party took place on the Barona Indian Reservation. Their bingo hall was much bigger, and this was also before they had a casino. This production featured more lights, a bigger sound system, both bands and DJs, and, of course, more kegs.

I started adding a "Person of Honor" to some of the parties. Sometimes it was for a friend, and other times, I was paid to feature someone as the honoree. These parties were big, wild, and always left people eagerly anticipating the next one.

First 50 people enter free!
--- So come early --- BYOB \$3.00 In Honor of Allison Shaw

New Destiny
productions

Friday, March 6, 1987
Barona's 5000 sq. ft. Bingo Palace
7:30 P.M.

Reservation Times 2

No Cancellation or Breakup Possible
No matter where you live, it's worth the trip.
Bigger & Better
3000 Watt Mega Sound System

Old Bingo Palace
mini-mart
Hillway Rd.
E. Highway
2nd St.
Park Rd.
Easy to Find, and only 10 miles from 7th St.

No Party in San Diego will Compare
Bigger and Better than any other Warehouse Party around.
Never Hold Back Adventures!

New Destiny Productions feels they need to make-up for the rained out party on Friday the 13th. To do so, we bring you not just a party, but an EVENT!

Promotional Sales Rep
Gil Ortega
588-7883

Party Bingo Palace

1987 / 1,500+ People Attended

BEACH BASH+

I regularly produced beach parties while I was in high school. They were not money-making events, but they kept the party-going get-togethers fresh in everyone's schedule until we could secure a venue for the next big event.

We often rented motel or hotel rooms for private parties, packing as many people as possible into a small room or suite.

Go hunting this weekend. *Belus's Sat. P. Bash!*

Forward march
Calling Dr. Clean

SOCIAL

DOUBLE DECKER

QUIET ZONE

HIGH STYLE

South Mission, turn left go to the end, look for cuts.

Mission Beach
Bay Side Bash II
Friday 8, 1987
8:00 - *B.Y.O.?*

Big Bon Bong Fire
Chili Productions *Brooklyn*

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Smoking By Pregnant Women May Result in Fetal Injury, Premature Birth, And Low Birth Weight.

arty

Mission Beach Bay Side II
8:00-11:30 Friday

LAW STREET
AFIRE HOURS
CHILI PRODUCTIONS
"BEAR" PARTY
B.Y.O.?

NIGHTMARE OUT

OF INFERNAL TALK

Share new adventures!

More and more people across the board are getting involved.

Liquid cooling
WINDMILLING, BEERMAKING, ETC.
SCIENCE & CHEMISTRY
TEBACCO
HERBS

WHISKEY, GIRL, VOOKA MAKING.

SHORE & PIPE
PIPE & TONIC

Lip service

Instant haircut

LIPMAKING
TONGUE HEAVEN

I'll TAKE A BOUL, PLEASE.

POW!

AN' AFTER THAT YOU CAN ALWAYS BLAME IT ON THE BOOZE

Why did God invent booze?
So that fat, ugly girls could have a chance to get laid, too.

Never Hold Back ADVENTURES

I'M NOT EVEN GOING TO WAIT FOR SUMMER...

I CAN SEE ME NOW 'WAY UP THERE ABOVE THE CLOUDS...

MY TEETH ARE TINGLING AGAIN...

I HAD A LOT OF FUN, THOUGH

Never Hold Back ADVENTURES

BEACH PARTY PART II

TURN LEFT AT JACK-N-BOX GO TO THE END OF MISSION DON'T TURN RIGHT TURN LEFT.

STARTS ABOUT 8:00 P.M. - 9 P. BEFORE FINISHING AND AFTER THE GAME - LOOK OVER THE GAMES AT THE BARBECUE

FLY DO WOMEN HAVE TWO HOLES?
So that when they're drunk, you can carry

What's a Cinderella 10?
A woman who sucks and fucks off at the same time

ENDLESS SUMMER

BEACH PARTY PART II

TURN LEFT AT JACK-N-BOX GO TO THE END OF MISSION DON'T TURN RIGHT TURN LEFT.

STARTS ABOUT 8:00 P.M. - 9 P. BEFORE FINISHING AND AFTER THE GAME - LOOK OVER THE GAMES AT THE BARBECUE

PARTY

Never Hold Back

ADVENTURES

HOT TIMES AT THE BEACH

mission bay side

big bon bong FIRE

BE THERE

B.Y.O.?

SEA WALS

PRODUCED BY: GIL ORTEGA

NEW DESTINY
THE MULTIMEDIA SOURCE

1986-1987 / 40-300 People Attended

STRATUS



My first foray into the nightclub scene was during Spring Break. I was 17 years old and in my senior year of high school. Up until then, I'd been orchestrating numerous booze-fueled parties. Like many other teens, I'd been making the pilgrimage to Tijuana, Mexico, to party since I was 15.

It was at this club, Stratus, where I got the opportunity to see B.A.D. Big Audio Dynamite at the age of 15. I was in the front row of the stage because I knew the owner, Sam, and was let in early. I had never been in the middle of a mosh pit. It was wild, and I ended up getting my ribs cracked during this experience. It was worth it to see such an incredible show.

Stratus was a teen nightclub with no alcohol. I knew I wanted to break into the nightclub business, and I figured starting with a teen club was a good way to get my feet wet. I wanted to produce my first nightclub. It was a gamble, to say the least. I remember meeting with the owner, Sam B., and presenting my growing portfolio of party flyers. I managed to negotiate a Thursday night slot with a split-of-the-door admission. Prime nights? Forget about it. I got a Thursday night, and I packed the place.

Sam was a good guy. I learned a ton from working with him. It was a night to remember and a significant step on my journey into the nightlife industry. My Stratus club event was the catalyst that got the ball rolling. It became my passion for more than a decade-long journey of promoting and running events. Looking back, it was a crucial learning experience that set the stage for everything that followed.

1987 / 500 People Attended

THE CHILI BRAND

During my senior year of high school, I started a clothing line, **CHILI Sportswear** and **Surfwear**, along with a line of surfboards called **CHILI Hot Styx**. Inspired by a friend's Wet Dreams line and our connections with the guys at Life's a Beach, we figured, "Why not us?" I partnered with David Coons, a talented surfboard shaper who moonlighted as a ghost shaper for Peter Benjamin of T&C Surf Designs. Coons was also a stock market whiz and later became a successful hedge fund manager. Looking back, I wish I had followed his stock advice.

We operated our clothing and surfboard business for three years, and it was a great learning experience. Getting orders wasn't the problem; it was having the cash to fill them, with a net 30 days turning into a net 90 days. Invoice factoring was nearly impossible to come by. We constantly needed cash and **discovered we could generate it by throwing parties sponsored by our clothing brands**.

Working with Coons exposed me to the art of using resin and shaping tools. I always asked him about the possibility of making surfboard-like artwork to hang on the wall. That idea stuck with me and fueled my artistic imagination. Coons even got hired to work on the Batmobile for the Michael Keaton movie, and I had the chance to help out in the garage sanding. I had done tons of that type of work in my dad's paint & body shop.

As our clothing brand aspirations wound down, I had the idea of licensing my character, the **CHILIMAN**. While researching the T&C Surf characters, I discovered that a surfing legend, Gary Propper, owned the rights to T&C's surf characters. He was also the manager of comedians like Gallagher and Carrot Top. He was also an old-school concert promoter and owned the rights to the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles franchise (the first movie hadn't come out yet). I hunted down his contact information and cold-called him to pitch the idea of him buying the rights to **CHILIMAN**.

To my surprise, he took my call and was interested. He invited me to meet him at The Forum in Los Angeles before a Gallagher show. Armed with my portfolio of The CHILIMAN, I pitched my vision. He was gracious but ultimately declined my offer. However, he shared his plans for the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles movies. I stayed for the show, and we kept in touch. He always offered great advice and insights whenever I called.



1987-1991

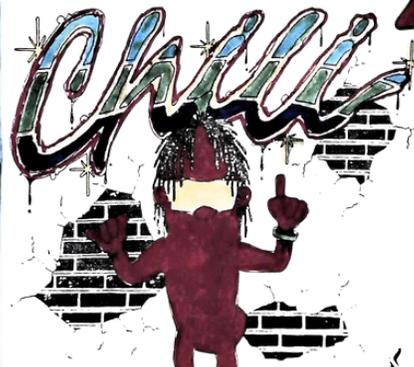
CHILI
Hot Styx



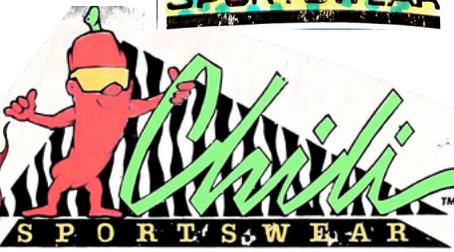
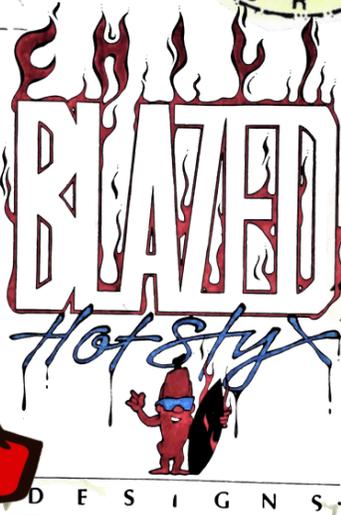
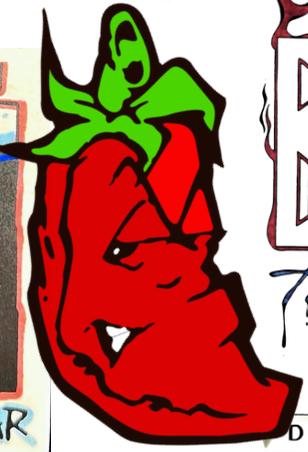
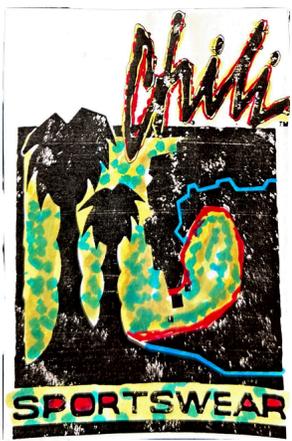
BLAZED



Chili SPORTSWEAR



CHILI



Hot Styx
BY CHILI



FLIP SIDE

My Flip Side series of parties ran for about a year, and what a year it was. These events mostly took place on Saturdays inside luxurious hotel ballrooms. I discovered that large hotels would let us host parties in their ballrooms without charging a rental fee. All we had to do was cover a minimum bar spend, which was usually something ridiculously small, like \$4,000. It blew my mind how easy it was. We'd produce a party with top-notch entertainment in a fantastic location that could hold 2,000 people and could keep the cover charge for admission. Plus, we could have 18+ age groups with a wristband to drink for 21+. **It was a sweet deal.**

Almost every large hotel ballroom in San Diego eventually became one of our party venues. At 21, I created a new party brand and started my first 21+ weekly nightclub. I was on a roll.

Cross-promotion became our leverage point. We'd pass out flyers at one event to promote the next one. This was all pre-email and social media days, so we had everyone sign up for our phone list. I would personally call everyone on that list and invite them to the party. It was a personalized touchpoint, and it worked.

The goal was to fund our clothing brands during this time in my life. It was all about keeping the momentum going and ensuring we always had a full house. This was the first time I started draping the walls with art murals. I hired artists at first. Then started painting them myself.

* FRIDAY, JANUARY 4, 1991

FLIP SIDE AND **CLASS ACT**
PRESENT

JUST LARGE PARTIES

\$5

7 FULL BARS
9pm-2am

18-UP

HOUSE FX BY **IMPULSE**

LA JOLLA **Marriott**

@ THE LA JOLLA MARRIOTT
EST. 800-1500 BODS • THE GRAND BALLROOM

FLIP SIDE
ADMIT ONE

- ★ NO COVER
- ★ NO WAITING
- ★ Please surrender to host upon entering

V.I.P. PASS

NEAR SDSU • NOT IN P.B.

FLIP SIDE PRODUCTIONS

Mr. Whipple's
A BRAND NEW FUNK
EVERY WEDNESDAY

Leave your world behind and join us in ours at the *Old Cafe Vid*. Doors open at 8:00 p.m. • 21+ • \$4 at the door
7353 EL CAJON BOULEVARD
For information 688-6278 • 460-6755

Guest Dj Butchie B.
Plus Cameo Appearance by **LAKEWOOD 53**

\$1 DRINKS
DRINKS
DRINKS

FREE ADMISSION W/ AD

FLIP SIDE

FRIDAY NOV. 16, 1990
MISSION VALLEY MARRIOTT
RIO VISTA BALLROOM
9:00 P.M. TO 1:30 A.M.
6 BARS • 5 BONES • 18 & UP

*** FEATURING ***

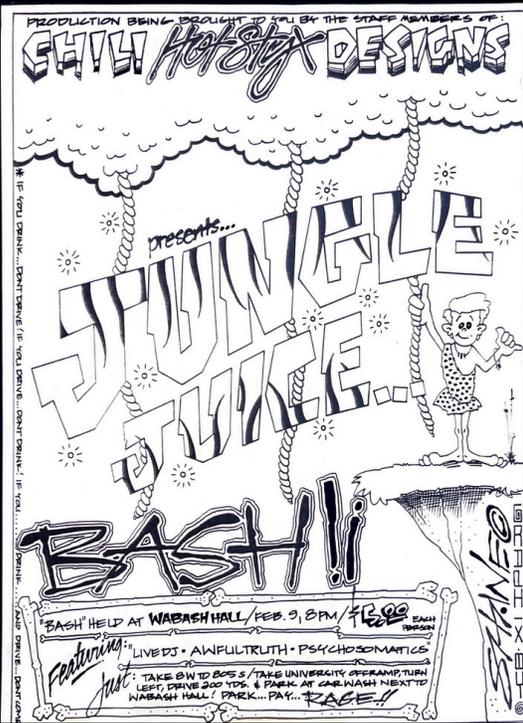
THE MARRIED
THE BEST IN VINYL EFFECT BY
SCOTT MARTIN

Coons
CUSTOM T-SHIRTS

THE CREATORS OF
WAREHOUSE, INDIAN RES., WABASH, 4 U!

1990-1991 / 500-1,500 People Attended

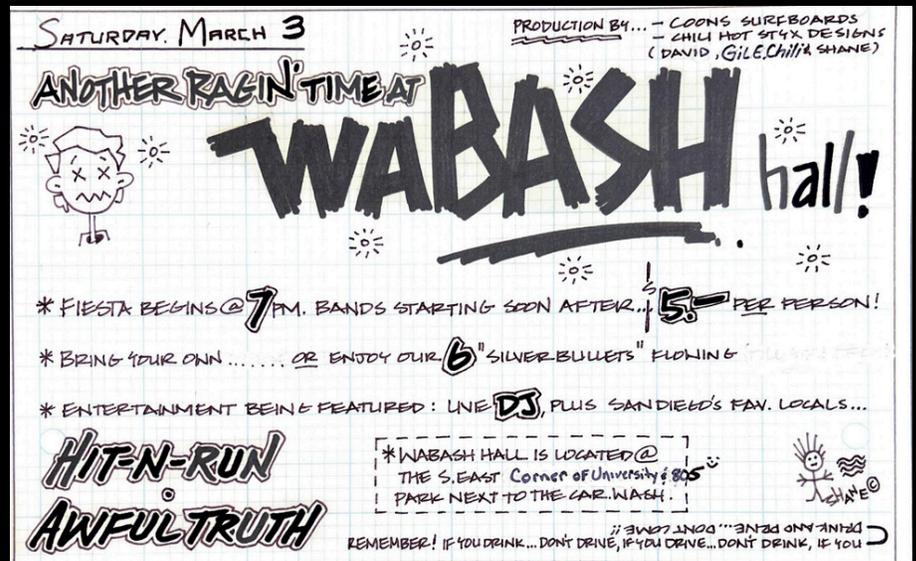
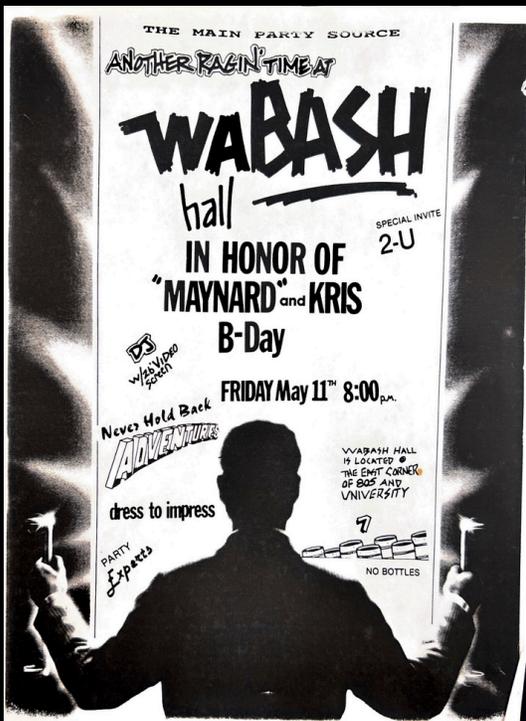
WABASH



Wabash Hall was notorious for punk shows and smack dab in a not-so-great neighborhood. The place could hold up to 700 people, and I lost count of how many parties we produced there. These events were the first time I started using my CHILI brand as the party production name instead of my clothing line.

Our relationship with the big hotel ballroom managers stayed solid for several years, even though they understandably didn't want thousands of young adults with questionable behavior flooding their properties. Sometimes, keeping things under control was a real challenge. When we couldn't secure one of the fancy ballrooms, Wabash Hall became our go-to fallback venue.

Looking back, those Wabash Hall parties were wild and gritty but essential to my journey. They taught me how to adapt, roll with the punches, and keep the party going.



1989-1990 / 700++ People Attended

SUPERCROSS

I produced three annual Supercross After Parties, and let me tell you, those were some epic events. Every year, when the Supercross came to Jack Murphy Stadium, I'd host the after-party at one of the nearby hotel ballrooms. Most of the big-name riders would show up, which added a whole vibe to the event for the riders' fans.

Growing up riding dirt bikes in Jamul, California, I had a front-row seat to watch some of the best riders train on the tracks near my house. As a kid, from about 11 to 13 years old, I'd do my best to keep up, trailing in their dust.

Hosting these after-parties was like combining my childhood passion for motocross with my knack for throwing epic events. It was a blast creating those events and getting paid to do it.

**SUPERCROSS
AFTER PARTY**

SATURDAY FEB. 9, 1991

**THE RADISON BALLROOM
IN MISSION VALLEY**

10 P.M. - 2A.M.
5 BARS • \$5 • 18+

☆☆☆ FEATURING ☆☆☆

**THE AWFUL TRUTH
STAR ENTERTAINMENT
AND A
DEE-LIGHTFUL VIDEO EXPERIENCE**

BROUGHT 2 U BY
EPIC MANAGEMENT
AND

FOR MORE INFO, CALL (619) 688-6278

1990-1992 / 1,000-1,500 People Attended

SURGE

My SURGE series of parties ran for about two years. We'd take over a luxurious hotel ballroom, transforming it into the hottest spot in town. The energy was always electric, and the atmosphere was unmatched.

SURGE

One Night Special Event

The *Summer Blow Bash*
SURGE (serj) to rise or swell
with great force (oo-baby)
FRIDAY JULY 26

9pm till 2am @ the RED LION HOTEL



Grooves By :all for one &
Butchie B., GREY BOY, E STAR
DAZZLING SYNCRO SLIDES of
all the HoUsE & FUNK you can suck down.

secured parking, 6 full bars.

18 + \$3 b4 10:00 -oooooh!

caged flesh deceptions

fat drink specials all night

as funky as you sweatdogs like it

•bubblelicious•

*8-mission center rd-left on
hazard ctr. dr.- n the huge ballroom.

hosted by: R.B., JBE, CHILI, & ROY

the creators of the WABASH, INDIAN RES.
KONA KAI, WAREHOUSE, HOLIDAY INN, RADISON
and MARRIOT EXPERIENCES.

EXSPECT a FOUR FIGURE turn out.

INFO. 698-9053 NICHOLAS L. + R.

SURGE

Shmoozatorium

SATURDAY
August 3rd, 1991

The La Jolla Marriott
BALLROOM

The Horses are on the Track
save this invite for \$2 off b4 ten

Guest DJ Butchie B.

INFO: 698-9053

surge II

(serj'), verb: to rise or swell
with great force. (ooh, baby!)

FRIDAY MAY. 8, 1992

at the
MISSION VALLEY HILTON HOTEL
(FORMERLY DOUBLETREE)
In the Luxurious, Grand Ballroom

HOSTS:

CHILI FLICK
PRODUCTIONS

REG 3-STYLE ATTRACTIONS

STEVEN FLEX
X - RAY
DJ STYLE

guest appearance by:
DJ JAM

all the...
HIP-HOP
HOUSE
TEKNO
FUNK
you sweat hogs
can suck down!

18+UP
FULL
BAR!!

from the creators of
SHAZAM
JAMAICA HOUSE
THE BIRTH OF BABY X

INFO.LINE:
492-8087

(SECURED PARKING)

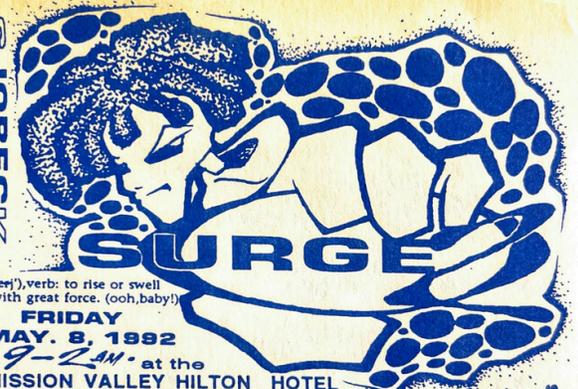
win the good for
additional guest
reduced price

without

and live performance by
THE GROOVIES

UNITED SPICE NETWORK PROMOTIONS

JOBECK



(serj'), verb: to rise or swell
with great force. (ooh, baby!)

FRIDAY
MAY. 8, 1992

9-2AM at the
MISSION VALLEY HILTON HOTEL
(FORMERLY DOUBLETREE)
In the Luxurious, Grand Ballroom

all the...
HIP-HOP
HOUSE
TEKNO
FUNK
you sweat hogs
can suck down!

\$7

win the good for 3
additional guest at
reduced price

\$10

without

STEVEN FLEX
DJ STYLE
X - RAY

guest appearance by:
DJ JAM

and live performance by
THE GROOVIES

from the creators of
SHAZAM
JAMAICA HOUSE S.D.
THE BIRTH OF BABY X

HOSTS:
CHILI FLICK
PRODUCTIONS

3-STYLE
ATTRACTIONS
FLICK

18 + UP
FULL BAR w/ID

INFO.LINE:
492-8087
(SECURED PARKING)

FAT DRINK SPECIALS



SATURDAY AUGUST 3rd



La Jolla Marriott
Ballroom

SURGE

FRIDAY AUGUST 23rd, 1991
9 PM - 2 AM
at the
Kona Kai Hotel
in the Grand Ballroom
1901 Shelter Island Dr.
(By Humphery's)

Bubblelicious **Benji Lee**

Grooves By: **Butchie B**

Surge: (Serj) verb: to rise or
swell with great force

18 n' up

INFO:
698-9053

1990-1992 / 1,000-2,000 People Attended

SWIRL



SWIRL was the second weekly 21+ nightclub I produced, and I was barely 21 years old myself. The club, located near SDSU College, rocked every Thursday night. I dove headfirst into the 21+ nightclub biz, learning the ropes quickly and loving every minute. The energy was infectious, and the experience was invaluable. At this nightclub, I met Darryl "Flick" Blount and Branden Powers. We became fast friends and future business partners, setting the stage for many more adventures. Dave McKinnon of FelixLighting.com did our lighting; it was his first event. He's still killing it decades later. Side note: Eddie Vedder of the famed band Pearl Jam was a bartender at this club Winters/SWIRL.

THURSDAYS | **WINTERS**

5880 El Cajon Blvd. 582-1813

THE WORLD OF SWIRL
IN THE 3rd DIMENSION

FROM 8PM - 11PM

SPIN THE DRINK DEAL WHEELS

SEX ON THE BEACH
SKREW DRIVERS
LONG ISLANDS
TOM COLLINS
FUZZY NAVELS
RUM & COKE

CHANGES EVERY 20 MINUTES!

1.50 90¢ 75¢

AFTER 11PM

JAEGERMEISTER SHOTS 1.25
KAMIZ 1.00
ALL NIGHT LONG
LONG NECKS 1.25
DRAFTS (L.G.) .80

UPSTAIRS
For Your Mind, Body, & Soul we offer U

That Girl DJ
FROM PLAYSCOOOL

21 & UP w/ID
doors open @ 8PM
just because...

\$3.00 B4 10PM

Brought 2U by Chili, Ibe, & Dave.
Special Thanks to Flick

CALL STATIK LINE FOR INFO. 465-9179

ABSOLUTE ELABORATE LIGHTING FX

SWIRL
5880 El Cajon Blvd. 582-1813

THURSDAYS at WINTERS

ALL NIGHT Drafts \$1
AFTER 11PM Longnecks \$1.25
Kamiz \$1
Jagermeister shots \$1.25

Sex on the Beach
Skrew Drivers
Long Islands
Tom Collins
Fuzzy Navels
Rum & Coke

\$3 B4 10PM

FROM 8PM - 11PM

20 Min. Drink Specials Change Every 20 Min.
\$1.50 \$1.00 \$1.25 \$1.00

GROVES BY: ALL FOR ONE
JUICE BY: FLICK
Brought 2U By Chili, Ibe, & Dave

1990 / 300-400 People Attended

CHILI ORIGIN

In 1982, I was in a middle school classroom when a substitute teacher, who didn't know me, was doing roll call. He said my last name, "Ortega," and the nickname CHILI was born. When I said, "Here," the teacher looked at me and said, "Ortega, like the chili?" I said, "Yeah." From then on, kids—mainly friends—started calling me CHILI.

Later, in high school, when I launched my CHILI clothing brand, even more people associated me with the nickname, and most of my friends called me CHILI.

In 1991, my friend Darryl "Flick" Blount suggested I should focus all my future event branding on CHILI. We started promoting events together, and by 1992, we became known as CHILI & FLICK Productions. Our slogan was "We bring good things to life," and we tried to bite the GE logo with CF.



Around 1991, I realized I was making way more money and having way more fun producing parties, concerts, and clubs. The clothing business was out, and we were giving away t-shirts for free. Flick was right—CHILI became the natural brand for my events business.

To this day, I'll randomly run into someone who only knows me by the nickname CHILI. CHILI or Rick Bliss. My wife gets a big kick when people address her as Mrs. Bliss at my art events.

Take a look at my business card from 1992—see how early I was with the whole "CREATOR" thing. Some trends take time. LOL.



BIRTH OF BABY X

The Birth of Baby X was San Diego's first large-scale rave festival, a groundbreaking event that set the stage for the rave scene in the area. Held in Rosarito, Mexico, on a polo field right next to the beach, it was unlike anything that had come before. I didn't produce this event—my friends Branden Powers and Nicholas “Nick Nak” Luckinbill did—but I was hired to promote it and put my name on the flyer. Branden and Nick were from LA and Nor Cal and had never produced an event in San Diego. Bringing me on board guaranteed the promotional clout needed to make it a success.

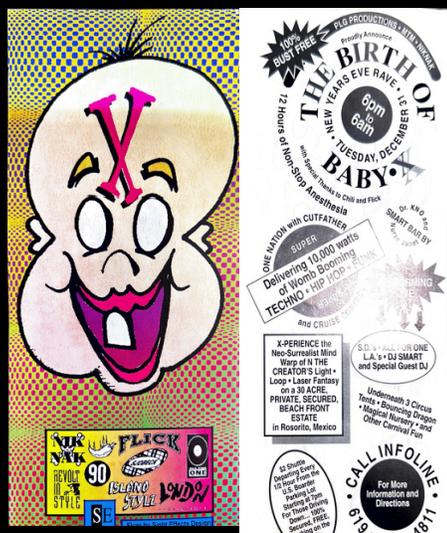
And it was a huge success. We bused huge crowds from San Diego to Rosarito, and the entrance was nothing short of spectacular: a large foam crotch between two legs leading into a tunnel of love fashioned as a fallopian tube. People entered the event to emerge "reborn"—the Birth of Baby X.

The party featured multiple stages, including techno, hip-hop, and bands. It was a massive hit and kickstarted the underground rave scene in San Diego. Rumors even swirled that Perry Farrell was there, who later that year produced Lollapalooza.

Some serious players in Mexico's underworld owned the polo field where the event occurred. The field was owned by Pietro La Greca Jr.'s family, and we worked directly with Pietro, who was our age. We had no idea about his family's connections; we knew they were wealthy. In 2022, Pietro La Greca Jr. published "Pesos: The Rise and Fall of a Border Family," revealing that his father, Pietro La Greca Sr., was dubbed "Mexico's real-life Don Corleone."

Unbeknownst to us at the time, this event opened up some darker paths in the underworld, which I'll cover later.

I went on to produce several significant events with Branden and Nick. These guys are next-level when it comes to imagining wild and crazy adventures for parties. Today, Branden Powers creates restaurants, bars, and experiences in Las Vegas, including the well-known Golden Tiki and Evil Pie. Nick Luckinbill is the Vice President of Brand Strategy at Insomniac Events, which produces some of the biggest electronic dance music festivals in the world, like Electric Daisy Carnival (EDC), Beyond Wonderland, Nocturnal Wonderland, and Escape: Psycho Circus, plus many many more.



Branden



Nick

1991 / 2,000 People Attended

HIP HOP

**CHILI
&
FLICK**

In 1982, I was in 7th grade, just starting my journey into breakdancing, and I got pretty good at it. Back in the early to mid-80s, a concert tour known as Fresh Fest rolled through San Diego a few times, showcasing the pinnacle of Hip Hop at the time. Access to information about Hip Hop was limited to underground sources; it wasn't mainstream. Growing up in the countryside of Jamul, California, it wasn't like John Denver was breakdancing. And I love JD; I am a country boy.

However, I had a good friend, Mike Arias, who moved from LA. He exposed me to elaborate house party flyers, productions, Hip Hop mixtapes, and breakdancing. Fresh Fest brought not only the biggest Hip Hop groups to perform but also the best breakdancers in the world. The Rock Steady Crew, along with the legendary Crazy Legs himself, were there. In the hallways of the San Diego Sports Arena, I saw some of the best breakdancing battles ever. Better yet, I got to go center stage and show off my skills. I'll remember it for the rest of my life. The little kid version of me battling the legendary Rock Steady Crew will forever be one of the most epic experiences of my life.

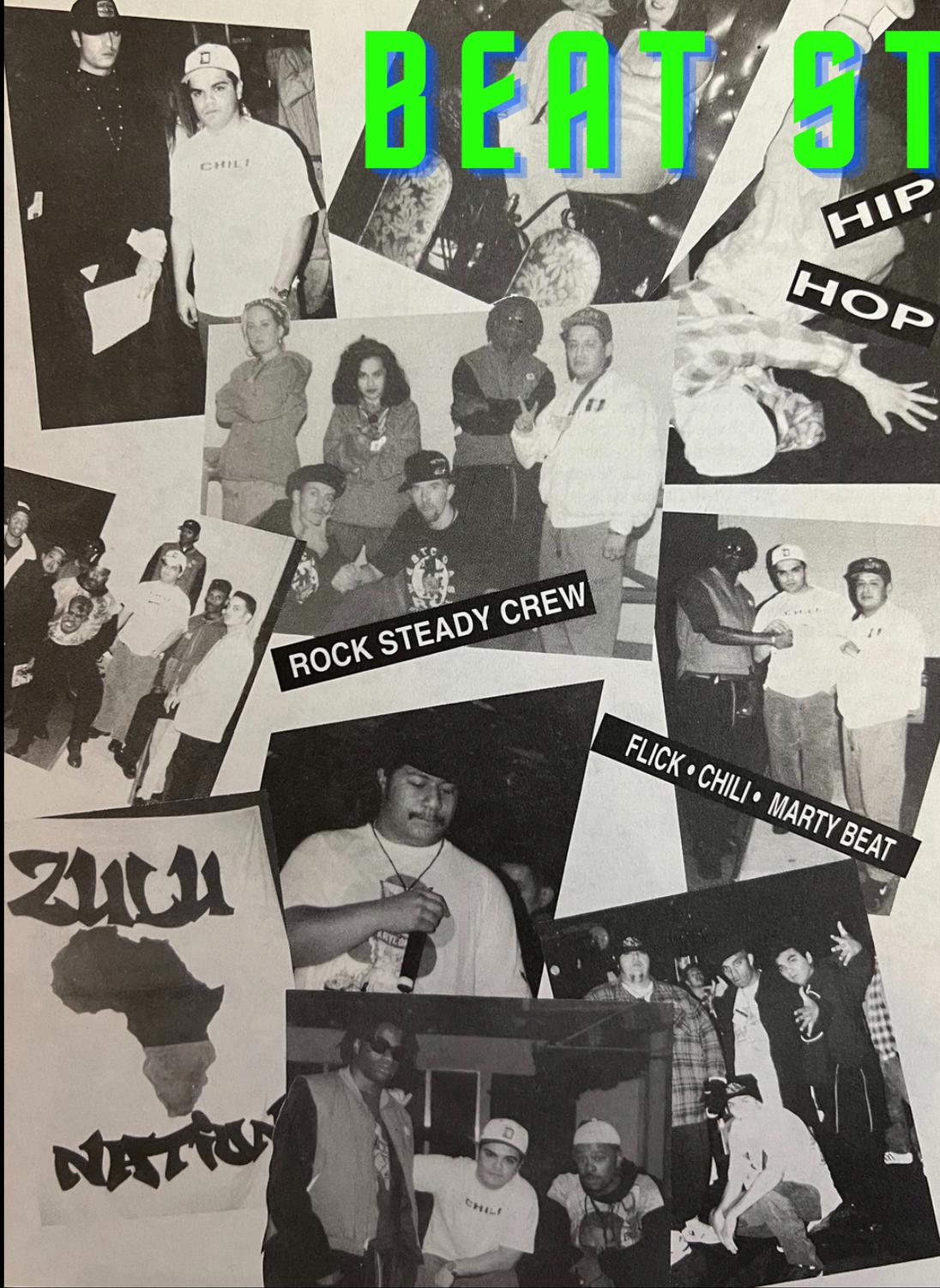
FLICK

CHILI



Early 80's - Mid 90's

BEAT STREET Magazine



Oh, I forgot to mention that I got crushed and demolished in the battle, but it didn't matter. *I was there doing it and doing it well.*

Later, in the early 90s, I became the leading Hip-Hop promoter in San Diego. If it was Hip-Hop in San Diego, I probably had a connection to it at that time. I tell you this story because I had the opportunity to co-found the San Diego Chapter of the Universal Zulu Nation with my business partner, Darryl "Flick" Blount. RIP, Flick. Props to you; it was your idea.

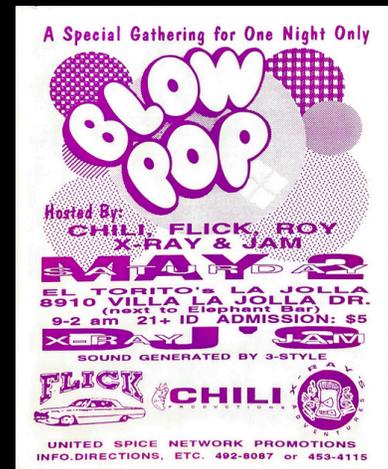
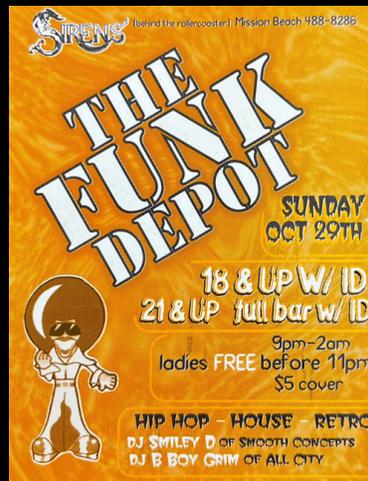
Recently, we celebrated Hip-Hop's 50th anniversary in the same year I'm turning 55. Many of the friends pictured here are no longer with us, but it's nice to remember so many good times from the past.

Early 1990's

RANDOM EVENTS

Special one-night events always required a ton of work to promote. We didn't have email addresses back in the day. At best, we had to snail mail our flyers, which wasn't always effective since our young audience constantly moved. Calling the list helped, but it was still a challenge.

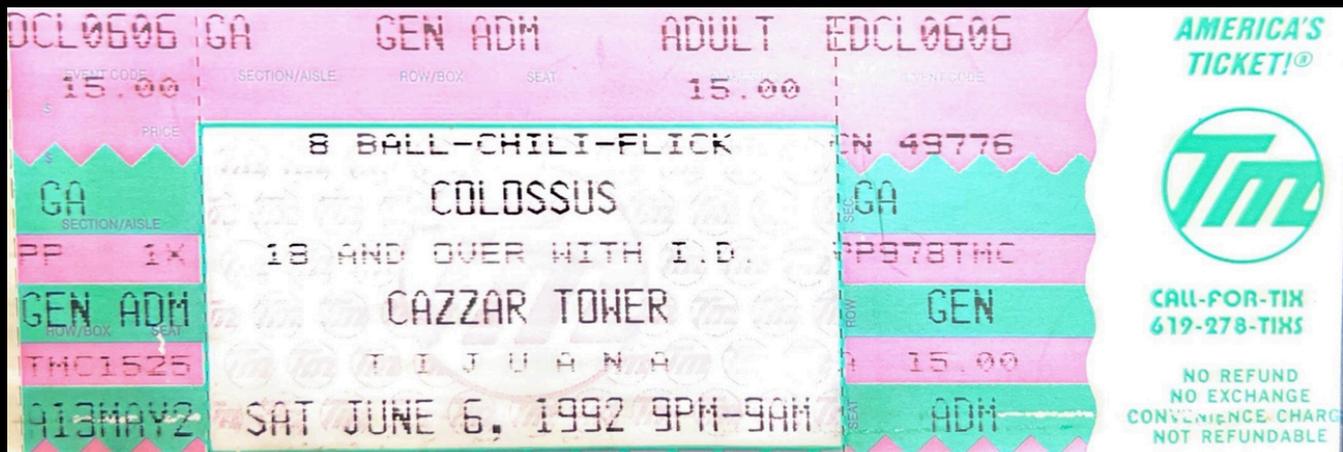
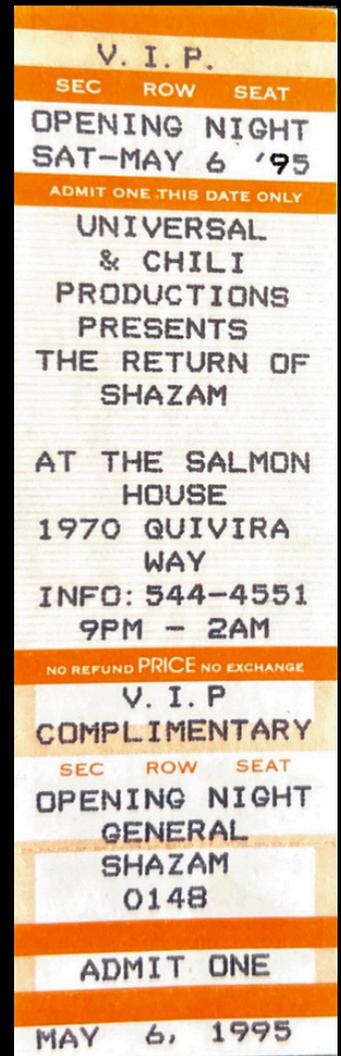
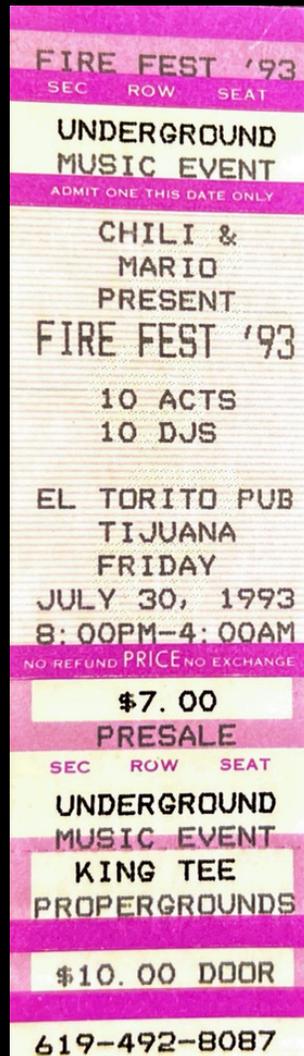
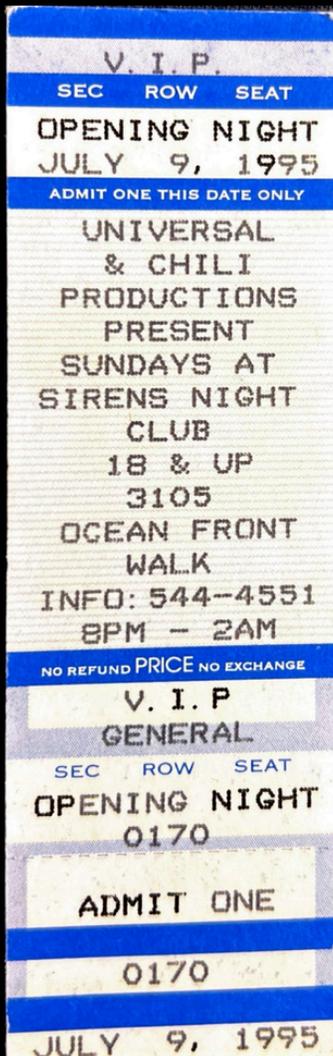
My job was to be out on the town, at clubs and events, seven nights a week, hustling, spreading the word, and supporting other promoters' events. It was all about making those personal connections and ensuring everyone knew where the next big event was happening. It was a lot of legwork, but it paid off in creating solid events.



1992-1993 / 500-1,000 People Attended

THE TICKET

Sometimes, we'd use these tickets as promotional flyers. They were cheap to print, and people felt like they should go since they had VIP tickets. Other times, we'd use them as real tickets so people couldn't tell the difference between a regular ticket and a promo. We only ever used TicketMaster one time for a large event.



1992-1995

JAMAICA HOUSE

JAMAICA HOUSE: Bringing LA's Premier Hip-Hop Club to San Diego

JAMAICA HOUSE was the premier Hip-Hop club in Los Angeles. My promotion partner, Flick, and I would drive up from San Diego at least monthly, sometimes weekly, to hang out at JAMAICA HOUSE. We got to know the owners, Howard and David, and we worked out a deal to bring JAMAICA HOUSE to San Diego for a mid-week, weekly club. This was the first weekly Hip-Hop club in San Diego, with national artists performing every week. The club ran for about six months.

This particular series of clubs was groundbreaking because we had national recording artists every week. That kind of thing was new to San Diego. This was also when I started promoting records for major and indie record labels.

Bringing JAMAICA HOUSE to San Diego was a great experience. It introduced the local scene to high-caliber Hip-Hop acts and solidified our reputation as innovative promoters who could deliver top-tier entertainment. The energy and excitement that JAMAICA HOUSE brought to San Diego were unmatched, and it set the stage for many more successful ventures in the Hip-Hop record industry. **JAMacia House Movie:** https://youtu.be/obs7R4QYxzs?si=tmpQfB6jVLhT_oMy

Howard Lynch & David Ferguson of
4 Play Entertainment L.A. presents

JAMAICA House

in San Diego
May 7, 1992

featuring live performances by
Ruthless Record recording artists
ABOVE THE LAW
W/ KOKANE
&
Island/4 & Broadway recording artist
THE FUNKYTOWN PROS

also featuring
D.J. Alywod of JAMAICA House L.A.
D.J. Jam of S.D.
D.J. General Lee of L.A.
D.J. Johnny of All for 1 S.D.
in association with



hosted by
Colin Sutton, D.J. Jam, Eric Etabari,
Darrel Blount, Gil, Al-G, & Tai Campbell

admission \$6 w/ invite & \$7 w/ out
drink specials - \$1 draft beer & \$2 rum drinks
also free record & tape giveaways
4 info: (619) 685-7470
(213) 290-1822

Howard Lynch & David Ferguson of
4 Play Entertainment L.A.™ presents

JAMAICA House™

in San Diego
Thursday, June 4, 1992

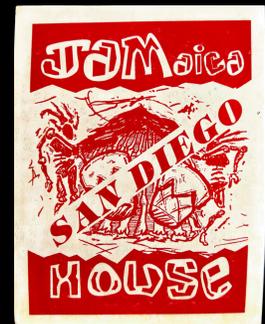
featuring live performance by
Electra/ Street Knowledge recording artist
DEL tha funkke homosapien
performing his hit singles including
"Mistadobalina"
with other special guest celebrities in attendance
located at club 860 (formerly diego s) in pacific bch.
also featuring
D.J. Alywod of JAMAICA House L.A.
D.J. Jam of S.D.
D.J. Johnny of All for 1 S.D.
spinning the best of reggae, hip-hop, funk, & soul
in association with



hosted by
Colin Sutton, D.J. Jam, Eric Etabari,
Darrel Blount, Gil, Tai Campbell, & Chris

admission \$6 w/ invite & \$7 w/ out
drink specials - \$1 draft beer & \$2 rum drinks
also free record & tape giveaways
4 info: (619) 685-7470
(213) 957-4631





David Ferguson & Howard Lynch
of 4 Play Entertainment L.A. present

JAMAICA HOUSE

IN SAN DIEGO
Thursday April 30
located at Club 860 (formerly Diego's)
860 Garnet Ave

featuring live performances by
Chrysalis Recording Artist
DADDY FREDDY
Electra/Pendulum recording Artists
HEN-GE & EVIL E
of Ice T's Rhyme Syndicate

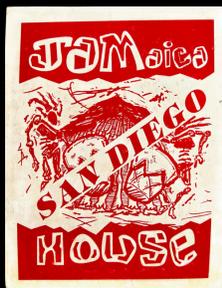
D ALYWOD of Jamaica House L.A.
COLIN of All for One S.D.
WITH **GENERAL LEE** of L.A.
DJ JAM of S.D.
spinning reggae, hip-hop, funk, & soul
in association with

Darrel of Flick
Gil of CHILI PRODUCTIONS
Kent & Marc of rockwrok productions
also hosted by
Eric Etabari & Tai Campbell

AMMISSION: \$1 Draft Beer & \$2 Rum Drinks
w/invite \$7 w/out

 4 INFO: (619) 685-7470
(213) 290-1822





1992 / 1,200-1,500 People Attended

COLOSSUS



This could be a long story, but I'll keep it short and sweet. I've only ever told this story privately to a select few who needed to know, and even then, not the whole story. I have to be careful about what I publish here because, after this party, I had a contract on my life.

First, let's start with COLOSSUS. After we produced it, it became the largest underground festival in Southern California then, but it was actually held in Tijuana, Mexico.

So, how did COLOSSUS come to be? It all started with a voicemail on one of my party information lines. As you can imagine, people would leave messages with their phone numbers for all sorts of reasons. This one particular message came from a man with a Spanish accent, whom I'll refer to as the Manager. He said he had an excellent venue for a large party and wanted to discuss possibly producing an event there.

And that, my friends, was the beginning of an adventure I won't soon forget.

This kind of thing happens all the time. In fact, about a week after the call about COLOSSUS, I got a similar call from someone in LA who wanted to fund a party at Vertigo, a popular venue during the late '80s and early '90s.

I met with this person at Vertigo, and we did the tour. After lunch, he asked if we could quickly stop by his friend's office. He encouraged me to come up to the office and wait. Little did I know, I was walking into the office of the Secret Service. I sat for about 15 minutes with a few other people in a small waiting room that looked more like a room full of two-way mirrors. Not a word was spoken. He eventually came out and said, "Let's go." He drove me back to my car, and I never heard from him again. What kinds of things does the Secret Service deal with? I'm wondering. Hmm.

A 12 HOUR MIND RIDE

I'm not trying to suggest anything—I wouldn't even know what to say. I wasn't involved in any illegal activities except throwing the occasional underground party without the proper permits. But don't you think that's a weird scenario, walking into the Secret Service office like that?

Years later, in **2022**, Pietro La Greca Jr. published his book "Pesos: The Rise and Fall of a Border Family." Not until I read his book did I know that his father, Pietro La Greca Sr., was majorly connected to criminal activity and owned the **largest currency exchange on the Mexican border**. We had the Birth of Baby X party on their polo field in Rosarito, Mexico. Maybe—and I'm totally guessing here—but maybe that's why I ended up in the Secret Service office waiting room with two-way mirrors. No one knows, but it was weird.

Back to the Manager

We met up for coffee in Chula Vista, near his home. I was 22 and about to turn 23 when we planned to produce COLOSSUS. The Manager was at least ten years older than me. He told me about his background of owning and operating clubs in Mexico, and then he started painting a picture of this large venue he envisioned for a party. The venue was a vacant ten-story office building in Tijuana, Mexico, owned by his friend. He mentioned he'd been to some of my parties and clubs and heard about the Rosarito event. He liked our parties. This was normal; people were lining up to fund my parties then.

He said we could produce anything we wanted at this venue, and they would fund the production as long as they kept all the booze sales and got repaid through ticket sales for any upfront costs. It sounded similar to the hotel ballroom deals but even better because they were willing to cover the upfront costs.

I found the whole idea intriguing and was excited to see this venue. CHILI & FLICK would partner with EightBall Productions, a successful underground promotion company made up of three guys with a solid reputation for producing events. About a week later, the partners met the Manager at the border to check out the venue.

To say this venue had the wow factor would be an understatement. In terms of an office building, it was a fairly ordinary new construction development, about 80% complete. But as a party venue, it was extraordinary—a blank canvas for an underground production of a lifetime.

The Manager said we could throw a party before they finished the construction, so we needed to hurry if we wanted to do it. He even suggested we could paint murals on all the walls since everything would be repainted as they completed the construction.

The potential for creativity and the sheer scale of the venue had us all buzzing with excitement. This was going to be a party for the ages, and we were ready to make it happen.

MEETING THE BOSS

The following day, I got a call from the Manager; he said to meet at noon at McDonald's in San Ysidro, near the border. I arrived a few minutes before noon but had no idea what the building owner looked like. The Manager had only told me his first name. Let's call him The Boss because, little did I know at the time, he was really The Boss in so many ways.

I spotted him with another guy the second I entered McDonald's. The place was packed, but he stood out during lunchtime. It wasn't bling or fancy clothing that made him noticeable; it was an air of presence. As I walked in, they spotted me like they were expecting me. We greeted each other and exchanged pleasantries. I learned the other guy was The Boss's driver, who also doubled as his bodyguard. I didn't know about the bodyguard part until much later.

I shared all our plans for the party with The Boss. He asked a bunch of questions and spoke almost perfect English. The driver's English was very broken, but he understood me well. Instinctively, during our discussion, I included the driver because, at times, he seemed distracted and not paying attention. I'd make a point to ask him what he thought about what I had just said. I guess it's a habit from sales training—keeping everyone engaged. Here I was, enthusiastically discussing our plans, really excited about what we were doing, and if the person seemed distracted, I'd make sure to reel them back in. I'm guessing he might have been distracted for other reasons.

We met for about an hour. The Boss and I met again at the same McDonald's a few days before COLOSSUS. I always sensed that The Boss liked me. There was nothing artificial about his demeanor. By our second meeting, I also sensed that The Boss was a very serious man. My upbringing taught me a lot, and one lesson from my Dad was never to make a deal with the devil, even a small one. My Dad had several opportunities to do "simple" deals with guys involved in criminal activities—like holding a million dollars in cash for safekeeping. He always said, "Don't do it."

Now, I'm not saying The Boss was the devil. I know nothing about what he did or didn't do. In retrospect, I've heard things, but I can only imagine. What I can tell you is that I had two pleasant meetings, each lasting about an hour, with The Boss—without the Manager. I can also tell you that I was smack dab in the middle of a deal with The Boss. A real Boss. There was no backing out, and I didn't want to back out. I knew I couldn't, so I needed to make the best of it.

My Dad also taught me how to operate in a business deal. You can always stand behind your actions if you operate respectfully and don't lie, cheat, or steal. I'm speculating, but I think this operating procedure is what ended up saving my ass.

JUMP MOTHERFUCKER JUMP

We planned and promoted around the clock, down to the smallest detail: logistics, promotion, entertainment, and day-of event management. "What did I miss?" was the question looping in my head.

The building was less than a mile from the taxi pick-up spot where people walked across the border, so we rented six buses to drive people to the building. That would become one of the many near-incidents we avoided on the night of the event. I had no idea the Tijuana taxi cab drivers would get so pissed we were transporting people from the taxi-pickup center. They didn't own the pickup location. Seems like an obvious issue now, but several of our staff who directed our partygoers to the buses almost got stabbed by highly irate taxi drivers. Somehow, it took a while for the General's message to get down to the taxi drivers because they came close to shutting down our flow of partygoers.

However, that near-miss incident pales in comparison to the one that would have been headline news. The second-level concrete parking structure started bouncing along with the massive crowd jumping to The Movement's number one single, "Jump Motherfucker Jump." The footage captured on the COLOSSUS video shows the band being stopped by security because the concrete floor was rolling like a wave so much that it seemed like the entire structure was about to collapse onto all the people on the third floor. Thank God we avoided becoming a headline news tragedy. Apparently, having thousands of partygoers jumping in unison on a newly poured concrete parking structure is not advisable.

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714.286-4694
818.801-2683
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18+ FULL BARS...\$1 DRINKS ALL NIGHT...INCREDIBLE
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SKYSCRAPER...\$20 AT DOOR...TICKETS AVAILABLE AT TICKETMASTER, KLOK,
\$15 IN ADVANCE...\$20 AT DOOR...TICKETS AVAILABLE AT TICKETMASTER, KLOK,
AG & S RECORDS, BERLIN WALL, CATWALK, BEHIND THE POST OFFICE, AND THE
CAZZAR TOWER(ON THE DAY OF THE EVENT).
60,000 FLYERS DISTRIBUTED. UNITED SPICE NETWORK PROMOTION

SJOBECK
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9782FIK92

619 . 479 . 8616



Watch the COLOSSUS video:
<https://adilo.bigcommand.com/watch/sAZR9sVb>

THE POP UP FLYER

ADDED JUICE:
50: ROCKWOK, TIC-TOC, SKIN
TWO, IVAR, GLOBAL UNDERGROUND
NETWORK, ANOTHER WORLD, UNIVERSAL
SOUND, 3 STYLE,
ALBERTO'S AFTER PARTY
LA: DOUBLE HIT MICKY
JAMAICA HOUSE
SPECIAL JU
TEGATE BEER
LIVE HIP-HOP
SECOND TO NO

DJ'S
MR. KOOL AID, DESTRUCTO
BARRY WEAVER, GREYBOY
DALE CHARLES, JON BISHOP
JOEY JIMENEZ, ALL FOR ONE
X-RAY, DJ JAM, STEVEN FLEX
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The lineup of DJs and bands was growing fast, and we secured Gary Richards, AKA DESTRUCTO, as our headlining DJ from LA. Gary was a badass and one of the few DJs still going stronger today than before. Back then, Gary had a following; he was a super promoter and a DJ. So we hired him to bring some of his LA crowd down to COLOSSUS. We had previously helped him promote some of his events, so we knew he'd give us a good push to his crowd. We also knew that if we somehow had a killer, one-of-a-kind flyer, it would make us stand out in LA and everywhere.

Enter the COLOSSUS pop-up flyer. It was the first underground party flyer in SoCal that was a pop-up, and it was outstanding. Designer Mel Marcelo created it. We hired a large team to use a glue gun and individually glue each pop-up into the fold-out flyer.

With everything coming together, we were on the brink of something epic. The anticipation was building, and we were ready to make party history.

CHAOS BEFORE COLOSSUS

On April 29th, 1992, FLICK and I had made enough pop-up flyers to distribute in LA, so we dropped them off at all the essential locations. Our first stop was Gary Richards's apartment with bags of pop-up flyers. I remember the day well because of its significance. Gary was watching the news as the verdict for the Rodney King trial was released. We plugged into the news for a few minutes, chatting about how messed up the verdict was, and then we bounced downtown to deliver flyers to one of our sponsors, Eric SjoBeck of SjoBeck Clothing.

We spent about 45 minutes at Eric's office, located on the 10th floor of an old building downtown. As we started descending in the elevator, some guy with a shotgun entered with us. He's all pumped up, saying "shit is going down." FLICK and I, still clueless about what was happening, stayed quiet. When we got out to the parking lot where my car was parked, we finally started to glimpse the chaos unfolding around us. People were running around carrying stolen goods, sometimes so overloaded that they were dropping items as they ran. It was getting chaotic.

FLICK assured me we had nothing to worry about because we weren't white. Okay, sure.

About half a block from us, we saw a guy crossing the street carrying a big-screen TV. And back then, those TVs were heavy. He dropped the TV in the middle of the street. FLICK and I started laughing and pointing at him. The guy pulled out a gun and started shooting at us, hitting the wall behind us. This was the big sign that we were in the wrong place at the wrong time.

There was much more going on than just racial unrest; it was an opportunity for people to act as crazy as they wanted. We decided it was time to leave LA and head back to San Diego. I kept driving up to blocked-off streets. The cops were trying to control the traffic and the crowds forming throughout the city. As the sun set and it got dark, we had a hard time finding an on-ramp to a freeway heading south. We were forced to drive around, looking for a way out. FLICK was trying to navigate using my Thomas Brothers map (pre-smartphone days). We knew LA streets well enough, but it was getting stressful. I didn't want to stop moving because we saw people smashing cars everywhere.



1992

PRISON

We drove down Broadway and saw people trying to break the glass windows of what we thought was a bank. As we passed the mobs, we came upon a car burning in the middle of Broadway. It was abandoned. The scene looked straight out of a war or end-of-the-world movie. We kept driving, trying to find an outlet heading south. People were looting and fighting everywhere we went. As we approached an intersection, we saw a car speed by and hit someone trying to stop the car. The impact was so hard the guy flew at least twenty feet and rolled to the curb like he was dead. No one died that night, but it was insane! More than 50 deaths occurred in the subsequent days as the riots continued.

The stress didn't stop when we found a freeway on-ramp heading south. We saw at least a dozen structures burning as we drove along the freeway. In awe as we drove, cars passed by us on the freeway, and we felt like maybe someone might start shooting. It wasn't logical thinking, I know. It could have been pure paranoia or a form of PTSD from just getting shot at earlier. That night was insane and a stressful drive out of LA. We still had a ton of pop-up flyers to pass out and a little over a month to do it. And we did it.

COLOSSUS turned out to be a milestone for CHILI & FLICK Productions. Around 3,500 people attended, making it the biggest underground event south of LA at the time. All indications were that it was a success. We hired trusted production partners to handle ticket sales and money collection. All the partners oversaw the accounting and cash payments to DJs, bands, and production staff. The last partygoers left the party at sunup. By the morning, everyone was paid. We all left the venue with cheers and a feeling of victory. We still had \$9,000 that we had to collect from Ticket Master. Not many partygoers bought tickets through Ticket Master for an underground event, but we thought it was cool to run an underground event through Ticket Master because we had never seen anyone do it.

A few days later, a rumor swelled among the partners and The Manager—funds were missing. The Manager and The Boss weren't owed anything according to our deal, they were paid in full, so I didn't know where this was coming from. Almost a month later, that specific number—\$9,000—would ring as an important indicator or message to us as we sat in a prison cell in Tijuana, Mexico.

TNT-IGUANAS



TNT was a 4th of July concert event we produced at a popular 12,000-square-foot venue known as Iguanas, located in the Pueblo Amigo Shopping Center, just 500 yards from the San Ysidro border crossing into Mexico. People could easily walk there from the border. Leveraging the promotion opportunity, we passed out flyers for TNT to everyone at COLOSSUS. Top billing for TNT was the group The Movement, who almost brought the house down (literally) at COLOSSUS a month before. Their song “Jump Motherfucker Jump” was the #1 single in LA at the time, so we knew we’d pack Iguanas.

As usual, I was in full promotion mode for TNT in the weeks following COLOSSUS. My business partner on TNT was Javier. He owned a successful record pool for DJs, was majorly connected in the music business, and is the person through whom we booked The Movement. He’s a super solid guy you’d be glad to do business with—and, as it turned out, be imprisoned with. Little did we know, but that’s where we were heading.

I also had my weekly club going on Wednesday nights. So, between all my regular promotion activities, I had a series of calls with my COLOSSUS partners and the Manager, which was, in retrospect, a bit unsettling. During these phone calls, nobody was willing to directly point the finger at anyone regarding the allegations of “missing money” from COLOSSUS. However, the Ticketmaster account was settled, and everything seemed to be resolved regarding discussions. The frequency of calls with The Manager had lessened because we no longer had an event in production together. That was normal, but I sensed that The Manager was more aloof. The last time I saw The Manager was at COLOSSUS, and as far as I knew, The Boss wasn’t even at the event. At least I didn’t see him or hear he was there. What I’m getting at is everything seemed to be good, status quo. Vibes were not tense.



PARTY FAVORS

One night after my Wednesday club, a girl started overtly flirting with me as everyone left. This did happen at times, and it wasn't totally unusual. I knew this girl, or at least I had seen her before. What was unusual was that we had zero attraction before. She was coming on a bit strong, considering we'd been around each other at several events, and nothing like that had ever happened between us. Then, it took a sharp turn for the unusual. She introduced me to her girlfriend, whom I'd never seen. They said they wanted to party. I knew exactly what that meant, but I felt like something was off about the whole thing. She was asking me if I had specific party favors. I didn't and said I didn't know where to get them. Now, I started thinking they were just trying to score drugs, and I didn't play that game. At that point in my life, I didn't touch drugs, and I would barely drink, especially when it was my club. I wanted to maintain a clear head for the business. In high school, I experimented with some drugs, but very little. X was legal when I was in high school. The last thing I wanted to do was get busted for drugs. Considering the circumstances, I stayed as far away from them as I could. I knew in the club business, drugs were everywhere. Plus, I treated everyone like they could be from 21 Jump Street, a popular cop TV show for young folks reading.

This odd encounter set off alarm bells in my head. Something wasn't right, and I had a bad feeling about it. Little did I know that things would get much more complicated and weird fast.

The Night That Almost Went Wrong

Anyway, I started signaling that I wouldn't be much help and was about to leave. Suddenly, both girls wanted to go back to her apartment. She told me to get in her car, saying she lived about half a mile from the club. Still not entirely convinced but intrigued, I told her I'd follow them to her place. I pulled up beside her car, and she was on her cell phone. She said her contact for party favors would meet her down the street at the 7/11. She told me to follow her there, and then we'd head to her apartment.

We parked at the 7/11, and they asked me to wait in the front seat of her car with them. So I did. It was cozy. A few minutes later, a guy knocked on her window. She told him to get in the backseat. This guy was Mexican and barely spoke English. I didn't speak Spanish, and neither of the girls spoke Spanish. In very broken English, he told the girl to meet him by his car. They were gone for a few minutes and then both returned to the car. She said the Mexican guy was going to party with us. I didn't make a big deal out of it and got out of the car. The other girl made it clear I should come along; we'd have a fun time. I agreed to follow them to her place.

When I walked up to her apartment, the girl had the screen off the window and was climbing through. She said she lost her house keys. She went around and opened the front door after breaking into her apartment.

BREAKING & ENTERING

Once in her apartment, we all sat down on two couches like, "Okay, we're here; now what?" I asked the Mexican guy where he was from, and he told me he was from Mexico. Okay. He then got a call and said his friends were bringing over some beers and weed. At about the same time he finished saying that, two other Mexican guys who didn't speak any English opened the screen door and entered the small apartment. They spoke Spanish to their friend and greeted us in broken English. They didn't have beers but brought a bong. One of the guys sat on the couch while the other stood because there wasn't enough space.

The vibe in the room was a little weird. The first Mexican guy said, "Smoke some weed." I'm not a big smoker, so before I said anything, I was thinking, "What the fuck is going on here? I need to leave ASAP." The girl had been looking for her house keys since we arrived. The first Mexican guy hit the bong and passed it to the second guy. Then the girl said she would leave for a little while and check the parking lots to see if she dropped her keys there. The other girl said she would go with her and help her look. I was about to say I'd go with them, but I didn't think that was the right move. Instead, I decided to play along because I had a feeling running for the door wouldn't fly.

The girls left me in the apartment that she had technically broken into with three Mexican guys I'd never seen before. As they left, the second Mexican guy was hitting the bong and started coughing so much that he went outside right after the girls. My idea was right in front of me. I grabbed the bong, hit it, and started coughing hard and nonstop as I tried to laugh, smile, and stand up to gain my composure. The third Mexican guy hit the bong and started coughing as well. They were both sitting on the couch, and I was standing up. I grabbed the bong, hit it again, and started coughing like crazy. I headed towards the front screen door, signaling that I needed air. The Mexican guy outside was re-entering the doorway as I exited, coughing. I signaled to him that I needed air. He turned sideways to let me by. I looked back as the screen door shut to see if the other Mexican guys were getting up, and that's when I saw a gun tucked in the pants of the Mexican guy re-entering the doorway.

My instinct was to run, and that's exactly what I did. I ran as fast as possible to my car, got in, and drove away as fast as possible. Did I overreact? I drove to FLICK's house nearby. He couldn't tell if what I was saying was a complete fantasy trip because he'd never seen me high. All I knew was that FLICK would protect me in case anything else happened that night.

The next few days, that night felt surreal, as if that night wasn't real. I didn't know what to think. Did I just escape something dire? Why did that Mexican guy have a gun? If they wanted to hurt me or worse, they could have. What was going on? The Manager wasn't answering my calls. I had no way of contacting The Boss. I had a lot of questions running through my head and no straightforward answers.

THE MOVEMENT

I knew I had another event in a few days and needed to promote it. So, despite the lingering paranoia and unanswered questions, I threw myself back into work, hoping to make sense of it all eventually.

TNT was a sold-out event; over 2,000 tickets were sold. We had a caravan of three vans pick up the group The Movement in San Diego and transport them to Iguanas in Tijuana, Mexico. It wasn't just The Movement in transport. They brought their girlfriends and wives. Including Javier, myself, and the drivers, there were 17 of us in total. Javier was a pro at this. He had produced many concerts in Mexico and was fluent in Spanish. As far as he was concerned, it was another day at the office. All required work permits were obtained for the group and the DJs. This concert wasn't an underground event like COLOSSUS. It was produced at an established concert venue by an established concert promoter.

The crowds were significant as we pulled up to Iguanas in the caravan. The place was sold out, and people who couldn't get tickets were milling around outside the venue as we arrived. Within a minute of our arrival, Mexican government officials approached us in the vans and asked us for our work permits. Javier was prepared. He showed them our work permits as everyone stayed in the vans. More government officials showed up to check our work permits. They made phone calls from their cars verifying our documents. We waited for about 15 minutes, and then more officials showed up and asked for our work permits again. We looked around for the officials who had taken them, but they had disappeared. Our work permits were nowhere to be found.

After another 10-15 minutes of waiting, these new officials escorted us to official government offices. If you've ever walked or driven across the border, you might have seen those offices along the walking bridge. We were inside those offices for another hour or two. That's when we realized this concert wasn't happening. From those official government offices, we were then escorted to prison.

I've never been to jail or prison in the United States. The only time I'd been to the Tijuana, Mexico jail was to bail out friends after they did stupid things at the bars and nightclubs. The place we were brought to wasn't the jail with which many Americans who frequent TJ are familiar. This was a prison. All 17 of us, men and women, were in the same place and cells. We were told this prison was for political prisoners.

As we were guided into our cells, we walked by prisoners' cells that looked like mini apartments. They were watching TV in their cells. This was a long-term living facility, not a temporary jail. Welcome to prison in Mexico.

IN PRISON

Imagine walking into a prison with The Movement, their girlfriends, and their wives—17 of us in total. Even if you don't remember the group, which was a one-hit wonder, the members were hugely talented and influential. Plus, they did nothing to deserve this kind of treatment. Everyone remained calm and collected, even though none of us had any idea what was happening or why. The group was formed by producers Richard "Humpty" Vission and AJ Mora, along with rapper DJ Hazze. Mora and Vission co-founded and hosted "Power Tools," the US's longest-running weekly radio EDM mix show. After this event, Vission continued to have a high-profile career with many #1 Billboard Dance Chart remixes and worked with high-profile artists such as Lady Gaga, Major Lazer, Black Eyed Peas, Steve Aoki, and Madonna.

We were placed in two prison cells next to each other through the night, sleeping on the concrete floors as the sun rose. We still hadn't learned why we were in this terrifying predicament. Starting at the government offices, I told Javier that this might have something to do with the COLOSSUS event. I hadn't shared with Javier the unusual experience I had a few nights before because I was still trying to process what had happened. I explained to Javier what I thought had happened to me the other night. He didn't think it was connected. Javier kept saying, "If those guys wanted to hurt you, it would have happened, and you wouldn't know what hit you." And he was right. Nothing was making sense.

As morning turned into lunchtime, we started smelling food in the air. Prison guards were bringing food to the other prisoners. We found out we could ask the guards for food if we had money to pay for it. Those of us who had cash on us started ordering food for everyone in our group who hadn't eaten. Some prison official would get us food at a nearby taco shop and bring it back to us. The standard operating procedure of the prison was for prisoners to receive money from friends or family to pay for their meals. Another part of the problem was that none of our friends or family members knew where we were. We weren't in the regular jail, so even though we had friends or family looking for us, they couldn't find us. And we hadn't been allowed to make a phone call. Still, nothing was making sense.

Despite the chaos, everyone remained remarkably composed. Again, it was surreal to be in this situation, with all of us trying to make sense of our predicament. In our confusion and exhaustion, we hoped that clarity—and freedom—would come soon.

As day turned into night, the concrete floors became more challenging to endure. We finally had the opportunity to communicate with the prison officials. Javier and I were asked to leave the prison cell and follow a guard. We were brought into a small office, where guards stood over us, and we sat in front of the prison warden. All the discussions were happening in Spanish, and I had no clue what was being said. Luckily, Javier spoke Spanish and could interpret for me.

WHY \$9,000?

Not a single word was mentioned about the COLOSSUS event. Javier explained to the warden that he had obtained all the required work permits for the concert. He told the warden that government officials had taken the permits and stated he had additional documentation at his San Diego office. Javier asked if he could call someone to bring the additional documentation to the warden to prove it.

About five minutes into the conversation, the warden threw a bag of white powder onto the desk. This is when I saw things change very quickly in the tone and posture of the conversation. Javier looked at me and said, "The warden is saying this is ours." I was stunned. "What? That's not mine." The warden then looked me directly in the eyes and said in broken English, "Yes, this is yours." Javier and the warden exchanged more words, and then Javier turned to me and said, "The warden wants us to pay him \$9,000 right now, or he's going to say that bag of white powder is ours."

Javier was allowed to make a phone call, but we could forget about the additional work permit documentation. We needed \$9,000 delivered to the prison ASAP, or this would become a much bigger problem than we could have ever imagined.

Around the same time Javier was finally allowed to make a call, several of our friends and family members, including my dad, had located us in the prison and were outside trying to negotiate our release. They had no idea of the ultimatum Javier and I had received from the warden. When Javier and I returned to the prison cell with everyone else, we didn't discuss what had happened with the warden. We just assured them we would get out of there very soon. The money was delivered.

It was nighttime when we were finally all released from prison. As we were released, Javier was pulled aside and told that we were never allowed to do business in Mexico again.

That night was a turning point, a stark reminder of the unpredictability and danger that can lurk beneath the surface of the party business. We escaped with our freedom, but the experience left an indelible mark on all of us.

Days and weeks after our stint in a Mexican prison, stories, rumors, and dots started to connect as to what had happened. Because even after getting out of that prison, I still didn't know exactly what had happened or why. I never had any communication with The Manager or The Boss again. Javier was right: if The Boss had wanted me handled differently, it would have easily happened. I could have been made to disappear in a snap. Clearly, the warden could have asked us for any amount of money to release us from prison. He had us over a barrel. Why \$9,000?

CONNECTING THE DOTS

A seed of doubt was planted with rumors swirling about missing money from the COLOSSUS event. Whether there were or not, someone had to be held accountable.

Friends who knew people within those circles said it was a friendly message to me from The Boss. The reason it wasn't worse than it was, was because The Boss liked me enough to handle it the way it went down. Okay? Well, what about my strange night in the apartment with the Mexican guys carrying guns? I'm told there's no way that was The Boss because I'm still here, and I believe that. However, several sources who would know told me that I had a contract put on my life. It wasn't for anything specific I did wrong. People were saying money was missing, and no one knew exactly who did it or how much it was. So, an example needed to be made to the other partners of the event. I was going to be that example. Others said it might have had something to do with The Manager. I don't know. I never heard from The Manager again. It's possible they felt slighted that I was having the TNT concert a month later and promoted the concert at COLOSSUS without including them. All of this seems plausible to me.

One thing for certain: I wasn't doing business in Mexico or stepping foot in TJ ever again. **At least, that's what I thought.**



1992

THE SEED



Back in San Diego: The Hustle Continues

Back in San Diego, I was still producing my weekly club and special events. My typical day involved making the rounds at all the malls, dropping off and passing out flyers to the retail staff, and making sure they pinned my flyers on the wall in the break rooms. Plus, I'd leave a stack somewhere in the store if it was appropriate. I always made the rounds at all the various college campuses as well. I had a regular promotional street team of people who helped me cover all of San Diego. The normal weekly team was just a handful of people, but for big events, I had over a hundred people on the street team.

Sometimes, I would check up on their work to make sure all the right spots were being covered. I had my ways of knowing if someone was just telling me they were passing out flyers and they weren't. I would find out because I had a network of people all over San Diego that I could call and get information on what was happening. Most of the time, I didn't pay cash to my promotional street team.

Instead, they got paid with special privileges at the clubs and events, like getting people on the VIP list and a drink tab at the clubs/events. In the evenings, seven nights a week, I'd hit all the hottest clubs and events. It was work.

The SEED was a rave we co-produced the following month after the TNT prison situation. The venue was a building connected to a roller rink in Chula Vista, California. We took over the building and the roller rink. I can't remember if it was the intended venue or a backup venue. We often had venues fall through at the last minute and had to scramble for a backup. Either way, this turned out to be a great event that went into the wee hours of the morning as intended.

The SEED was the second party I did with Branden and Nick from the Birth of BabyX-Global Underworld and the first time I worked with JP and Jose. Jose owned AC&S record store and produced several underground events along with his partner JP, who produced a long-running weekly club, Geraldines, at the Kansas City Steak House on 5th Ave in The Gaslamp of downtown San Diego.

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I remember THE SEED was about the music. We were producing this event to showcase a new sound that was going to be the new direction for raves in San Diego. At least, that was our thinking. Even though CHILI & FLICK productions were very much known for Hip Hop in San Diego, it wasn't unusual for CHILI & FLICK to produce an event without Hip Hop. We were one of the few production companies that crossed music genres with regularity. FLICK was also the lead singer of a hardcore band called House of Suffering. We'd often produce punk and hardcore shows the same week as a rave or Hip Hop club. We were all about providing outlets for underground music that mainstream radio stations ignored.

The Drive and Dedication

Promoting and producing events was a full-time hustle. It involved relentless promotion, constant networking, and a deep understanding of the underground music scene. The SEED was a testament to our commitment to pushing the boundaries and bringing new sounds to the forefront. Despite the challenges and the unexpected turns, like the TNT prison incident, our dedication to the craft and the community kept us moving forward. The SEED was just one of many events that showcased our ability to adapt and innovate in the ever-evolving world of underground music.

1,500+ People Attended

WILD KINGDOM

WILD KINGDOM was an underground music festival we produced on an Indian reservation in Escondido, CA. From idea to event, it took us about a month to pull it together—not the year advertised on the flyer. We had a contact who lived on the reservation, and this was all pre-casinos. We rented 30 acres of this property. There were no buildings on this land, just loads of bushes everywhere. We hired two massive bulldozers to level the hills, remove the bushes, and make room for parking, carnival rides, and thousands of lunatic kids who wanted to dance until sunrise. We had zero permits for this event. There was also zero insurance in case something went wrong. What could go wrong? We were dumb kids.

To stack the deck, we included the first “rave” with a massive hot air balloon. Your ticket included FREE bungee jumping 300 feet out of the balloon if you were insane enough. The video footage is bad, but it does show the balloon and people jumping.

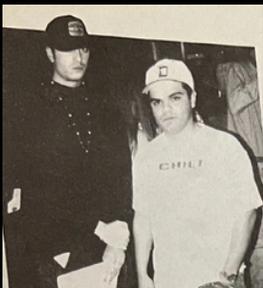
WILD KINGDOM was the third event CHILI & FLICK produced with Branden and Nick of Global Underworld. We also produced it with our investor, Artie Parent, who owned the printing company that printed our flyers. Being produced on an Indian reservation, a nation within a nation, was something I was already familiar with. We learned there was one specific way the cops could stop the event. The CHP could stop cars from driving the road to the event. If the CHP shut down the road to our partygoers, we were screwed. This had happened to me when I was in high school producing an event on one of the other Indian reservations.

So, we had a daring idea because this event was going to be much more high-profile. Unbeknownst to anyone else, we made the event a fundraiser for a non-profit. We chose the Widows of CHP Officer's Foundation. We asked the organization's president to come to the event to pick up the sizable check. We also asked the president of this organization to stand at the front of the event and wait for the cops to come. He did. Of course, the cops showed up. And he showed them the check and the official nature of the fundraiser. Our plan worked. The event continued until 9 am without any major mishaps.

WILD KINGDOM was considered a huge success. It was a wild and unforgettable night, proving once again that with a little creativity and a lot of nerve, we could pull off something truly extraordinary. This event was the first underground with carnival rides.

Watch the Wild Kingdom Video:

<https://adilo.bigcommand.com/watch/addHMDnP>



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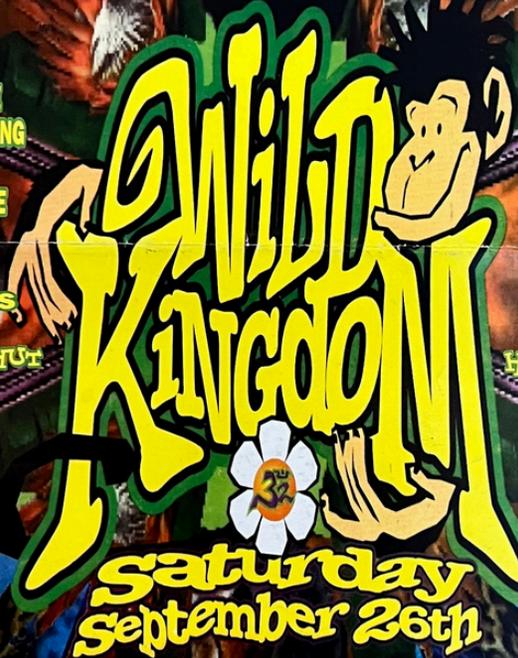
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ALYWAD

WORD TO YO
MAMMY!



PRESALE TICKETS AVAILABLE AT THESE LOCATIONS

\$20 PRE-SALE

\$25 DAY OF EVENT

PACIFIC BEACH
KLOK
619.270.1350

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619.476.1212

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619.234.3862

EL CAJON BLVD.
RECORD HEAVEN
619.582.1984

LOS ANGELES
PRIME CUTS
213.654.8251

(GLOBAL INFOVINE) 619.685.3451 213.243.9603

(CHILI & FLICK) 619.599.5321 714.284.9517

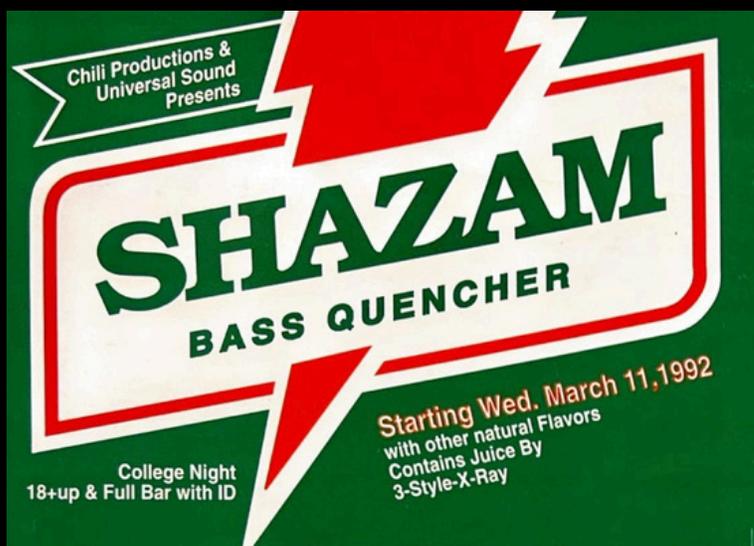
3,500 People Attended

SHAZAM

SHAZAM was launched during Spring Break of 1992 and quickly became our biggest weekly nightclub. We'd get 1,200-1,700 people each week. I produced the club with Fred Sotelo of Universal Sound. Fred, similar to me, started promoting in high school. He owned a DJ company called Sonic Sound, a competitor to Mid-City Productions. When Fred and I met, we became fast friends. We produced numerous events together and still do business today.

SHAZAM became a great club event and business for us. We set up a booth on the restaurant's patio and gave away a Motorola Flip-phone for FREE. This was the very beginning of free cell phone offers. The Motorola Flip-phone was new, and getting a FREE Motorola Flip-phone was an even newer concept. We were paid \$250 for each free phone giveaway. It was awesome. Every week, we gave away 10-20 Motorola Flip-phones.

Producing SHAZAM with Fred was a blast. We had a great partnership, combining our strengths and experiences to create a nightlife experience that stood out in San Diego. SHAZAM was a testament to our ability to innovate and capture our audience's attention, making it one of the most memorable and successful ventures of our club careers. Later, with the Return of SHAZAM, we added another partner, DJ X-Ray of 3-Style Productions. The Return of SHAZAM was a prime-time Saturday weekly event. X-Ray is one of the few promoters still going strong today. He DJ'd my wedding, and Fred, Branden Powers and Rage Richardson were all groomsmen in my wedding. You'll soon meet everyone within these stories. We all go way back together.



1992-1995

MOST WANTED

My little brother, who was in 9th grade, would help me run the door and keep an eye on the cash register. There was a lot of cash, and we always needed trusted people to count on in those important situations. He'd help the door guys organize the line as it got big. One of our main door security guys was good at checking ID cards and driver's licenses. He had been working for us for about six months. He was a big guy—intimidating but still personable and friendly. He was teaching my brother how to spot a fake ID. My brother was getting good at finding them too.

One evening, while at home, my brother and I watched the TV show America's Most Wanted. The segment was about a bank robber who had robbed several banks using a unique method. He'd go to the bank manager's house, take the entire family hostage, then go with the bank manager to the bank and rob it. They showed the bank robber's picture, and it was Dave, our door security guy. WTF!

It was just a matter of days before we saw in our local news that Dave had been busted in San Diego and taken into custody. My little brother then decided to tell me about all the weird phone calls he had with Dave. I guess there was a reason Dave was really good at spotting fake IDs. You just never know who you're working with.

SHAZAM SATURDAYS
MAY 27th SDSU GRAD PARTY!
9PM TO 2AM • 21 & UP W/ID • FULL BAR • \$2 OFF WITH COLLEGE ID • LADIES FREE B4 9:30
AT THE SALMON HOUSE
1970 QUIVIRA WAY IN MISSION VALLEY

3 ROOMS
DJ's MIKESKI • RUC • DAQVRE • JOHNNY KING • STRETCH • IZZY
HIP HOP • HOUSE • OLD SKOOL

INFO: 619. 544-4551

W MISSION BAY DR
QUIVIRA DR
HYATT HOTEL
SALMON HOUSE
MISSION BAY DR
8 FRWY
5 FRWY
805 FRWY

SHAZAM
EVERY WEDNESDAY
Located @ 860 Club Formally Diego's, 860 Garnett Ave in P.B.
DJ X-Ray w/Guest DJ Ricky Rick
T-40, R&B, House, Hip Hop, & Funk
Dollar Drink Specials 8pm-2am
Reggae Dance Hall on our Huge Patio by DJ Just-I
One Dollar Off with College ID • 18+up Full Bar w/ID
Chili Productions & Universal Sound • Club Info. 272-1241
Computer Aid: Sight Effects Design • Printing: Baja Printing

UNIVERSAL AND CHILI PRODUCTIONS BRING YOU
THE RETURN OF
Shazam
Saturday MAY 6
CINCO DE MAYO WEEKEND
AND EVERY SATURDAY AFTERWARDS
AT THE SALMON HOUSE
1970 QUIVIRA ROAD • THE LEGEND CONTINUES...

1,200-1,700 People Attended

SANTA'S FUNKY TOY DRIVE



SANTA'S FUNKY TOY DRIVE was a fundraiser I organized for two years with my friend Steve Billings at the Del Mar Fairgrounds. All the bands, DJs, security guards, lights, sound systems, promoters, and others donated their services. The whole rave and club scene called off work and came together for one night. Later, we'd bring all the toys to an orphanage in Tijuana, Mexico. These events were fun, but helping the kids was the best part.

I remember this particular event flyer well, but not for the best reasons. One night before the event, I handed out this flyer in Pacific Beach, California, on Garnet Ave in front of a nightclub on the public sidewalk. The nightclub manager came outside and demanded that I leave and stop handing out flyers. I ignored him and continued. He then sent two huge bouncers out to deal with me. From the side, I got punched in the face as I was speaking to a girl about the party. Another bouncer grabbed me and held me from behind while the first guy worked me over like a punching bag. The girl I was talking to at the time jumped on the bouncer's back and got him to stop—nuts and amazing.

Dear Santa's Helpers:

As you know, Christmas is a time of year that is dedicated to the joy of sharing and giving to others. Unfortunately, the gifts of Christmas do not ring the same bells for all children. Various community programs attempt to spread goodwill, and although well intended, find a large portion of their proceeds disappear within the administrative framework.

Santa's Funky Toy Drive is unique in many ways. First, one hundred percent of the proceeds reach the less fortunate children without a dime being wasted on administrative expenses. Second, all the gifts and proceeds are distributed equally between the needy children in San Diego and Tijuana and last but not least, participants involved in Santa's Funky Toy Drive not only share in the joy of giving, but also enjoy in an evening of celebration.

To accomplish this goal we are asking that you proudly support our cause by attending this event and PLEASE BRING A TOY.

On December 11th at the Del Mar Fair Grounds, underneath the new grandstands, Santa's Funky Toy Drive will sponsor San Diego's largest Christmas toy drive bash. Featuring several of San Diego's best DJ's, live bands, magicians, jugglers, celebrity guests, fitness video monitors, cocktails, and non-stop dancing.

This Toy Drive will utilize the long standing efforts of several of San Diego's finest party events promoters all working together to generate an earth shaking event. With your help and the help of others, we expect to raise well over one thousand toy donations. Please help us put a smile on OUR children's faces.

THANK YOU



After the bouncers stopped, the manager slithered over to me and whispered, "I told you to leave." I looked at him and punched him in the face. Legal documents say I broke his jaw. Long story short, I won an injury lawsuit against the nightclub and manager for about \$20k.

Despite the incident, SANTA'S FUNKY TOY DRIVE was a huge success. It brought the community together for a great cause and left a lasting impact on the orphanage children. The spirit of giving and the unity of the scene made it a truly memorable event.

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>2nd Annual SANTA'S FUNKY TOY DRIVE • Fri. DEC. 11, 92 At the Del Mar Fair Grounds under the New Grandstand Multiple Rooms 21+ with ID Doors open at 9:00PM Attend this event for a \$10 donation or an unwrapped toy of equal or greater value [we prefer toys, please] After-hours Party @ nearby location to be announce at the event. Thanx to Fletcher, Sean & Lawrence for the following donations: General Hospital Loops • Temple of Boom Sound Ground Control Security</p> | |
| <p>Brought 2 U by Chilli 8 Flick, Global Underworld, International Record Source, J2, Jason A., JP 8 José, L.O.S.T., Nebulous, Playschool, Previce 8 Sinister of OW3, Psychone, Rockwrok, Side Job, Sin Magazine, Soul '0, Steve Billings, 3-Style, Tawd, Tic-Toc, Universal Sound.</p> | <p>PERFORMING LIVE: Dime Store Hoods, Lunatic Fringe and other local/national acts to be announced. Call info. line for up-to-date listings.</p> |
| <p>DI'S SPINNING HIP HOP HOUSE, DANCE HALL 8 FUNK: Steven Flex • Jam S.O.S. • J. Sinister Joey Jimenez Scott Martin Unique • Kutfather Jon Bishop Quiksilva Destructo/Rave America plus special guests to be announced.</p> | <p>Information: 619.492-8087 619.277-PLAY-[STATIK LINE]685-8449 [HIP LINE]491-HIPP Massive CD, Records & Tapes giveaways.</p> |
| <p>Happy Holidays, from the Pimps of Print Custom Printing Services 619-275-0293</p> | |
| <p>Brought to you by Steve & Gil MPyre Grfx92</p> | |

1992 / 1,500 People Attended

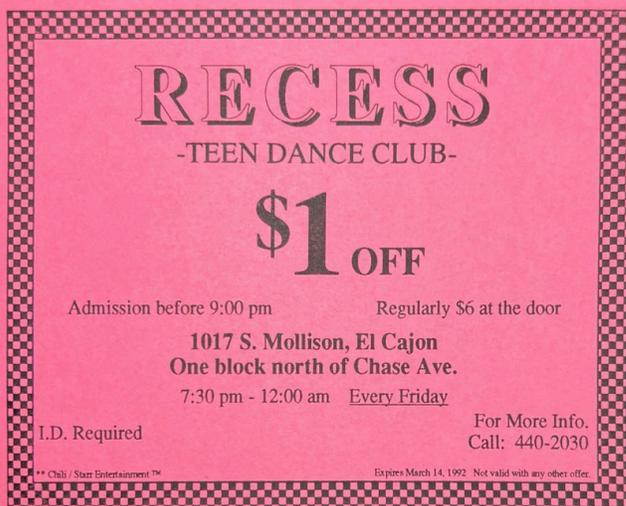
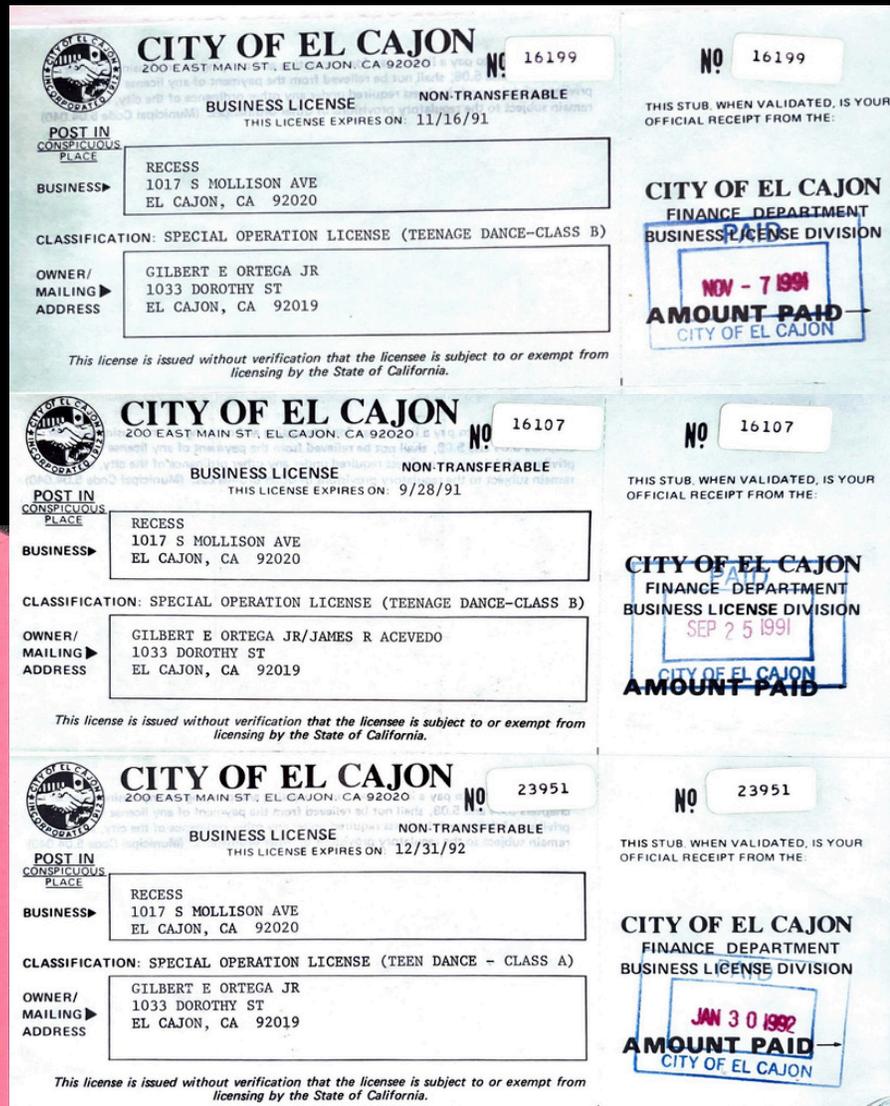
RECESS

In 1991-1992, amidst the vibrant nightlife of San Diego, I created a unique spot for the younger crowd—RECESS, a teen dance club I produced every Friday night. It was one of the few events where I actually got permits to produce. Yes, you heard that right—an underground promoter with permits. And here they are as proof.

RECESS catered exclusively to teenagers aged 13-17. Adults over 18 were not allowed. To secure the permits, I had to produce two separate events where the police would show up and inspect the scene. If both events got a thumbs up, the city would issue me a permit for the entire year. With Stratus, the local teen dance club, shutting its doors and Tijuana clubs getting stricter about enforcing their 18+ ID policy, kids had nowhere to go. That's where RECESS came in.

Most of my partners in the 21+ club scene had no idea I was running this teen dance club. I kept it under wraps, but it was a solid business. I taught a group of kids how to promote throughout the high schools because adults weren't allowed on campuses.

RECESS filled a crucial gap, providing a safe and fun place for teens to dance and socialize. It was a low-key operation but highly successful, proving that even an underground promoter could go legit when needed.



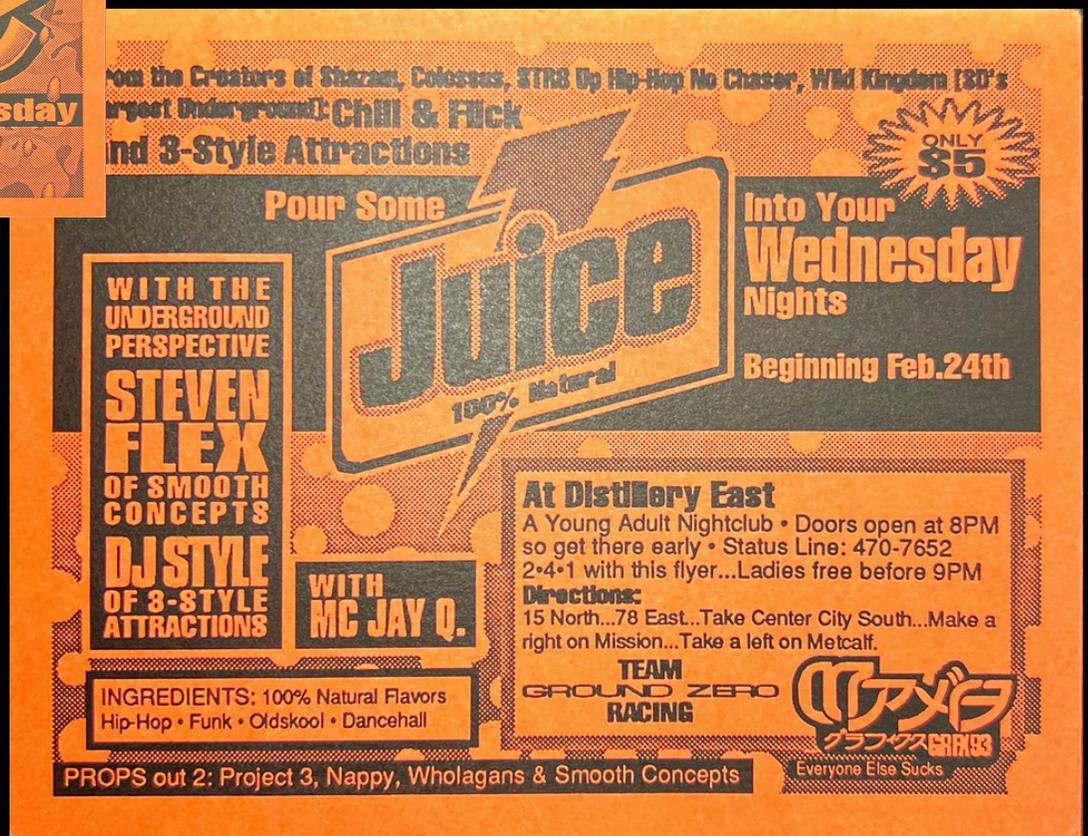
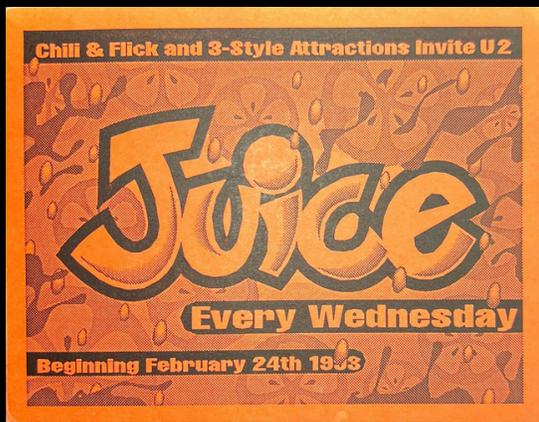
1991-1992 / 500 People Attended

JUICE

Following the success of RECESS, we launched another teen dance club called JUICE, which was aimed at the north county of San Diego. Leveraging the RECESS list, we promoted JUICE to a new audience of future partygoers.

JUICE quickly became a hit, drawing in crowds of teenagers eager for a place to dance and hang out. Using the established network from RECESS, we seamlessly transitioned and expanded our reach, creating another hotspot for the under-18 crowd. The same principles applied: a safe, fun environment with no adults over 18 allowed, ensuring the teens had their own space to enjoy.

The success of both RECESS and JUICE highlighted the demand for well-organized, teen-focused events. It also showed that it was possible to create sustainable, popular venues catering to the younger crowd with the right approach and understanding of the audience. These events provided entertainment and fostered a sense of community and excitement among the city's youth.

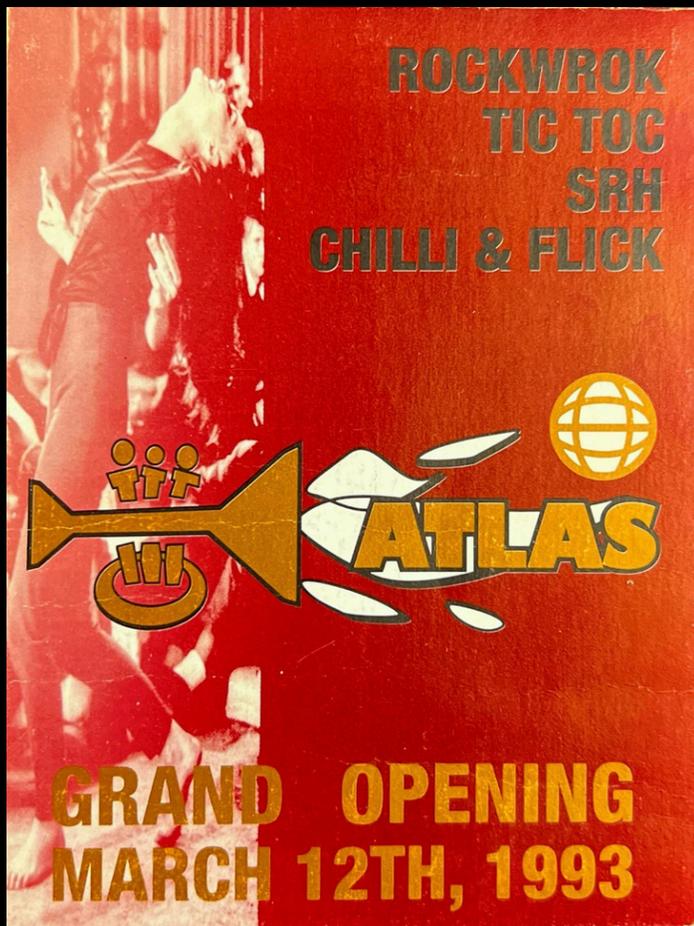


1993 / 700+ People Attended

ATLAS

ATLAS on Fridays was my brainchild. This weekly club ran for about 5-6 months. My friends owned a huge bar across from the Sports Arena in San Diego. It might not have been the best venue, but it was huge—it could hold 2,000 people. Plus, it had a unique permit to stay open until 4 a.m., rare for San Diego clubs. I convinced the owners to allow us to do \$1 drinks every Friday. No bar owner wants to do \$1 drinks on a prime Friday night, but the owners agreed if I could bring together four top promotion companies for a weekly Friday club. And I did. It was an easy-packed house every Friday night. No other promotion company dared to compete with us on Friday nights.

The funny thing is, we never entirely sold out the place with 2,000 people, but it was always packed with a great vibe. With \$1 drinks, the atmosphere was nuts. Each promotion partner only made about \$500-\$1,000 per night, but we also negotiated a nice bar tab. As if \$1 drinks weren't enough to light the crowd up, we also had our bar tab.



ROCKWROK
TIC TOC
SRH
CHILLI & FLICK



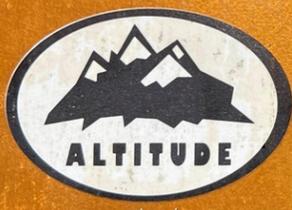
ATLAS

GRAND OPENING
MARCH 12TH, 1993



 619-425-5007

 714-646-8700

 619-454-SNOW

 619 423 2101

CUSTOM PRINTING 619 275 0293
KENT PARKER DESIGN 619 969 3617

1993 / 1,200-1,600 People Attended

BODY PAINTING

I remember one night before the club started. Grant King, one of my promotion partners, asked me to body paint the go-go dancers. Everyone was too busy, and no one was there to paint the day-glow paint onto the go-go dancers. We had painted day-glow murals on bed sheets hung all over the club to make it aesthetically different from the boring sports bar it was. The go-go dancers would dance in front of the murals, which were black-lighted to glow and give the place a better aesthetic vibe. Looking back, I see I got the inspiration for Rick Bliss party at this club.

I gotta give props to SHR. Zinger is still at it, doing big things in the music business decades later—big props to Zinger for sticking to it. ATLAS was a wild ride and a fun chapter in my journey through the San Diego nightlife scene.

**THIS FRIDAY
SPECIAL EDITION
OF
ATLAS
LIVE HOUSE
FROM L.A.
DAVEN THE
MADHATTER**
HOSTED BY TODD OF PLAYSCHOOL
AND MARK & CLAUDIO OF EVAR +
NIK NAK & YAB YUM
9PM TIL 4AM
SAN DIEGO'S ONLY LEGAL AFTER HOURS
THE RAGE
3595 SPORTS ARENA
DIRECTLY ACROSS FROM THE SAN DIEGO SPORTS ARENA
VALET PARKING AVAILABLE
100 COUCHES - FIREPLACE-GO-GO'S
LOOPS & LIGHTING BY FELIX
SOUND BY THUNDERHILL
DJ'S
JON BISHOP & KELLY LYNCH
FOR MORE INFORMATION
976-CLUB
1.25 PER CALL + TOLL IF ANY
PRODUCED BY
TIC TOC-ROCKWROK-PSYCLONE
& CHILI



**rockwrok-tic toc-srh-chili & flick
FRIDAY NIGHTS!
9PM TIL 4AM**
THE RAGE 3595 SPORTS ARENA
2 DANCE FLOORS AND PATIO
70'S FUNK HOUSE
SCOTT MARTIN - JON BISHOP

PLUS SPECIAL PIMPS AND LIVE PERFORMANCES



**1 ONE DOLLAR DRINKS!
POOL TABLES
HANG 10 TEN.**
BITCHIN' BEFORE YOU WERE BORN.

ATLAS

FRIDAY NIGHTS ARE FOR FUNKIN'!
!!!!!!!!!!!!FREE PARKING IN SPORTS ARENA PARKING LOT!!!!!!!!!!!!
PLEASE DON'T PARK IN HOME DEPOT LOT OR YOU WILL GET TOWED!
FOR BAND AND SPECIAL APPEARANCE INFORMATION
CALL 969-3888 976-CLUB 492-8087 973-9269



TIC TOC-ROCKWROK-SRH-CHILI
**EVERY FRIDAY
ATLAS**
9PM TIL 4AM
SAN DIEGO'S ONLY LEGAL AFTER HOURS
THE RAGE
3595 SPORTS ARENA
DIRECTLY ACROSS FROM THE SAN DIEGO SPORTS ARENA
VALET PARKING AVAILABLE
**\$1.00 DRINKS
ALL NIGHT**
DJ'S
JON BISHOP SCOTT MARTIN
SPECIAL GUEST DJ'S EACH WEEK
CHECK THIS SHIT OUT
100 COUCHES - FIREPLACE-GO-GO'S
LOOPS & LIGHTING BY FELIX
SOUND BY THUNDERHILL
SPECIAL PERFORMANCES EACH WEEK
976-CLUB
1.25 PER CALL + TOLL IF ANY

1993 / 1,200-1,600 People Attended

BACK IN MEXICO

This event was unusual for two reasons: it was produced in Tijuana, Mexico, and it was produced in conjunction with the radio station Z90, which I had never used to promote my events. Z90 kinda hated me.

Let me back up. There was an event in Tijuana a year earlier that resulted in me spending a little time inside a Mexican prison. I hadn't forgotten that experience, nor had I forgotten the warning I received from the powers that be: keep my business out of Mexico. Period. I didn't take that lightly. However, circumstances had changed drastically. The Boss, who I believed to be the reason behind that prison experience, was killed, along with his driver. They were both shot and killed leaving their home in San Diego. It was shocking news at the time. I wished no ill will or harm to The Boss because he was always nice to me, considering the odd way he ended up showing me his affection. When the incident made the news, I didn't start making business plans for Mexico. Quite the opposite. I still had not heard back from the Manager either. I wanted nothing to do with business in Mexico.

Radio Z90 **EL TORITO PUB** **CHILI Productions**

8TH WONDER

Presents

"BORDER JAM 93"

THIS MEMORABLE EVENT WILL FEATURE
LIVE CONCERT PERFORMANCE
BY

RODNEY O

JOE COOLEY

Special Guest
KNIGHTOWL - MC MENACE
- DOME SICKK -

ALSO THE "Z 90" BIG ASS BUS WILL BE THERE GIVING OUT PRIZES
HIP-HOP * FUNK * HOUSE * OLD SCHOOL * RETRO

All this and more
Happening

SATURDAY MAY 8, 1993

At
EL TORITO PUB
IN DOWNTOWN TIJUANA
(on the corner of 3rd. & Revolution)
Doors open at 8:00 p.m.
Drinks special **BUCK A SHOT** till 10:00 p.m.

Several months later, I got a similar voicemail message from someone new in Mexico. His name was Mario, and he had a large venue on Revolution Avenue that could hold 3,500 people every week. My ears perked up hearing this, but there was no way I was producing another party or club in Mexico. I returned Mario's call to be courteous. That call led to an in-person meeting in San Diego. He brought pictures of the venue, but I already knew the venue well. It was El Torito on Revolution Avenue. I had been there several times throughout my teen partygoer years. The club was huge and had two separate levels.



1993

EL TORITO

The problem with owning a large club like El Torito or any nightclub anywhere is competition. Revolution Avenue had more nightclubs within a short distance than you could count. The competition was fierce and on max overload any night of the week. The challenge with an extra-large club is filling it on a regular basis. The smaller nightclubs on Revolution Avenue could have a quarter of the people and still be packed with the vibe and energy of a full nightclub. On the other hand, if El Toritos had double the people compared to the smaller clubs, it would still feel empty, less exciting, and people would leave for clubs with better energy. It's funny how that works, but it's a fact of life for nightclubs. Plus, most nightclubs have a six-month life span of being the hot spot before another hot spot takes over. This is where promoters come in. When a venue isn't drawing a crowd regularly, they can partner with a promoter to reinvent the club for a night that will bring in the crowd. No crowds, no money.

When I met with Mario, he seemed to know everything about my situation. He knew about my past and present clubs and parties. He knew all about my prison experience, how it went down, and who was behind all the dealings that created my unique situation. The fact he knew so much about my situation made me suspicious. I thought Mario must run in the same circles as the Manager and The Boss. And with respect, I said so to Mario. He completely understood my concerns and assured me that he and his partners were 100% legitimate businesses, with zero criminal elements or activities. I acted like I gave him the benefit of the doubt, but I didn't believe him. I mean, why would I? Would you?

Mario pleaded with me to at least give him the opportunity to show me that he and his partners were, in fact, solid, legitimate business owners in Mexico. I posed many questions. Assuming what Mario was telling me is true, how could they protect me from The Boss's associates? The Manager, who I hadn't heard from, and any or all the other associates that I didn't know existed outside my view of the situation? He told me I would never hear from the Manager again. He was on a permanent vacation. He said the Manager was the reason for the bad situation in the first place. The Boss had no bad feelings toward me, and no one connected to him would either. Mario stated up and down that he and his partners had enough power with government officials to protect me. His partners were in the beer and liquor business. They owned hundreds of retail stores and nightclubs throughout Mexico. It was through these legitimate business relationships that they had a substantial power base to ensure my security in Mexico.

Mario wanted me to visit Tijuana with him and meet his partners. Then he asked me to do my due diligence and research everything he was saying. Call me crazy, but I was willing to let Mario show me proof of these statements he was making. I didn't make a snap decision like I did with COLOSSUS. I asked all my friends and my Dad, who knew business owners and big players in Tijuana.

2,000+ People Attended

MARIO

I visited Tijuana with Mario and met his business partners. I asked them all how they knew so much about my business and the situation stemming from the events. They said Tijuana is a small town, and those big events became the talk among many of the club owners on Revolution Avenue. I asked, won't some Revolution Avenue club owners get jealous if I start producing events in competition? What's to stop them from kicking a hornet's nest simply because they want me out of the picture? They were honest and said all of that is possible, but they will have plans to protect me from political, legal, or any other types of snags I'd run into. What can I say? It felt good. You can see the flyer(s), so you know the parties were produced. However, the first event didn't go without any snags or run-ins with the law—the Federales. Most of my friends who didn't know all the details thought I was bat-shit crazy for going back to Mexico.

Before I tell you about the trouble, let me explain the relationship between myself and the radio station Z90 because they became my business partners on this first concert back in Mexico. The management at Z90 flat-out didn't like me. Why? Because I never bought radio campaigns from them to promote my events. And when they had events on the same nights as me, my events would always have more people. I guess that sucked for them. It wasn't like I was ever mean or bad to them. I simply did not need their services.

In the case of this event, when Mario and I finally made an agreement to have CHILI Productions go back to Mexico, I was also starting to work more with record labels. I would help record labels promote their artists with my street promotion team. I proposed the idea of doing a concert at El Toritos with Rodney O and Joe Cooley to their record label. They loved the idea and asked me to team up with the radio station Z90 to produce the event. If that's what it took to make it happen, I was all in. Plus, I thought it was a good idea to make this event as high-profile as possible. If anything was going to happen to me in Mexico, I wanted it to be headline news. I thought having the radio station on board would allow for the most publicity, and it did.

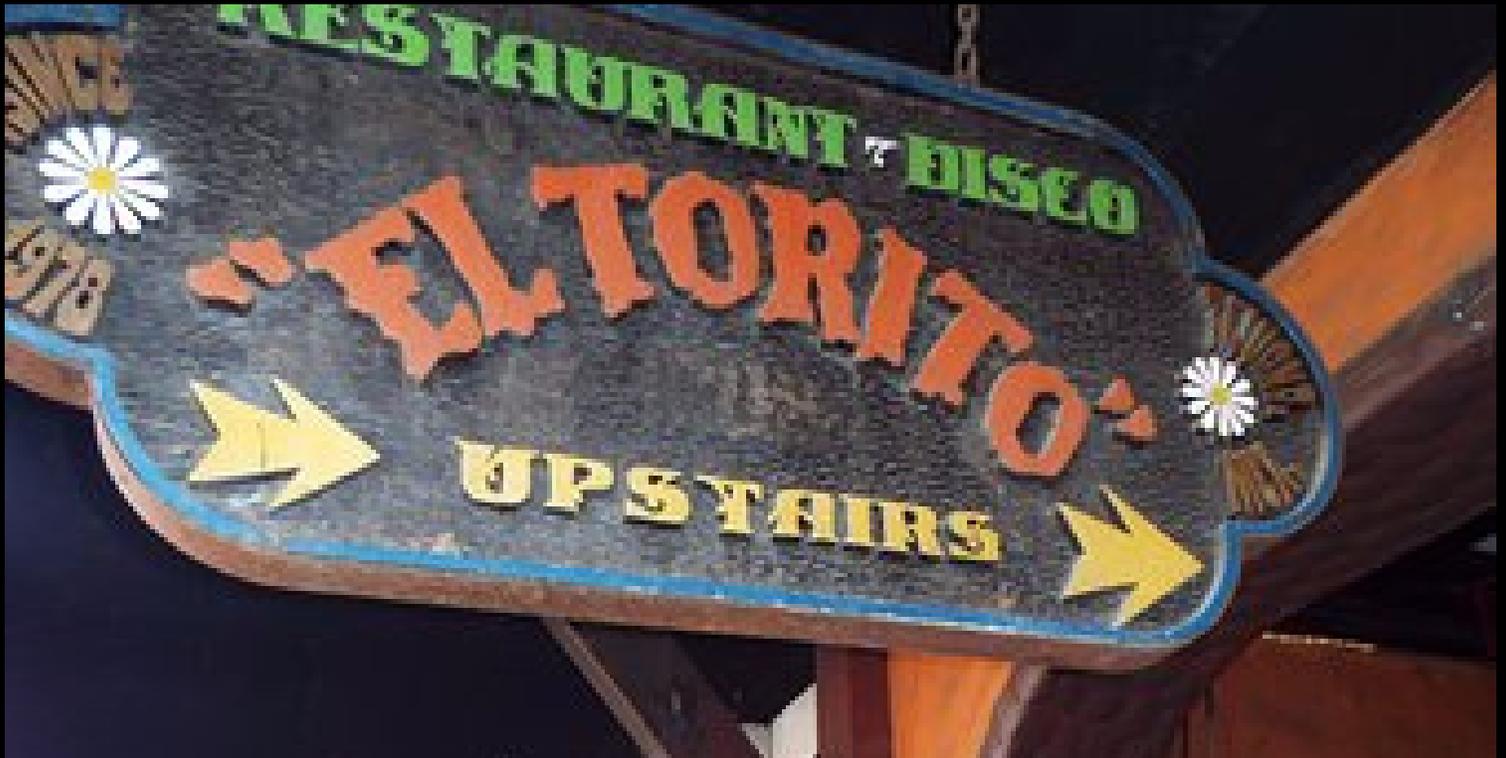
At the time, Z90 was the only station playing Hip-Hop in San Diego. You'd think they'd have more pull with Hip-Hop audiences, but they didn't. I did. The station was more mainstream. My events were more underground and more authentic to the direction of Hip-Hop culture.



2,000+ People Attended

SUPER MARIO

The event was packed, and Rodney O and Joe Cooley were about to hit the stage when the Federales arrived. The party was raging on; however, behind the scenes, in the club's offices, the Federales were telling Mario they were shutting down the event. And they wanted to see me. They were going to take me into custody. All of this was happening in Spanish, so I didn't understand anything other than how serious it was getting. Now, the owners of Z90 were also in the middle of this drama. They weren't keen on the idea of shutting down the event. It was their name and reputation at stake as well. Z90 was operated by a prominent Mexican family, and they were not without influence. I knew that. They weren't arguing for me as much as they were arguing for their reputation. They couldn't have this concert shut down. All the proper work permits were obtained, and nothing was wrong. Clearly, these Federales were simply sent to the event to shut it down. Sent by who? No idea. The Federales did have an interest in me. Whoever sent them must have known I was the one who packed the place. Again, I had no idea what was said, but whatever was said, it worked. From that day forward, Mario had a new nickname: Super Mario. This event became the catalyst for many other events at El Torito with Super Mario.



2,000+ People Attended

FIRE FEST

Fire Fest was the second concert we held at El Torito. Super Mario passed the test two months earlier, so we were back at the same location with a more extensive lineup of Artists and DJs.

I remember it was packed, and there was zero drama with the federalies.

Fire Fest 93 Chili Production & Super Mario Promotions Present
Friday July 30, 1993
El Torito metroplex Downtown Tijuana
on the corner of 3rd and Revolution
18 & up. Full Bar, Balloons in effect
Hosted By The Wholagan Tribe & Mischa
7\$ Presale \$10 at the door
Presale tickets available at AC&S Records 476-1212
El Torito, TJ

Performing Live

King Tee
Proper Grounds
Bronx Style bob
Dred Scott
Juvenile Style
Tommy Gun
Brother Hood From another Hood
Sykoalition

DJ's
Unique • LA Wrekless • Mikeski • Steven FLeX • Johnny King
HIP HOP, hip hop and MORE HIP hOp, wit sum FUNK
Sound & Lights by Airplay-Bass Mechanix
The only club in Tijuana that truly supports Hip Hop.
You can get wit this, or you can get wit that, but this is kinda Phat.
El Torito's and the Promoters thank you for your support.

Info: 619.492.8087

FIRE FEST '93
SEC ROW SEAT

**UNDERGROUND
MUSIC EVENT**
ADMIT ONE THIS DATE ONLY

**CHILI &
MARIO
PRESENT
FIRE FEST '93**

**10 ACTS
10 DJs**

**EL TORITO PUB
TIJUANA
FRIDAY
JULY 30, 1993
8:00PM-4:00AM**
NO REFUND PRICE NO EXCHANGE

**\$7.00
PRESALE**
SEC ROW SEAT

**UNDERGROUND
MUSIC EVENT
KING TEE
PROPERGROUNDS**

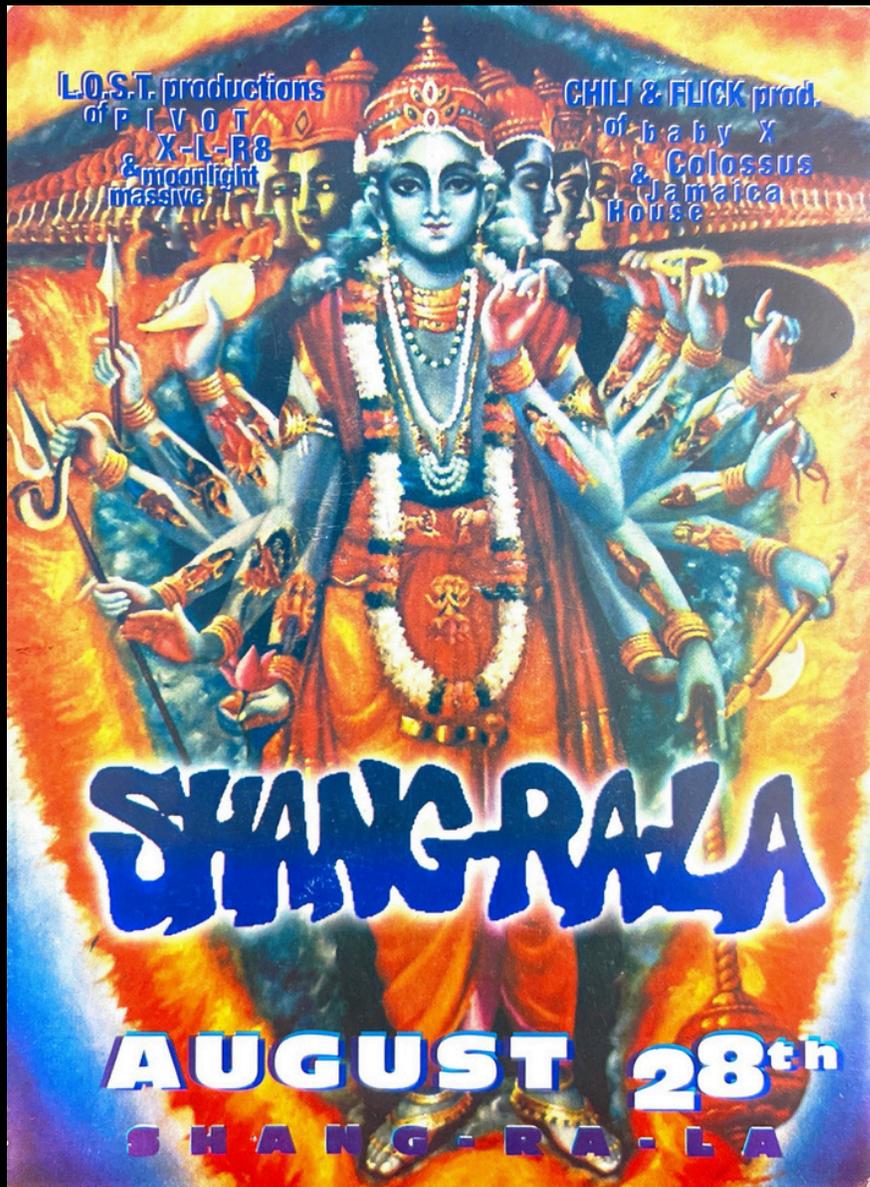
\$10.00 DOOR

619-492-8087

1993 / 1,500+ People Attended

SHANG-RALA

SHANG-RALA was the first "underground" we produced with Super Mario after our second concert, Fire Fest, at El Torito. SHANG-RALA was held in a private nightclub on Revolution Avenue, owned by one of Mario's business partners, and was not open to the public. It was a super nice luxury nightclub located at the far end of Revolution Avenue. A bit out of the way, but close enough, a taxi cab would drop you off at the club. People bought tickets stateside, near the border. The directions told them to cross the border and where to go. The private nightclub didn't have that underground vibe and only held 1,000 people. It was super low production because everything was there. All we had to do was bring DJs and people, and the party was on.



SHANG-RALA
AUGUST 28th
MARK LEWIS
KAOS-X
STEVEN FLEX
B-SIDE

massive:
2-8 watt lasers & 4 emulators
16 cubical video wall • 60,000
WATTS of surround sound •
RAISING Dance Floor
2 STORY SHANG-RALA
multi-level

NEW location
100% BUST FREE

[619] 259-5385
[213] 259-6698

\$5 for first 200 presale tickets
\$10 there after || \$15 day of...

HOLEBODY
619-755-4014

1993 / 1,000+ People Attended

POWER SURGE

POWER SURGE was a theme borrowed from the original SURGE events. We held these gatherings on Sunday nights at El Torito in Tijuana, Mexico, with Super Mario. We also got less static from the other club owners. On Friday and Saturday nights, it's a given that most clubs on Revolution Avenue will be packed. However, filling a club on a Sunday night was a much tougher challenge. We worked hard to make our club the place to be on Sunday nights. And it was.



PLUG IN!
SUNDAY. 30
9PM to 3AM
4 Rooms • 2 Levels
3500 Capacity
 PREPARE TO BESHOCKED
Level 1 With a 100 ft. Cathedral Ceiling
Level 2 Indoor & Outdoor

VYNIL VOLTAGE GENERATED BY HIP HOP/OLDSKOOL DJ'S

STEVEN FLEX LA WREKLESS
STYLE JOHNNY KING X-RAY
MR. TEE JOESKI

SHOCK THERAPISTS **HOUSE & TEKNO DJ'S**

B-SIDE J. SINISTER RAGE
QUICKSILVA MR. MYXZLPTK

At the new **El Torito Metroplex** in Downtown Tijuana
 On the Corner of 3rd & Revolution
 18 & Up w/ID • Full Bars & A Special Level for Young Adults

NO SCHOOL OR WORK ON MONDAY...SO POWER SURGE ON SUNDAY

Guest Hosts: **Jay-Q • Underconstruction • Dig Dug**
Nappy Grafx • Wholagans • Silly Enterprise Ent.

Status Line: **619.470-7652** Splice Line: **619.492-8087**

PRESALE
 Tickets available at AC & S Records
\$7 Presale
 Buy early...this event will sell out
\$10 Day of the Event

AC&S RECORDS 665 H Street Suite 6 Chula Vista 476-1212
Pacific AUDIO SYSTEMS Pager Repair Recrystallization
Solar Eclipse ENT COMPANY Escondido 747-6686
TRIBAL GEAR

que wear **GROUND ZERO** PERFORMANCE

PRINTED BY PIMP PRINTING 619.275-0293

POWER UPS 2 Project 3, Wholagan Tribe, Severe & Zadak of TOP 2 BOT'M, DYSE 1 Cloze, No Sellout, MicFresh, Bo Bo, Yambo, MC Reply, Flavor, SCAE 1, L.O.D., L.P.S.D., Phyme Suspect, Jose of AC & S, Naughty Co., Universal Zulu Nation, Kool T, Wildstyle, 4th Dimension, Dizzy Dee, West Coast Rock Steady Crew, ROB1, Groovies, Just 1 & Max 1, DJ Jam of Jam Ent., DJ Rhettmatic, DJ S.O.S., M.I.A., Phunkadelic Hobos, 2 Kidz from New York, 3-Style No. Cal., Hype Squad, 2-Step, Twice As Nice, Blahop & Alliance Ent., N.A.P.S., Naughty Desirez, UGR, Frequency, Pure Energy, D-Siples, Scam & Jam Physcotics, Eddie 8-Ball, Mad Funk Muzic, Realistix, IRS, Xerox, First Choice, C-Sharp, Tic-Toc, Rockwrok, SRH, Drowzy, S.D. Brass Mechanics, Legend LA & SD, United Kingdom, Bahay Tribe, Unique Style, STR8 Edge, Smiley D., Kutfather, Greyboy, DJ Icy Ice, FBI, T.O.C., DJ Unique, G-Rock, DJ Slyde

So. Cal's 3-Style Attractions of DJ Scenarios & Blow Your Mind 1 & 2 **GENERATING**

Universal Promotions **THE JUICE...** Chili Productions of One World & Shazam of Colossus, Baby X and Wild Kingdom

Power Surge

SUNDAY MAY 30 1993

ONLY \$7 PRESALE \$10 AT DOOR



POWER SURGE '93

CARD 1 of 7

MPYRE
GRAFIH93

1993-1995 / 1,000-1,500 People Attended

SUNDAY NIGHTS

By establishing POWER SURGE as the go-to Sunday night event, we left Friday and Saturday nights open for us to produce clubs in San Diego. This dual-city strategy allowed us to maximize our reach and keep the party scene vibrant on both sides of the border.

POWER SURGE was an 18+ club we produced regularly, bringing together a dynamic mix of music, energy, and an eclectic crowd. It wasn't just about filling a venue; it was about creating an experience that drew people back week after week. Through relentless promotion and a keen understanding of our audience, we turned Sunday nights into a must-attend event, ensuring that the weekend's excitement extended slightly longer. Later, we moved the event stateside to a new 18+ venue we found.

From the creators of SHAZAM, COLOSSUS, DETOUR & WILD KINGDOM
Universal and Chili bring you...

POWER SURGE

SUNDAY JULY 9, 1995 A.D.

at Sirens in Mission Beach
3105 Ocean Front Walk Mission Beach
behind the roller Coaster

18 & UP

HIP HOP CLUB INFO
DJ MIKESKI (619) 544-4551
HOUSE \$2 OFF W/ COLLEGE ID.
DJ DAQYRE
RETRO
DJ RUE
W/ GUEST DJ'S EVERY WEEK!!!

Multi-floor Monster Sound & Lighting...
to blow your MIND

Pager giveaways by
Pacific Audio
422-8508

FROM THE CREATORS OF COLOSSUS, SHAZAM, DETOUR & WILD KINGDOM...
UNIVERSAL & CHILI PRESENT

Power Surge

EVERY SUNDAY
BACK-2-SCHOOL PARTY SEPT. 10
AT SIRENS IN MISSION BEACH
BEHIND THE ROLLER COASTER
3105 OCEAN FRONT WALK

MULTI-LEVEL FULL BAR FOR 21 & UP WITH ID
18 & UP WITH ID
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S NEWEST & MOST ELABORATE NITECLUB
OUTSIDE PATIO

HIP HOP. RETRO. HOUSE
POWERED UP BY DJ'S:
MIKESKI - RUE - DAQYRE
GUEST DJ'S EVERY WEEK

SHOUTOUTS TO SDSU, UCSD, USD, MESA, SOUTHWESTERN & GROSSMONT COLLEGE.

SPONSORED BY:
AUDIO SYSTEMS
285 BROADWAY, DUBLA VISTA
315 WEST 10TH ST. # 200 SAN DIEGO, CA 92101
MPYRE GRAPH 1995 (MPYRE@AOL.COM)

UNIVERSAL & CHILI PRESENT

Power Surge

BACK-2-SCHOOL PARTY SEPT. 10

EVERY SUNDAY
18 & UP W/ID
FULL BAR FOR 21 & UP W/ID

1.800.975.0203
1.619.544.4551

AT SIRENS IN MISSION BEACH BEHIND THE ROLLER COASTER

So. Cal's 3-Style Attractions GENERATING
of Da' Scenarios & Blow Your Mind 1 & 2

Universal Promotions THE JUICE...
of One World & Shazam Chili Productions
of Colossus, Baby X and Wild Kingdom

Power Surge

1993

SUNDAY MAY

MPYRE GRAPH

POWER SURGE'S 5th

PLUG IN! SUNDAY • MAY 30th
9PM to 3AM
4 Rooms..2 Levels
3500 Capacity

PREPARE 2B SHOCKED
Level 1 with a 100 foot cathedral ceiling
Level 2 indoor & outdoor

no school or work on Monday SO POWER SURGE on Sunday

At the New El Torito MetroPlex in Downtown Tijuana or the Corner of 3rd & Revolution 18 & Up w/ID • Full Bars & A Special Level: 4 Young Adults

STATUS LINE 619.470-7652
SPICE LINE 619.492-8087

CARD OF 7

1993-1995

PLAYERS & PIMPS MACDADDY BALL

The name says it all. The DJ lineup spoke for itself.

hustler's lounge:

DJ **jam** of
jamacia house
DJ **greyboy**
DJ **steven flex**
EQUALS=
old school,
hip hop,
dancehall.

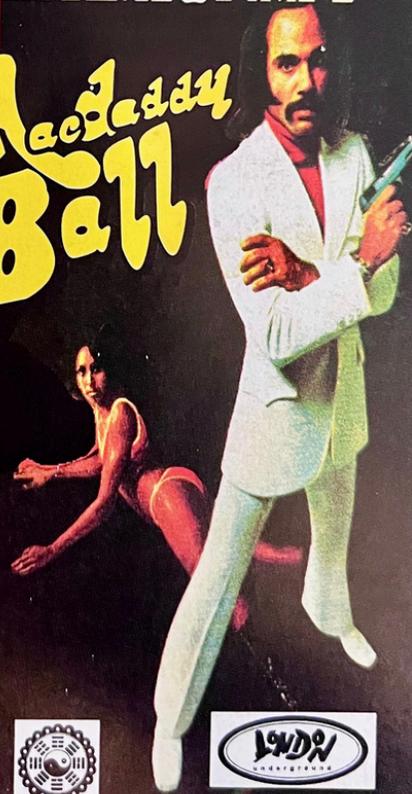
Special guest DJ
straight from NYC
DEF JAM COMEDY HOUR
KID CAPRI

A funk convention
for all the funky
Hustlers, Hoes,
Macs, Turkeys and
Jive time suckers

Club 860
Friday Sept. 4th

PLAYERS & PIMPS

**MacDaddy
Ball**



patio:

DJ **joey jimenez**
DJ **B-side**
spinning the
DEEP house grooves
and techNo

special guest
performance by
LPSD

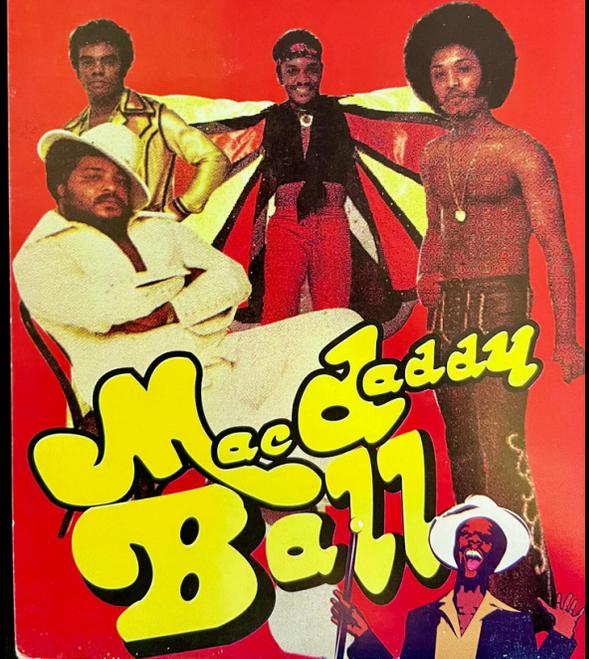
guest hosts:
jose of AC&S,
x-ray of 3 style,
eric etabari,
one nation,
dj S.O.S,
gumbie,
charlie rock,
& linda of tomatos

\$3 off w/;
8track,
big oracy hat,
bell-bottoms
(all nite)
\$5 before 10pm
music giveaways from ac&s



J2 PRODUCTIONS / CHILI & FLICK
unite to bring you

PLAYERS & PIMPS



**MacDaddy
Ball**

Another
CHILI
PRODUCTIONS
18 & Up w/ id Full Bar For 21 & up w/ id
Joint
the Return of the
**Players & Pimps
MacDaddy Ball**

at Club Sirens
In Mission Beach
behind the rollercoaster



Sunday Oct. 8th

We need the funk. You gotta have that funk.
Sundays al over San Diego are kinda bunk.
So we offer to you a funk convention for all the funky
Hustlers, Hoes, Macs, Turkeys and Jive time suckers

Dj Scott Martin
with tall stacks of butter
drenched Hip Hop & Funk
NO 619.544.4551

1993 / 1000-1,200 People Attended

SOUL FOOD

SOUL FOOD was a mix of hip-hop and deep house music. We produced this weekly club with some East Coast friends. It was a small venue with a stage, and it definitely had a more East Coast vibe, which is what we were going for because it was different than most clubs we had at that time.

92' Chili & Flick Productions of the Birth of Baby X, Surge, Atomic Insecticide, Shazam, Jamaica House S.D., Colossus, the Seed, Shangrala, STR8 Hip Hop No Chaser, Wild Kingdom, and Knott's Berry Farm Rave America teams up with O3W in 93' to bring you...

saturday jan. 9th 1993
and plenty of Saturdays after

7 hours of grub 9pm to 4am \$5 w/ flyer get in free be for 10pm \$3 after hours 2am to 4am 21+ /id open to 18+ after 2am slammin', sic, ass, raw dj's servin' up scoops & scoops of all the dope underground beats you can't get anywhere!

DEEJAY'S
Steven Flex & Unique (rotating) s.d. hip hop wizards
Maestro J. Sinister Bronx N.Y.C. Loft & House sound by: Dynamo
lights by: 3-style
loops by: General Hospital hosted by Original Zulu Nation & Daddy Roots of Trade Roots.
Phoneline: 619.492.8087

sponsors:
California Limousine 619.276.4227, Stoopid, Fat, Top to Bottom, Black I, Out to Sell, & Pacific Drive

Directions: From; 5 N. to Old Town ave. exit. Left onto Old Town ave. continue to 3-way stop sign. Left turn on Hancock St. Go 4 blocks. From; 8 W. to 5 S. exit on old town ave. at 3-way stop. Take Hancock st. go 4 blocks. 1845 Hancock st. down from the mission brewery



CHILI & FLICK AND O3W IN CONJUNCTION WITH SJOBECK

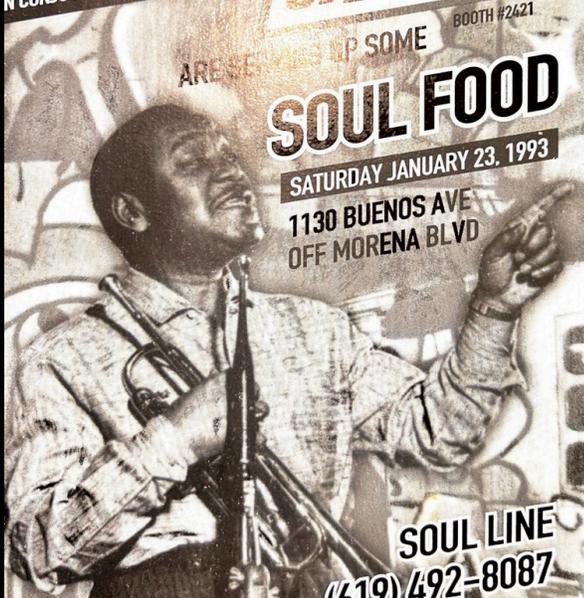
ARE SERVING UP SOME SOUL FOOD

BOOTH #2421

SATURDAY JANUARY 23, 1993

1130 BUENOS AVE OFF MORENA BLVD

SOUL LINE (619) 492-8087



chili & flick in conjunction with O3W brings

SOUL FOOD

souline: 619.492.8087 saturday jan. 9th



THE NEW MECCA OF UNDERGROUND

HOUSE IS THE FEELING HIP HOP IS THE HEART

PERFORMING LIVE - ATLANTIC RECORDING ARTIST O.F.T.B. ALONG WITH L.P.S.D

SERVING YOU THIS EVENING DJ STEVEN FLEX (SD) DJ UNIQUE (SD)

ECCENTRIC HOUSE FOR THE ECCENTRIC DANCER MAESTRO J SINISTER (BRONX) MAESTRO FELIX PRINCE (NYC)

RARE GROOVES ICY - LEE (SD)

DANCE HALL: RAM JAM W/COMMANDER JACKSON & SPIDERMAN

PROPS & SHOUTS: ROCK STEADY CREW (WEST & EAST COAST), PACIFIC DRIVE: SAL BARBIER, SEAN SHEFFY, JOVONTE TURNER, RICK HOWARD, AC&S, I.R.S., HIP HOP SHOP, DRAWLIS, TODD ZWIG, NEBULOUS, ROCKWROK, STREET BEAT, LATIN UNDERGROUND, UNIVERSAL SOUND, 3 STYLE, O.P. ZULU'S, FAT, STOOPID, BREED, S.O.S., URB, RAP PAGES, STRAT FROM THE LIP, CONARTI, FAT CAP, THIRDO RAIL, RICK, DOLLAR BILL, ALL FOR ONE, RHYME SYNDICATE, GREENY GREG, CHOROLATE, DJ LINK, DJ JAM, GREYBOY, UNIVERSAL ZULU NATION, SOURCE, AFRIKA ISLAM, TRICK, PLUS MAG, TRADE ROOTS, ZUNG, SF ZULU, BATWEAR, CHRISTIAN HOSI, ZIGG-ZAGG, BLOOD OF ABRAHAM, DEAD TO THE WORLD, ZERO MOB, ONE NATION, CRICKET B, FRANK Z, D.A.M., POSSE, DJ QUIK, SECOND TO NONE, DONGER, CHRISTIAN FLETCHER, JUSTIN POSTIN, STEVE BOISON, BILLY VALDES, X-LARGE, DJ RAGS, BILL, PECULIAR, GERALDINE, SMILE, JOHN REEVES, 8-BALL CLOTHING, DANNY WAY, DANNY MARE FRED ORLANDO, HATCH, EVAR, TIC-TAC, B.U.N., TAXI, MIKE MARTINEZ, REVELATION SOUND, DYNAMO SOUND, TAYLOR TOSH, CAN CONTROL, AFRICAN UNITY, FLAVOR MAG, DOPE, STATIC, SUGAR, MIKE MESSEY, TEFFOD, S.J.N. NYC, AFRICA BAMBATA, AMID, RED ALERT, SIM (SD), THRASHER MAG, BIG BROTHER, TRANS WORLD, SLAP, 26 RED, CLOBBER, ANARCHIC, BOMB MAG, OUT 2 SELL, BLACK I, WEED WEAR, HEMP PERVERT, LABEL WHORE, JAMAICA HOUSE

1130 BUENOS AVE. OFF MORENA BLVD. S.D. EVERY SATURDAY 21+/9PM-2AM SOUL LINE (619) 492-8087



1993 / 500-700 People Attended

FRESNO

I got hired to book a concert, and as usual, it all started with a voicemail. The gig was up in Fresno, California, this time at The Fresno Fairgrounds.

I booked all the groups and DJs. We rented two large vans and embarked on a wild road trip through LA, picking up all the artists and DJs—like herding cats high on something other than caffeine—before heading to Fresno.

Over the years, the road trips I've experienced with recording artists have turned out to be just like the movies. In some ways, it seems like many artists try to live up to those rock 'n' roll clichés we see on screen. These road trips were always filled with excitement and drama, often in excess. There are too many stories to share here, and most can't be told.

The concert itself was packed to the rafters, and the energy was electric. The afterparty was just as wild, and the afterparty after the afterparty. Well... It was one of those nights.

peace productions presents
saturday december 11th 1993

hip hop INVASION

of **FRESNO**

PEACE JAM

performing live...

unite
peace
on our streets
let the
violence
cease

and
MISTA GRIMM
indo smoke

plus special guests...

RODNEY O & JOE COOLEY
"Ya Don't Hear Me Though"
"Humps on the Blvd."

hosted by **RAGE** "the wild one"
spinnin' the hottest wax on the wheels of steel...
san diego's own underground

record, sticker and CD giveaways from
Capitol, Tuff Break, Epic, Skanless, Psychotic

Legion Of Doom's
DJ RAGE & DJ MIKSKI

and clothing giveaways by the following phat street gear companies...

FUCT **Fresh Juice** **CONAR** **FUNK** **BOMB** **BLUNT** **SOUL**

get ya tickets at
midtown sports 209-733-1817
DJs 209-224-0333
colkins 209-591-2422

show starts at 7:00pm
at the **FRESNO FAIRGROUNDS**
1121 chance avenue - 209-591-7845
for info call 209-638-7613

presale \$12
\$15 at da door

1993 / 2,000+ People Attended

WICKED

every WEDNESDAY
STARTING JAN. 29TH

92.5fm raggamuffin crew kick the dance hall style

**YOUR HOST TEACHER RICHIE
AND HIS SELECTORS
JUST I AND
KISSIE I**

PRIME DRINK CUTS

**1\$ BEERS ALL NIGHT
STARTING AT 9:00
ALL DRINKS START
AT 50 cents AND GO
UP 5 cents EVERY**

juice & water bar
PUT IN EFFECT BY

Grand Re-Opening



Saturday June 24th
SHAZAM

Friday
STARTING JUNE 22nd

EVERY WEDNESDAY at SMOKIES NITE CLUB

A Chili Productions Joint

SCHOOL
DAB
AKA

CHILI
UGLY
Sin City

BUTTERBALL

FRIDAY NOV. 29

5 BANDS ONLY
5 BUCKS

MIND-BLOWING PERFORMANCES by
DADDY LONGLEGS
SUB SOCIETY
HOUSE OF SUFFERING
BLIND JUSTICE
SHINDIG

AND ON THE 2ND LEVEL
ZERO MOB
with **DJ KALI K.**
on the wheels of steel

**BEERS ALL NIGHT
ONLY \$1.00!**

LOCATED AT
PEANUTS & BEER

SPONSORED BY
H STREET
MAJOR GRAPHICS

BROUGHT 2 U BY
CHILI & FLICK
MAYNOLLY DESIGNS

ALL AGES

ATOMIC INSECTICIDES

ATURDAY FEB. 29

ENTRO DE LA RAZA
104 PARK BLVD. BALBOA PARK

BAND DETECTOR

HERION
LAMANATOR
WORLD TRUST
FROM LA
HOUSE OF SUFFERING
SUB SOCIETY
411 FROM LA **235-6135**

PURE

Salmon House

1970 Quivira Way

October 14th
GREYBOY ALLSTARS

Fish & The Sea Weeds
DJ. Ryan Somers & Guest DJs

Hip Hop **FUNK & 70's**

\$1.00 WELLS
INFO:
270-1373
544-4551

HOSTED BY
PLEASURE FORCE RAGE

CHILI
UGLY
Sin City

SCHOOL
DAB
AKA

CHILI
UGLY
Sin City

straight hip hop no chaser

rought to you by
chili and flick j2 3style
productions productions
osts wit d mos

nation hip hop shop can control magazine
rom east and west the original

ROCK STEADY CREW

friday sept 11th 18 up
at the marriot in mission valley full bar w/

thing give away
by:
erworld element
for more info
213.259.6698
619.492.8087

dj alywod jamaca house l.a.
xray 3style s.d.
steven flex psychone
dj jam l.a.-s.d.
w/ special guest from s.f.
mix master mike rock steady

special performances and acts to be announced

sjobeck pacific drive sugar phillies blunt

SALMON HOUSE

1970 Quivira Way

October 28th

Fish and the Seaweed

**DJ MIKE SKI
DJ RUE**

INFO
270-1373
544-4551

HOSTED BY
PLEASURE FORCE RAGE

Sanctuary

CHILI
UGLY
Sin City

SANCTUARY

CHILI
Sin City
UGLY

FRIDAY MAY 29

sprung monkey
&
sam i am
from Berkeley

&
whack!
&
broccolli
shoeshine
&
juke
on lookout records

\$6 - 6:30 PM
THE GERMAN AMERICAN HALL
1017 SOUTH MOLLISON
SJOBECK, PLUS MAGAZINE,
SMD PROD.
CHILLI AND FLICK
INFO LINE: 492.8087

SJOBECK CHILI FLICK

1-8 EAST TO EL CAJON,
EXIT CHASE, LEFT ON SOUTH
MOLLISON

PLUS Magazine and SJOBECK present

EAT YOUR VEGGIES

FRIDAY MAY 1

FLICK

KU DE TAH
DARK ILLUSION
WHACK!
SHINDIG

plus special guests
Dahrel, Sergi Fresh, Tim
Godfather & Koko Barr

BEGINS AT 7PM - \$FIVE
AT UCSD'S CHE CAFE

INFO
270-1373
544-4551

HOSTED BY
PLEASURE FORCE RAGE

Salmon House

1970 Quivira Way

October 21st
PHAZZ

Fish and the Seaweed

DJ Izzy & guest DJs
HIP HOP FUNK & 70s

INFO
270-1373
544-4551

HOSTED BY
PLEASURE FORCE RAGE

SANCTUARY

CHILI
Sin City
UGLY

SATURDAYS

PRO SPORTS MGT

Pro Sports Management (PSM) was a business management firm for professional athletes and entertainers. In late 1993, they began courting me to open their entertainment division. At the time, PSM managed the finances of nearly two hundred high-profile athletes, each making millions of dollars per year. They had no entertainment clients before bringing me on board in January 1994. My task was to start the entertainment division from scratch.

While I knew nothing about financial management, investing, or estate planning, I had a network of successful entertainers. My job was to introduce these entertainers to PSM so they could manage their financial affairs. I hadn't been an employee of many companies before, but this was the coolest job I ever had. I received my first company AMEX card with an expense allowance for lavish entertainment, lunches, dinners, limos, and jets—all in the quest to set up appointments with the movers and shakers of the entertainment industry.

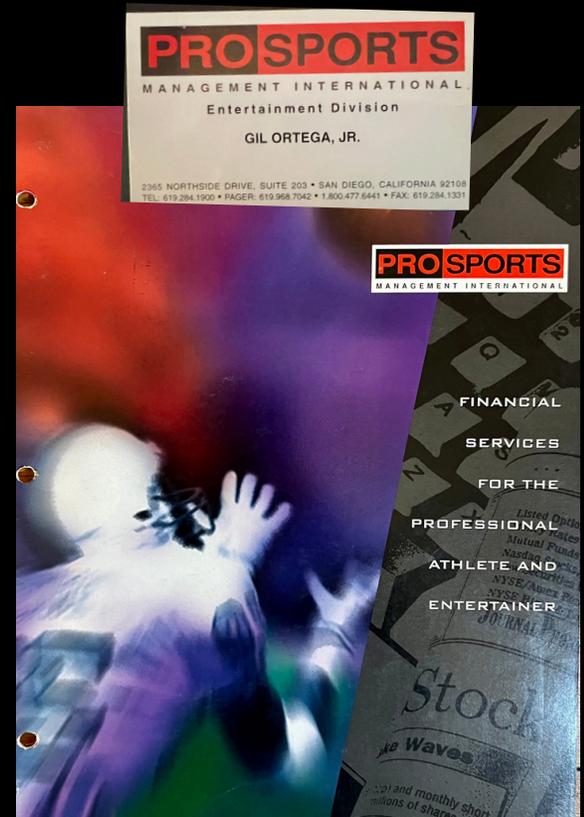
All my work as a promoter had made me a professional schmoozer for PSM. I had retired from producing events to producing sit-down appointments with successful entertainers for PSM, including mainly producers and artists.

To be perfectly honest, I was surprised that a job like this actually existed—or that I would be paid handsomely to pursue such an endeavor. I built a team of people to work with me in a beautiful office and mapped out how to get to the candidates for potential meetings.

When I wasn't in the office, which was most of the time, I was in the field seeking meetings with the who's who of the entertainment industry.

This meant going to all the events where industry bigwigs would be. I'd offer a limo or jet, a whole red carpet experience, to bring them to San Diego for a sit-down meeting to hear our pitch for financial services. I'd introduce the entertainers to the pro athletes and vice versa. We'd go out for a night on the town. It was awesome.

It really was a dream job, until it wasn't.



1994-1996

LISA

My cousin, Lisa Ashook, was deeply entrenched in the entertainment business for many years. She served as Jim Wiatt's assistant for thirteen years while he was co-CEO of International Creative Management (ICM) and followed him when he became the CEO of William Morris Agency (WMA), overseeing motion pictures, television, music, publishing, theater, and digital media. The stories I heard from her were legendary. Talking to Lisa about the entertainment industry played a big part in my decision to take the PSM job. She had always wanted me to become an agent and thought this job at PSM would be a good springboard for pursuing that career. She was my mentor and helped me navigate the pitfalls of the industry.

For two years, from 1993-1994, I took a full load of extension classes at UCLA, focusing on TV/Film and the music business. Before that, I had graduated with an associate degree in Video/Film from my local community college. Despite having zero interest in going to college straight out of high school, my mom had applied for Pell Grants for me to attend community college. If she hadn't applied for those grants, I wouldn't have gone. She showed me the check, and my college and books were paid for. So, I figured, since I needed to be on campus passing out flyers, I might as well take some classes. In the process, I found an interest in video and film production. Talking with my cousin Lisa about the industry fostered that interest.

During the two years I attended UCLA, I lived in San Diego. I would drive up to LA for evening classes, stay the night with my cousins, attend classes at UCLA the next evening, and then drive back to San Diego after classes. I had to run my promotion business in San Diego, so I couldn't live in LA full-time. The UCLA extension classes were taught by industry professionals. They were seriously the best education in the world for the entertainment industry.

For example, in one of the TV/Film classes on TV syndication, the guest lecturers were Lucie Salhany, Chairman of the FOX Network, and Mel Harris, who served as President of Paramount Television Group and then Sony Pictures Entertainment Television Group. The class was full of people who worked at Paramount.

I was in the front row, absorbing everything and engaging in the moment, kind of in awe. The topic was reality TV and its future. At the time, only two reality TV shows were airing: COPS and MTV's Real World. There was a great discussion about the future of reality TV, and most people there saw no future in it.



1994-1996

UCLA

The assignment during class was for all the students to come up with a treatment for a reality TV show. The challenge was then to pitch the show at a major television network by the next week's class and report back on how the pitch went. I asked around the class how we were supposed to get a meeting with a major television network. Many of the students who worked at Paramount were helpful and got me a contact at FOX Network. I imagine it was helpful that Lucie Salhany gave us the assignment. I pitched a version of People's Court for the MTV audience with DJs and a bit of a nightclub flare. Of course, that's what I'd pitch. My show didn't get picked up, but it was an amazing experience.

It's funny to think back to the discussion of how pessimistic the class, mostly filled with Paramount executives, was about the future of reality TV. Little did we know.

In addition to the TV/Film classes, the music business classes at UCLA were equally amazing. I took an Artist Management class taught by Ken Kragen, who was the personal manager to numerous musicians, including country music stars Trisha Yearwood, Travis Tritt, and Kenny Rogers for many years. He is probably best known for his role in organizing the 1985 benefit record "We Are the World" and the 1986 charity event Hands Across America. Ken was cool. He took my calls and even met with me later.

One of the music business classes focused on the business of Hip Hop music, offered an internship to one student in the class. After I showed the teacher my portfolio of flyers, it was clear that nobody else was going to get that internship except me. And I got it. The internship was with Tuff Break Records, a division of A&M Records. This meant that between classes, I'd work at the A&M Records offices once a week. After the internship ended, I turned the gig into a paid account. They put me on payroll to promote all the A&M Records in San Diego. After that, I secured numerous record promotion contracts with many major and independent record labels.

These experiences at UCLA were transformative, offering me unparalleled insights and connections in the entertainment industry. The practical knowledge and hands-on opportunities I received were invaluable, setting the stage for my future endeavors. The internships and classes were not just educational; they were a direct pathway into the heart of the music business, bridging my academic pursuits with real-world applications. This unique blend of education and industry experience was pivotal in shaping my career.

1994-1996

HUSTLE

Leading up to my job at PSM, I was doing everything I could to learn about the entertainment business and meet the people driving the industry. This included personally managing groups I thought had that special something. I secured numerous production deals for various local groups around San Diego. I've lost count of how many hours I've spent in recording studio sessions—it must be in the thousands. One of the most memorable sessions was at the legendary Record Plant in LA. We were recording there at the same time as Prince and Julio Iglesias. I never got to meet Prince, but Julio came out of the studio to relax at Record Plant's jacuzzi and play some pool. I got to play Julio Iglesias in a game of pool, and I beat him. He might have let me win, but it was a fun experience nonetheless.

Managing local artists was something I had been doing since I was a teenager. I was getting better at understanding the music industry, reading every book on the subject, and taking as many classes as I could. While I was securing production deals in legit recording studios, my attorney, John B. Von Passenheim, asked me to come by his office in Pacific Beach to talk about managing one of his clients. I went to his office and was introduced to Jewel Kilcher, who was living in her van, homeless at the time. We talked about what she was interested in doing, and I planned to see her perform a few days later at The Inner Change coffee house, which was near where I lived. When I arrived at the little coffee house, it was packed. There were more LA dealmakers in the audience than I could count. There was zero chance I was getting this gig. Jewel Kilcher was discovered by Inga Vainshtein in 1993 while performing at that coffee house. Within weeks, Jewel was driving a brand new car and no longer living in her van. She had a new attorney too. The rest is history.

What I find interesting is that Inga Vainshtein worked as the Vice President of Production at Paramount Pictures from 1991 to 1992. In this role, she supervised the development and production of several films, including the original "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles" movie with Gary Propper. It's a small world, and the world operates in a unique manner that we don't always see unless we're looking. The saying, "God acts in mysterious ways," indeed. It wasn't meant to be for me, and in the end, it wasn't meant to be for Inga either. Inga says she was fired by Jewel in early 1998 when Jewel's mother replaced her as Jewel's manager. Inga filed a \$10 million lawsuit against Jewel and her mother, claiming breach of contract and wrongful termination. The California Labor Commission later ruled in 2001 that Inga had violated talent agency laws and used illegal booking tactics while managing Jewel, voiding their original 1994 management contract. Inga appealed and demanded that Jewel be forced to pay her \$1,843,450 in unpaid commissions. The appeal was denied; the court has not yet reviewed Inga's still-pending original lawsuit.

MANAGEMENT

My Journey in Music Management: So Close Yet So Far

After the first year at PSM, I began landing a few recording artists. The first was UNV (Universal Nubian Voices), an American R&B group formed in 1991 in Lansing, Michigan. The quartet consisted of brothers John "J-Ski" and Shawn Powe. They were signed to Madonna's Maverick/Warner Bros. label, where J. Poww served as the primary songwriter, penning the group's hit songs. Their debut album, *Something's Gonna Go My Way*, almost went platinum.

UNV released their debut album, *Ghetto Novelle*, in 1993 on Maverick Records, which spawned the hit single "Something's Gonna Go My Way." The group's name, UNV, stood for "Universal Nubian Voices," representing their goal of spreading a positive message through their music. Despite their initial success, internal conflicts and creative differences led to their breakup. They spent over \$600K producing their second album with big-name producers on several tracks, but sales were sluggish, exacerbating their internal conflicts.

The second client I landed was Born Jamericans, a reggae/hip-hop duo formed in Washington, D.C., in the 1990s. The group consisted of Norman "Notch" Howell and Horace "Edley Shine" Payne. Their debut album, *Kids from Foreign*, was released in 1994 on the hip-hop label Delicious Vinyl, and their second album, *Yardcore*, came out in 1997, also on Delicious Vinyl. Both albums were chart successes in the United States reggae and R&B charts. The group was great, and the two guys were awesome clients. Plus, they were on a great record label. Delicious Vinyl was one of the longest-running truly independent labels, operating for over 30 years until the early 2000s. They pioneered the alternative hip-hop sound and helped launch the careers of artists like Tone Lōc, Young MC, The Pharcyde, and Masta Ace.

The third client I landed was The Dove Shack, a hip-hop group from Long Beach, California, known for contributing to the G-funk sound. The trio consisted of rappers C-Knight (Arnez Blount) and 2Scoops, along with singer Bo-Roc. The Dove Shack was signed to G-Funk/Def Jam Records. They first gained recognition when featured on Warren G's debut album *Regulate...G Funk Era* in 1994, appearing on the track "This Is the Shack." In 1995, they released their debut album, *This Is the Shack*, including their hit single "Summertime in the LBC." The song peaked at No. 54 on the Billboard Hot 100 and No. 11 on the Hot Rap Songs chart.

They became our clients before they produced their album *This Is the Shack*. One morning, during the album's production, I got a call from their label, Def Jam. I was told that the group was having difficulty showing up to the recording studio on time because they didn't have transportation. The solution was that they needed to buy cars, and we needed to help them buy the cars. So, I drove up from San Diego and picked up the group in Long Beach to buy three cars.

1994-1996

ROLLERCOASTER

When I picked up the guys, they said we needed to stop by Western Union to get the money to buy the three cars. I asked what they meant by Western Union. They told me Def Jam was sending them \$45,000 to Western Union. Turns out none of them had bank accounts. I'm like, what? There we are, in the hood, at a Western Union, getting \$45,000 cash. Do you know how much the fees are for sending \$45,000 through Western Union? A lot! They got \$45,000 cash and had instructions from Def Jam to give it to me. I'm holding \$45,000 cash, and we shop for three cars in the hood. We're driving into used car lots, one after another, looking for cars. No doubt, at least two of the guys insisted on buying low-riders. The last of the three cars we purchased was from a car lot in Compton. The car salesman looked like Eazy-E straight out of the music video. I'm doing my best to negotiate a deal with the remaining funds. We did it. It took all day, but they all had cars. They would come back and pick up the cars the next day. As I drove the guys back to their houses, they asked me if I knew what their name, Dove Shack, meant. I had no idea. It stood for the dope house. They told me we had better get out of Compton before it got dark because they're from Long Beach, which could be dangerous. Noticing my nervous response, they laughed at me and said they were only kidding—kinda.

The next day, I returned to the PSM offices and reported my escapades with The Dove Shack. I told them we were doing financial management for guys who don't have bank accounts yet. We only kind of laughed, and all said I sure hope their album blows up. Let's just say legal issues became the group's Achilles heel.

In the first year at PSM, getting these clients was our foot in the door to the rosters of Delicious Vinyl, Maverick/Warner Bros., and Def Jam. We had meetings with a slew of amazing artists. Time after time we'd run into the "rollercoaster" syndrome of hot and cold financial status with artists you'd think were doing very well.

Going into the second year at PSM, we could see the challenges in the financial affairs of recording artists. I still wanted to start an indie record label and PSM was showing interest in backing this endeavor. I also had a friend who was a wealthy lawyer interested in backing an indie label. We had gone as far as formalizing an entity to sign groups together. There was an artist I had my eye on, Michael Knott. He lived in Orange County, California. I'd say he was one of the most talented artists I've ever met. He had as great a sense for business as he did music. I remember he would never let me pay for lunch. He was just the nicest guy. We'd get together in Newport Beach to plan on starting a record label with his band Aunt Betty's Ford. They would later go by the name The Aunt Bettys because they ran into an issue with Ford Motor Company.

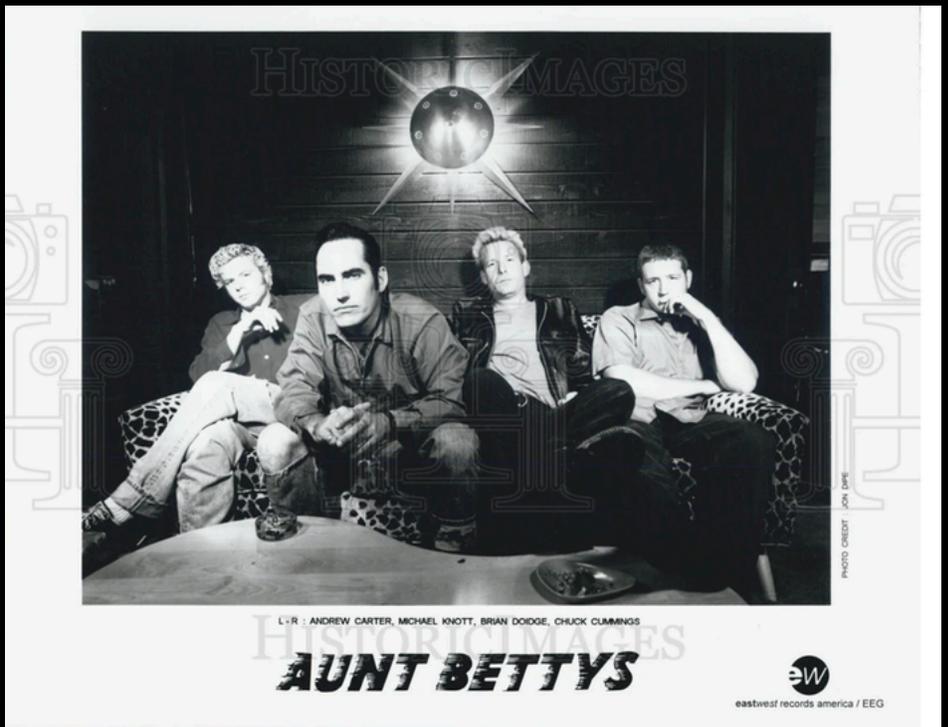
1994-1996

STICK-TO-ITIVENESS

In 1995, the Aunt Bettys were signed by Lara Noel Hill (Better Than Ezra) and Seymour Stein (Madonna, Talking Heads, the Ramones) at Elektra after a bidding war with other labels. Michael told me it was a \$1 million deal and they were given total creative control by Elektra, and they became co-managed by Green Day's management company.

Again, this felt like I was on the right track, but it just wasn't meant to be for me. I was so happy for Michael Knott. It couldn't have happened to a nicer, more deserving guy. On a sad note, during the time of this writing, I was looking to reconnect with Michael and found out he had passed away one month before. Michael Knott died on March 12, 2024, at the age of 61. So sad. I highly encourage you to listen to Aunt Bettys on Spotify. My two favorite songs are "Rocket & a Bomb" and "Kitty Courtesy." It brings me back to that special time every time.

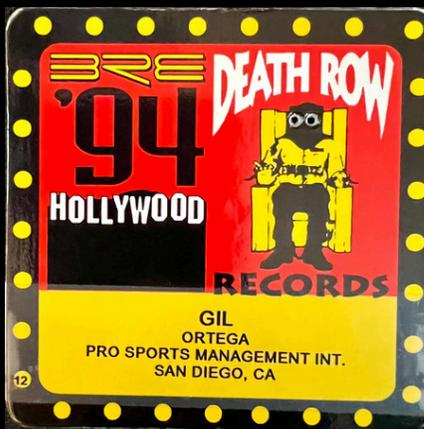
Needless to say, because I wanted to say all this nonsense about my life, I kept getting so close to a breakthrough in the music industry, but it wasn't happening. This syndrome is called "three feet from gold" because you never know when you're only three feet away from breaking through to the biggest success of your life. Don't give up, because it might be the next push that makes all the difference in the world. Don't give up three feet away from gold.



There's logic to that kind of stick-to-itiveness. It's the reason why I've had success in many areas of life and business. There's also logic to knowing when to cut your losses.

1995

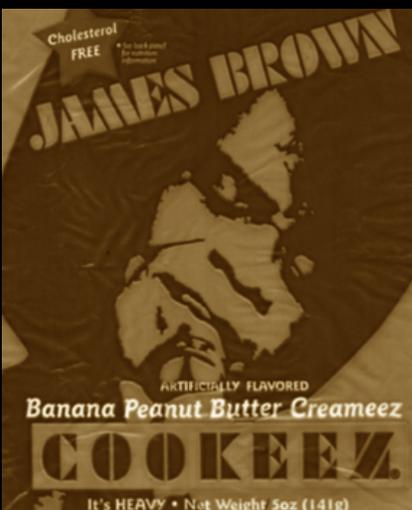
COOKIES



After missing out on the Aunt Bettys deal, PSM was eager to fund a production deal with a recording artist. My friend and business associate, Rage Richardson, was recruited to work with us at PSM. Rage is one of my best and longest-standing friendships. We produced numerous parties together back in the day, and he was one of the friends who, along with my dad, located us in the Mexican prison. He was also one of my groomsmen, and we are tight like brothers. Together, we embarked on a quest to find a recording artist for a production deal.



We went to the BRE Convention in 1994. Black Radio Exclusive (BRE) was one of the industry's first Black music trade magazines, and the BRE Convention was packed with all the industry leaders. That year it was held at the Sheraton by Universal Studios. Rage Richardson and I rolled up to the BRE Convention with James Brown, the Godfather of Soul himself. You heard that right. And we had with us boxes of cookies —James Brown Cookies. Yes, sir, boxes of James Brown Cookies. My buddy Rage's father was business partners with Mr. James Brown in a cookie company they started together.



Rage and I both had multifaceted interests at the event. We wanted to network for PSM, find a new artist for a production deal, and promote the James Brown Cookies at the BRE with Mr. James Brown himself. It was two days of pure enjoyment we called work. The James Brown Cookies were a solid door opener to talk to anyone there. However, the ultimate door opener was Mr. James Brown himself. It feels good. Mr. James Brown had a large suite where we invited guests to come up and meet him. We passed out boxes and boxes of James Brown Cookies. During the dinner event ceremonies, we sat at Mr. James Brown's table. I sat next to Tracey Edmonds and Babyface. I forgot who else sat at our table because I was sitting next to Tracey Edmonds. However, I did notice every famous person in the house coming up to say hello to Mr. James Brown. It was at this dinner we heard Jamie Foxx sing a song from his new album. Later that night, I ended up sharing a blunt with Snoop Dogg and Suge Knight. I only barely inhaled because I was honestly scared of the chronic. I'm such a lightweight. Rage became somewhat friends with Suge, and years later spent a day at Disneyland with Suge and his kid. Wild.

1994

CAUTION

Rage and I have had many wild and memorable events over the years. Not so wild but odd, we had OJ Simpson's white Bronco drive past us on the freeway that notorious day. In 2001, we spent a whole afternoon hanging out with Jamie Foxx and his manager in Las Vegas at the Palms Hotel watching movies in his suite. Rage has always been the person in the middle, in the mix of all the hottest activities to be part of. And quite often, I find myself there with him.

Our quest to find a recording artist for a production deal with PSM was settled with CAUTION. It should have been a warning sign; however, it was the name of the R&B recording group formed in 1994 in San Diego, California. CAUTION. The trio consisted of friends, Clarence "Dupre" Gates, Gary "Ritz" Murphy, and Victor "Trez" Cordova. PSM signed CAUTION to a production deal. It was now our job to get the music produced and secure them a recording contract. We hired Suamana "Swoop" Brown and Stephanie "Bright" Riley, a husband-and-wife production team. They were good, a bit difficult to work with, but they were pros. They produced a solid single for CAUTION, and we started shopping for a record deal.

Mia Redd, the co-manager of the Atlanta-based hip-hop group OutKast, was someone I had been trying to get as a PSM client for a while. I sent the CAUTION CD to Mia in Atlanta. She loved it and said there was a SONY Music singing contest in Atlanta that she could get us into. She thought we should do it. The only issue was, the contest was in three days. We looked at the cost to fly the group and ourselves to Atlanta, and it was too expensive. So, Rage, myself, and the three members of CAUTION jumped into a rented van and hit the road, headed for Atlanta. The road trip was a story unto itself. We all rotated driving, and we got to Atlanta in twenty-eight hours flat. You would've thought we were in the Cannonball Run. We stayed at Rage's father's house in Atlanta. We got to the jazz club in Atlanta located in a mall known as the Underground just in time. When we showed up, it was almost time for CAUTION to go on stage. The place was packed. We didn't know until we got in the club that it was a Black club and all the artists in the contest were Black too. No biggie, except CAUTION was a mixed group—Black, White, and Hispanic. Rage and I were praying for a warm reception from the crowd. CAUTION was feeling the pressure, and they needed to deliver. CAUTION hit the stage, and the crowd was feeling their vibe. It was looking good, really good. The crescendo in the song was delivered by Ritz, at that time the only white guy in the club, center stage. As Ritz delivered the goods, the crowd roared with a standing ovation. Mia was looking at me with dollar signs in her eyes. Out of nowhere, CAUTION came in and crushed it. They were the last group to perform. After about five minutes, the host of the contest came back and announced the winner—CAUTION. They won. We didn't know exactly what we had won. We were told SONY Music executives wanted to meet with us tomorrow. The group CAUTION thought we had a record deal. We all kind of felt like something good was about to happen when we showed up at the rehearsal building in Atlanta to meet the SONY Music executives.

JAGGED CAUTION

When we showed up, there was another group. We were told they performed in the contests too, but we didn't see them because we had arrived almost at the end of the contest, and we were the last group to perform. We were there for about an hour. The long and the short of it was the other group was signed to a record deal. That group was Jagged Edge, the R&B group from Atlanta, Georgia, initially signed to record producer Jermaine Dupri's So So Def Recording label, which was distributed through Columbia/Sony Music. It took a while to break Jagged Edge, but when they got traction, they got traction. Jagged Edge's most popular and highest-charting song was "Where the Party At" from their 2001 album Jagged Little Thrill. The song reached #1 on the Billboard R&B/Hip-Hop Songs chart and #3 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart. It was their biggest mainstream pop crossover hit. Their 2000 album J.E. Heartbreak went double platinum, meaning it sold over 2 million copies in the US. Their 2001 album Jagged Little Thrill, which contained "Where the Party At", went platinum, selling over 1 million copies. Their 2003 album Hard went gold, selling over 500,000 copies.

Wow! We didn't see that one coming. We didn't get a record deal, any kind of deal. Donuts. Yeah, we got donuts. Shit. We were in Atlanta with donuts. I wasn't leaving Atlanta on a sour note. I got us a meeting with Gary "Lil G" Jenkins, an R&B singer, songwriter, and producer in Atlanta. He is best known as the lead singer of the R&B group Silk. It was Pam Brown, the manager for Tag Team ("Whoomp There It Is"), who connected us with Gary. We spent the afternoon with Gary at his studio and hung out at the mall together just getting to know each other. There was hope—Gary was interested in working with CAUTION. The ride back to San Diego wasn't as fun. In fact, we finally got a speeding ticket. So we came back with donuts and a speeding ticket.

Again, this felt like I was on the right track, but it just wasn't meant to be for me. CAUTION was feeling the same way. I felt bad for everyone. We busted our butts trying to get a deal for CAUTION after that Atlanta trip. In the end, we ended up with donuts and a speeding ticket.

A funny side note about the CAUTION deal regarding the producers we hired, Suamana "Swoop" Brown and Stephanie "Bright" Riley, the husband-and-wife production team. Twelve years later, in 2006, I'm at the Playboy Mansion as Rick Bliss, about to perform a live painting on the stage. Some group I didn't know had just performed on the stage. The DJ was announcing to the crowd, "Get ready for Rick Bliss." I'm on the side of the stage getting ready. I thought the lead singer looked familiar, but I couldn't place where I knew him. I looked to my left, and standing next to me was Bright, Swoop's wife. And then it clicked—Swoop was on stage. We said hello, hugged, exchanged pleasantries, and then she asked what I was doing there. I said, "I'm Rick Bliss." She was like, "Huh?" I said, "Yeah, I'm about to paint live; you guys just opened up for me." Then I went on stage and painted live. It was kind of fun.

NEW PATH

On the CAUTION front, after about six months of trying to get them a record deal, things started to unravel from all sides. It was clear the rollercoaster nature of financial management for recording artists would hinder my earning potential at PSM. The wild spending on limos, jets, and the whole red carpet treatment for prospective clients was cut way back. CAUTION's production deal wasn't going to pan out because the group wanted more production, which required more investment, and the owner of PSM, John Gillette, was losing interest in the idea. After two years at PSM, I decided to pack my bags and do something else. What? I didn't know.

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: This music can be addictive. Proceed with CAUTION

You have been forewarned. Listening to **CAUTION** will have you playing the music over and over again. Each song brings you to a new high, elevating your spirits as each note hits your ear nerve. **CAUTION** warns you, "Baby, Be Strong," but you cannot resist the melodious addiction to this trio of excellent showmanship and sensual vocalization.

CAUTION has an array of music styles from Rhythm and Blues, hip-hop, pop and Latino. These styles originate from the diversity of the group itself, representative of African American, Caucasian, and Latino descent. The group has been influenced by music greats such as Aretha Franklin, the Temptations, and Freddie Jackson. The more contemporary influences have been New Edition, Prince, Jodeci and Teddy Riley.

CAUTION sees its role in the industry as serious business. And a business it is -- the group invests time in songwriting, voice lessons, studio recording, and rehearsals. **CAUTION** plans to get in your system and keep you hooked to its rhythm. So, sit back, take in a breath, and "Follow Me" with **CAUTION**.



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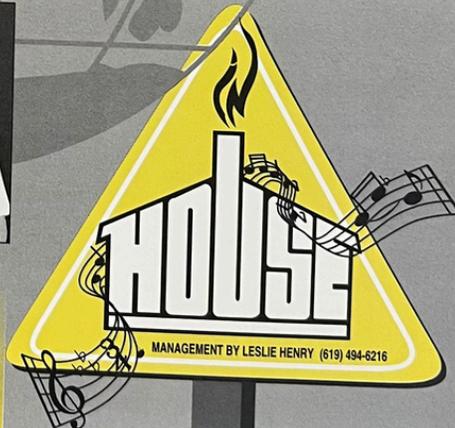
Dupree...
Born as Clarence Gates, is a well rounded artist who write songs, plays the guitar and various percussion instruments.



Ritz...
Born as Gary Murphy, is a versatile singer who disarms you with his soulful, rolling vocals and incredible range.



Trez ...
Born Victor Cordova, is best known for his smoothness and silky dance steps and his versatility to create a R&B tune and easily translate it for the Latin Music Market.



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BURN OUT

A Burnout Leads to a New Path

It was 1996, and I was twenty-seven years old. Burned out was an understatement—I was utterly exhausted by the entertainment business. Looking back, I realize my career in the entertainment industry was something I fell into. I didn't choose it; it chose me. As soon as I started making money throwing parties, the path became crystal clear. I was making more money and having more fun than I ever could in a corporate job.

PSM seemed like the perfect transition from CHILI Productions, but it didn't work out. Now what? Go back to producing events? No way. After living a lifestyle of going out seven nights a week, I discovered I am a total homebody. I'd much rather stay home and chill out—Netflix and chill, LOL. That's me. I don't even like traveling for extended periods. Two to four weeks is my limit. My honeymoon was a month-long unplanned travel adventure through Nicaragua and Costa Rica. We'd go to a place, stay as long as we wanted, then move on to the next destination. It was awesome! However, after a month, I told my wife, "Let's go back home." Since then, our big trips have been about two weeks max. I'm a homebody, and I love my hometown, San Diego.

My cousin Lisa wanted me to move to LA and become a Hollywood agent or get into the business in some other capacity. But sorry, I enjoy visiting LA; I don't want to live there. That traffic would drive me crazy. San Diego has a different kind of pace. I grew up on a farm, and now I live at the beach. It's chill. I wanted to do something where I could chill when I wanted and still make good money. There weren't many job opportunities with those benefits, so my idea was to create the job I wanted. And that's exactly what I did. I created a lead generation company. I started the business working from home before the internet was a big deal. As the internet grew, so did my business. By 1998, I was tapping into the internet for marketing. I saw the writing on the wall for the music industry—massive change was coming. I was riding the Dot Com wave.

WOW! FRAUD

Wow! I was lucky none of my clients lost money with PSM. In retrospect, we saw the signs that something wasn't adding up, but that was the last thing in the world you'd expect. John Gillette presented himself as an over-the-top Christian man. Maybe that was the first sign. I was shocked and saddened because I still had good friends working at the firm, and I know they were blindsided. It was curious that he was willing to spend so much money pursuing talent contracts without generating an equal amount of income from the activity. We just figured it was his money or an investor. Again, it goes to show that sometimes you never know who you're in business with.

Closing Comments on PSM

A little more than a year after I left PSM, the shit hit the fan in a headline news kind of way. John Gillette, the owner of PSM, got arrested. In December 1997, John Gillette was sentenced to 10 years in prison for embezzling approximately \$11 million from his clients, many of whom were NFL players. He was also ordered to pay \$11.8 million in restitution.

\$9 million athlete scam alleged



UNION-TRIBUNE

John Gillette Jr.:
Alleged fraud.

By **Don Bauder**, SENIOR COLUMNIST

John W. Gillette Jr., financial adviser to professional athletes including San Diego Chargers linebacker Junior Seau, was charged yesterday with 37 counts of grand theft and one count of forgery in the disappearance of \$9.3 million of investor funds.

Of the missing money, \$5.6 million came from National Football League players. Dallas Cowboys safety Darren Woodson lost \$2.5 million; Seau and Washington Redskins safety Stanley Richard, a former Charger, each lost \$1.25 million. Ex-San Diego Padres pitcher Greg Harris lost \$720,000.

Gillette, Seau's business partner in the Mission Valley restaurant that bears the star linebacker's name, pleaded

See **ATHLETES** on Page A-17

The Woodstock 25th anniversary event, known as Woodstock '94, took place on August 12-14, 1994, commemorating the legendary festival from 1969, the year I was born. This **Life Magazine** was published the following year after Woodstock '94, featuring a three-page spread dedicated to NARNIA, a music festival produced by **Branden Powers and Nicholas “Nick Nak” Luckinbill**. Life Magazine drew comparisons between NARNIA and Woodstock, calling it a “**neo-Woodstock**.” They could have chosen any music festival or rave in the country, but they picked NARNIA in little San Diego.

I had nothing to do with the production of the NARNIA events, other than attending the event and dancing until the sun rose. My history with NARNIA is tied to the producers of the event; we did five large events together. I'm sharing this Life Magazine article because I'm extremely proud of Branden and Nick, and I think it's super cool. They deserve the recognition tenfold. It's a significant achievement for the San Diego scene and everyone who was part of it. And it's kinda cool for me too because, in many ways, I helped build the events, the brand, and the reputation that led to NARNIA. In that way, I was a part of it.

I remember when this magazine came out. I was in the middle of all my escapades at PSM. I was so happy for Branden and Nick. It felt like a crowning achievement, a cherry on top of all those crazy events. I retired from the party biz, but Branden and Nick continue to build amazing events and clubs to this day. I didn't know it at the time, but six years later, Branden would rope me into one last event yet to come. What happens in Vegas doesn't always stay in Vegas.

LIFE

“I have never met anyone like her. Do you want to see what she looks like?”

—JOHN F. KENNEDY
DESCRIBING
JACQUELINE BOUVIER,
1953



EXCLUSIVE

PERSONAL

PHOTOGRAPHS,

NEVER BEFORE

PUBLISHED,

OF JACK

AND JACKIE

IN LOVE

AUGUST 1995/\$2.95



LIFE GOES TO...

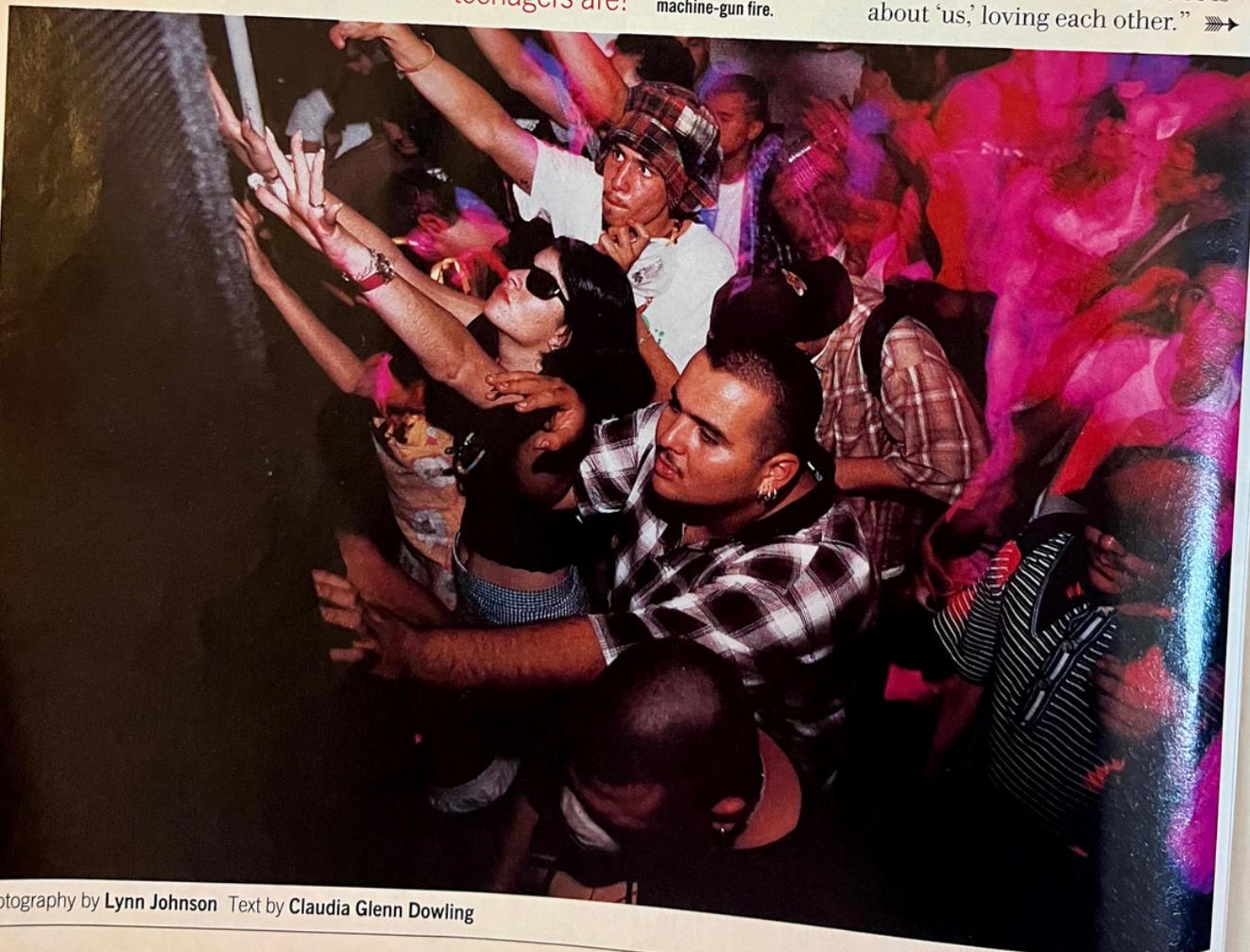
A Full Moon Rave

It's three
a.m., and
there's a party
going on. Do
you know
where your
teenagers are?

THE WORD is associated with madness—not far off. A rave is an underground party attended by people in their teens and twenties who dance all night under the stars or inside warehouses. The biggest annual rave in the U.S.—last year's drew 10,000 people to a gravel pit on an Indian reservation near San Diego—is called

Good vibrations: The crowd worships its sonic gods—the speakers. Banks of them emit 140 decibels at 100,000 watts—louder than machine-gun fire.

Narnia. On August 26, Global Underworld Network will host the fourth one. “We grew up in the '80s, when it was ‘I’ and ‘me’ and screw you and the planet,” says organizer Branden Powers, 25. “The '90s is about ‘us,’ loving each other.” ➤➤



Photography by Lynn Johnson Text by Claudia Glenn Dowling

W

E ARE ALL one," the phone message intones as Van Morrison's song *Moondance* plays in the background. "Undivided by race, religion, color or creed, Zippies, Zulus, Zen monks and you."

It is not easy to find a rave unless you're in the loop. A phone number is circulated by word of mouth or over the Internet or by flyers distributed at one party for the next one. On the day of the event, kids call the number to get directions to the site. Locations are often kept secret because organizers may not have permits. Narnia, which is now an established festival, avoids legal trouble by leasing land on an Indian reservation, which is not subject to California patrolling. Its semiregulated status appeals more to kids than to parents, who worry about the reputation raves have acquired, semiaccurately, as neo-Woodstock drug fests.

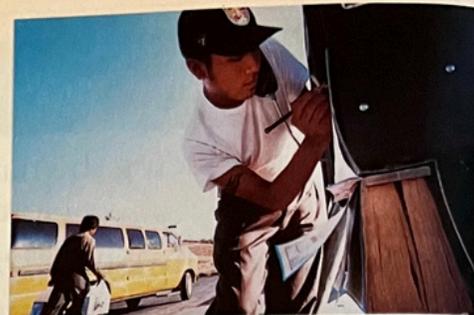
At the gate of Narnia, Harmonius Fist, a 40-man security force hired by the

organizers, confiscates glass bottles, alcohol and tanks of nitrous oxide. "We don't want people sitting around sucking at a tank of laughing gas," says organizer Powers. "It takes away energy from the event." Some partygoers use X, or ecstasy, amphetamines or LSD. "But this isn't about drugs," says Erin Hayes, a UCLA premed student. "This is friends. This is what we love to do. The energy is the most wonderful thing in the world." ➔

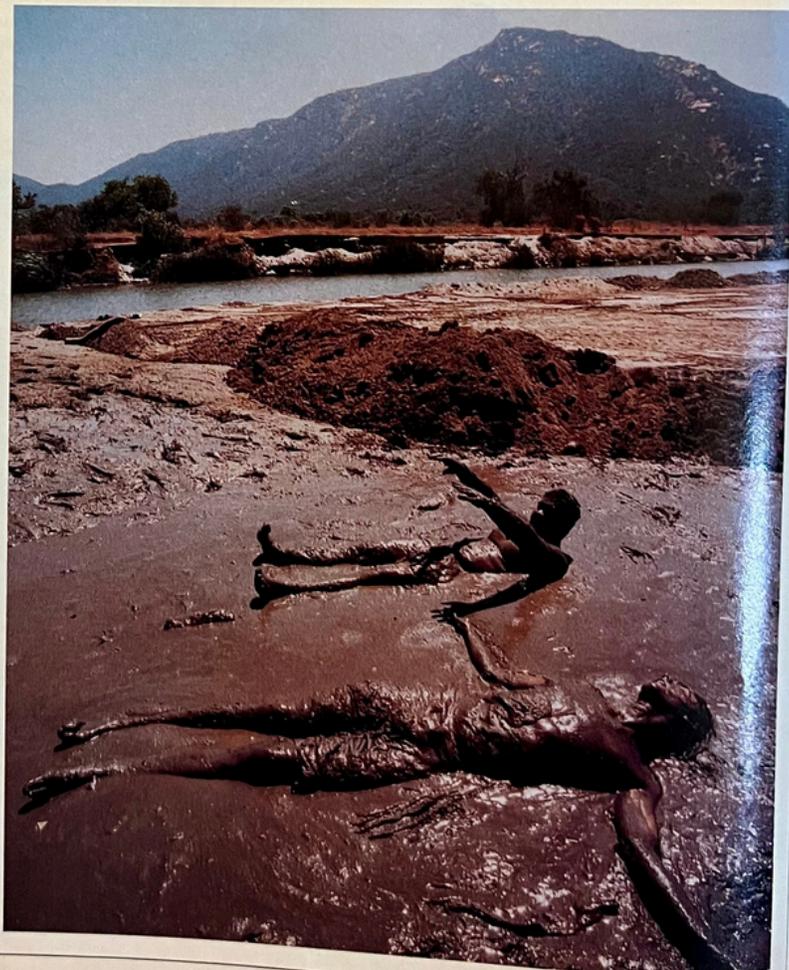
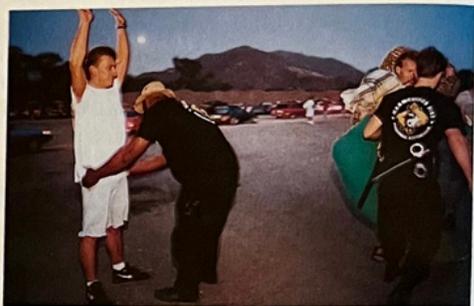
Kids who helped set up the stage in exchange for tickets finally get to kick back. Says an organizer, "We promise never to grow up and drive Jeep Cherokees."

No alcohol, no nitrous oxide, no red meat, no bad vibes. Mud and love are permitted.

A kid from Los Angeles dials for directions to the secret site—somewhere between home and San Diego.



As the moon rises, ravers pay the \$20 gate fee and submit to a pat-down for weapons and drugs.



The deejay keeps them dancing until the sun comes up—or until the police shut them down.



The crowds come to dance to star-power deejays: above, L.A. radio jock Jason Bentley.

When the moon is high and the lights flash, even a gravel pit can be transformed.

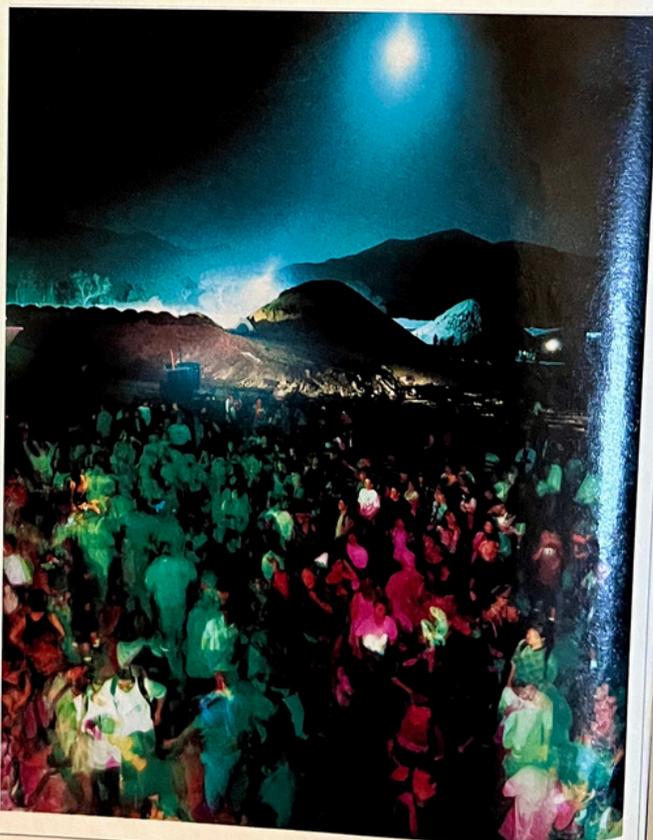
W

E'RE HERE together, under the moon," organizer Nicholas Luckinbill (stepgrandson of Lucille Ball) says at midnight. "Blessings and love." Then it's back to the real point of the gathering: the music. Don't divide it into techno, house, ambient or trance—as long as the sounds are synthesized and rhythmic, it's all rave music. The deejay works two to four turntables (yes, vinyl), speeding up a track, slowing another, flipping discs and switching grooves, controlling the mood. Lights sync. Words flash on a screen: "Evolve/Children/Future."

"Dance is a metaphor for being very free with people," says one kid, who has been boogying nonstop, facing the stage, for hours. "It's an

escape." His friend nods. "Turn all that negative energy into positive. Dancing is so healing."

As the moon goes down and the sun comes up, the most popular deejay, called simply Dmitry, plays an old Tears for Fears song intercut with Martin Luther King's I Have a Dream speech. The kids all chant along: "Free at last, free at last." Daylight means that after 12 hours the party's over. One injury has been reported: incense in an eye. "Pack it up," say the guards. The Native Americans want this tribe out. "O.K., enough of that love stuff," says a tired kid. "These faces look like 'When I get home, it's a hot shower.' All these people had one big party, and now they have to face reality." Or parents. □



LAS VEGAS

It was December 27th, 2000. I was driving my 1987 BMW 635csi—a pearl white, meticulously restored beauty. I'm not a car guy by any means, but I loved that car. Growing up with my dad in the car business, I switched used cars as often as some people switch shoes. But this car was my baby, and I didn't want to sell it under any circumstances. However, as I started my drive to Las Vegas, I seriously considered it because I had lost everything. The Dot-Com bubble had burst, and like many others in the tech industry, I lost all my money and possessions. All I had left was my cherished BMW, loaded to the roof with whatever I could fit. I was moving to Las Vegas for a fresh start.

The Dot-Com bubble's burst in 2000 forced me to reevaluate my life. After the success of my first lead generation company, I sold the business and invested in a 3D software startup. It was a great two-year run from early 1998 to 2000. We ended up on a popular website called FuckedCompany.com, despite not being VC-funded. The stubborn CEO turned down a \$5 million investment, a decision I still scratch my head over. But hey, I got a crash course in 3D software, internet marketing, and the rollercoaster of startups. I became a paper millionaire before losing everything, and the lessons I learned would serve me well in the future.

I was thirty-one years old and at least one year past my goal of moving out of my parents' house. Yes, I lived with my parents throughout my entire nightclub and entertainment career. I'm a total mama's boy. She did my laundry and cooked my meals until I was thirty-one. I had it good at home. My parents didn't have a lot of money, but there was a lot of love and support. My little brother did the same thing, living with our parents into his thirties. It's common in ethnic families. Honestly, if I didn't live with my family, I would have gotten into way more trouble. My family kept me grounded.

In 2000, my friend and previous business partner, Branden Powers, had been living in Las Vegas for about six months. He loved it. After telling him about my crash and burn with the 3D Software company, he said, "Move to Vegas! You can sleep on a blow-up mattress on the living room floor of my one-bedroom apartment." He couldn't stop talking about the opportunities in Vegas. He didn't mention throwing parties again, which I appreciated. Instead, he talked about different businesses we could start and how easy it was to get a job. I wanted to go to Vegas, get a job, and figure out my next moves in life.

I was on the road to Vegas, eager to see where my blow-up mattress was going. The weather was cold in December, and it was getting dark. As I passed Baker and started climbing the mountain ridge before Primm, it was a complete white-out with ice all over the freeway. Cars and trucks were pulled over, many stuck. My BMW needed new tires I couldn't afford. It was the slowest drive to Vegas I'd ever done. Going up and down that ridge felt like a lifetime, half the time sliding, half praying to stay alive. Getting to Branden's apartment was a relief and the start of a new beginning.

December 2000

LAS VEGAS

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December 2000

LAS VEGAS

The next day, Branden gave me a complete tour of Vegas. I had been to Vegas dozens of times, but this tour was like a reconnaissance report. Back at the apartment, we discussed various opportunities we could pursue. We seriously considered starting an Elvis Pedicab business—buying or renting pedicabs, dressing up like Elvis, and giving people rides up and down the Strip. It was a crazy idea, but we thought it might work if we stayed alive and got the equipment, costumes, and permits. But we had no money, and it was a long shot to find an investor.

Despite being broke, we went out on the town every night, networking and having fun. Branden spent the last six months networking with club owners and promoters, so we got comps at most clubs. This is when Branden decided to become my fashion designer. He said I'd become too much of a computer nerd and needed to start wearing sunglasses at night. It was hilarious, but I did it. There's at least one picture, maybe more.

For two months, we went out every night, DJ networking and having fun. My job prospects weren't going well, which is understandable given I was coming home when the sun was rising. Then one night, everything came full circle. Branden and I decided to do what we were most qualified to do—throw a party. I begrudgingly agreed. I was back in the party biz. We started having meetings with venues, potential investors, and promotion partners.

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Friday, March 30th 2001

utopia

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ALL DRESSED UP WITH SOMEWHERE TO GO.....

PINK BANANA PRODUCTIONS (BERLIN)
RHINESTONE COWBOY (UK)
MILLION \$ BABIES (NYC)

invite you to come & play within

Friday, March 30th 2001

THE POWDER ROOM

utopia

DJ MICRO
NEW WORLD'S SWEETEST
MISS HONEY DIJON

Diamond Girl **DJ Valerie and the Vibe Tribe**
"20th Century Digital Boy" **The Runkler**
All that Glitters **DJ Hypnotic Stars**
"Gimme Danger!.. Playboy Mansion's" **Johnny Knight**
And SuperStar V.I.P. Palace, Billy Beyond, DJ Kelebehol, and our world famous VAMPIRE KISSING BOOTH!!

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2001 / 1,900+ People Attended

LAS VEGAS

Leveraging our combined party portfolios made it easy to convince people we could produce a solid event. It wasn't long before we found an investor for our nightclubs.

Our business plan was unique. We proposed producing three back-to-back monthly events with over-the-top themes. We asked the investor to be prepared to lose money on all three events. In Las Vegas, when it comes to entertainment, you have to go big or go home. We needed to secure a prime location on the Strip on a prime night, like Saturday. We were bootstrapping, but we were asking our investor to spend \$30,000 per party, times three. These themed parties would establish the new party brand in Las Vegas, and the investor would be part of that brand going forward. We had done this business model countless times, and we knew how to do it. The investor was game.

We gave ourselves two full months to organize and promote the event. We got Saturday night at Utopia on the Strip, which could hold 1,800-2,000 people. At \$20-\$25 per ticket, we'd need at least

1,500 tickets to cover our budget. Anything over that would help put gas in our tanks and food on our table. The whole time, we had no money, I had no job, and I was making \$200 per week from unemployment. We had to keep our guest list (FREE) to a few hundred people max, which was going to be hard.



2001 / 1,900+ People Attended

LAS VEGAS

In Las Vegas, most people we met were loaded or doing better than us. Back in San Diego, we weren't rich, but we were making six figures cash and had our reputations to open doors. In Las Vegas, we only had our flyer portfolios. People could verify we had done good parties in San Diego, but that's it. We had no following or influence in Las Vegas. To build influence with the movers and shakers, we needed to exude confidence. Branden had a genius idea that would change the narrative beautifully.

We invented three different production companies from different parts of the world. PINK Banana Productions were three girls who were party promoters from Berlin, Million \$ Babies were two trust fund kids from NYC, and The Rhinestone Cowboy was a gay fashionista from the UK. We told people these production companies were making a huge investment in the Las Vegas club scene and had hired Branden and me as their production arm and envoy. In 2001, people didn't do heavy internet research on things like this.

We built personas for each production company, promoting every night and telling incredible stories about them and their events. We said if they wanted to see a spectacle, something they'd never seen before, they shouldn't miss The Powder Room. People loved the concept, and it worked. This way, it didn't matter if Branden and I were well off financially. We were just worker bees hired by exclusive club promoters from around the world.

For a month straight, we plastered Las Vegas and San Diego with flyers. We got kicked out of every casino with a nightclub multiple times for passing out flyers. One night, we gave out 500 flyers inside a nightclub made out of prescription pill bottles filled with M&Ms, with party details printed on the bottle. We handed out huge posters and themed the event The Powder Room, giving out flyers that looked like pocket makeup mirrors. We hired a local photoshoot with the most popular socialites and put them on the flyers. We held nothing back on the promotional flare and tactics.

We made partnerships with local promoters to ensure our success. Steve Davidovici, commonly known as "Stevie D.," helped us secure the venue Utopia and had an interest in our success. We hired Ryan Doherty to help promote and get people there. Stevie D. and Ryan were instrumental in our success, helping us navigate the local market and build alliances.

In the end, it worked. The events were successful, and we established our brand in Las Vegas. It was a wild ride, but we made it happen.

2001 / 1,900+ People Attended

NAKED PIZZA

Promoting Back and Forth Between San Diego and Las Vegas

We were promoting back and forth between San Diego and Las Vegas. Many of our friends would come out for the weekend and help us promote in Vegas. Our little one-bedroom apartment saw a lot of come-and-go traffic. One weekend, Branden allowed his friend Beth from San Diego to stay over as she worked locally in Vegas. She was a dancer who needed to make an extra \$3,000 over the weekend working at a local strip club. She was in a cash crunch and needed to make as much money as possible, so Branden told her there was no need to rent a hotel room; she could stay with us.

Beth showed up at our apartment, and I met her for the first time. A few minutes later, she came out of the bathroom completely naked and just sat on the floor. We didn't have any furniture except for a fold-out chair and a computer desk I was using to do research on my desktop computer. Branden and I just smiled at each other, and Beth said, "I hope you don't mind. I need to start getting comfortable being naked." She said if this bothered us, she'd put some clothes on. She explained that she wasn't normally a stripper in San Diego. She had been a stripper in Vegas before and kept her license active just in case she needed money. She said she was having a cash crunch and could earn more than \$3,000 in a single weekend here in Vegas. Branden and I both said no problem with the nakedness and joked that we wished we could earn \$3,000 this weekend too.

Beth was a super cool chick, a free spirit. She helped promote the event in Vegas and San Diego, and she brought her girlfriends who helped promote too. More importantly, she loved being naked in our apartment. Every time we ordered pizza, we'd ask her to open the door and pay the pizza guys. One afternoon, we were just hanging out in the apartment—of course, Beth was naked. Branden decided to tickle Beth with a paintbrush, no paint, just the brush. It was for no particular reason. It wasn't for the purpose of creating art; it was for the purpose of being ticklish, and Beth liked being tickled. Fast forward to 2005, this is one of the pivotal moments toward the creation of Rick Bliss. However, little did I know at that time, that moment would become part of the seed inspiration for my artwork.

Night of The Powder Room

The lines to get in started early. We had local celebrities come. Teller of the magic duo Penn & Teller was there. That dude talks. We had stilt walkers, fire breathers, jugglers, and magicians outside entertaining the line and attracting attention from the Strip. Inside, it was wild. We had people who would do your makeup, hair, and dress you up in flamboyant costumes. We kind of treated people like they were little kids again. We had a vampire kissing booth with a guy and girl vampire who would suck your neck. There was a ton of performance art throughout the club. Plus, the complete trapeze team above the dance floor. No one who had ever been to Utopia before had seen anything like this before. The DJ lineup was equally impressive.

AD NAUSEAM

The vibe was off the charts. We were already promoting the upcoming event we called Night of the Living Dolls. Based on the feedback we received, we could expect a better turnout for the following event. The plan was working as planned.

At the end of the night, we calculated we had a little over 1,900 people in attendance. That included the guest list, which exceeded 350 people. It was the first event, and we were a little loose on the guest list. We wanted to keep it at 200 max. We'd tighten it up on the next go-around. As the night wound down, the ticket booth was closed, and we started to pay the DJs and the rest of the staff. I'm glad I started to pay people early because I saw Branden in what looked like a heated argument with our investor. The investor and his brother came into the club's office yelling at the top of their lungs. The investor was upset we came up short. I was baffled by that. We had talked about this numerous times, ad nauseam. We were only \$5,000-\$6,000 short of our total budget. It turns out Branden went \$5,000 over the agreed-upon budget. This is actually really good. I've seen Branden go \$20,000 over budget on an event. It was my job to make sure we didn't go over budget, but it was hard to do with Branden.

If you look at the flyer and ads, you'll see we were promoting the Rhinestone Cowboy's Heavy Petting Zoo. It was a place with a bunch of pillows, and people would pet you like an animal. A bit of performance art and maybe a possible bit of utility if someone was rolling on X. Anyway, Branden had a tiger booked for the event, and he wanted the tiger to go upstairs in that area of the club. Yes, I'm talking about a real tiger. A flippin' huge, dangerous animal with a trainer, of course. Well, it was one of the things taking us over budget, and I cut it. We weren't having a live tiger at the club. Sorry but not sorry. The following week, the same tiger at a different event killed his trainer. So, I did my best to manage the budget, but Branden thinks of things he wants at the club, and it gets expensive fast. It's all about the experience.

So, back to our pissed-off investor and his brother. Instead of being happy about how well the party was going or happy we made back almost his entire investment on our first night—over \$35,000—he was pissed because we went \$5,000 over budget and we were short \$5,000-\$6,000. It's almost exactly what we said to be expected. It wasn't like Branden and I were making any money on this event, which sucked, by the way. We were both totally stoked that the club and production were going off the charts with the right vibe. Keep in mind, this investor committed to three events with us, agreeing he'd be perfectly fine not making money on the events. Branden and I weren't making any money either. We were building the reputation and the fake production company brands. This was the plan!

RUMORS

We only owed about \$5,000-\$6,000 to the various performance artists, including two DJs who were currently playing, but we had a super cool relationship with the DJs, so we knew we'd have no problems paying them later. By the time we exited the club offices, 20-30 minutes later, the whole club vibe had changed. The rumors of what had happened came to a crescendo. This lunatic performance artist was going around to all the other performance artists, telling them to stop performing because they weren't getting paid. He then recruited all the other performers to start telling the partygoers that we were con artists and that we shoved guns in their faces and wouldn't pay the performers. Imagine being at a club and you hear this. The first mention of a gun and people start to wig out. This lunatic was purposely shutting down the party. People started to leave in droves. From that point forward, it was pointless trying to have a conversation with this lunatic. All he did was scream at the top of his lungs the whole time people were leaving and as we wrapped up the night. He was there screaming hours later as we all drove away and left the club. It was completely insane. All the goodwill we had built up disappeared in an instant. The plans we had for the next club went down the drain too.

It turned out that the investor had all kinds of problems we weren't privy to. In the end, I felt sorry for the guy. We found out, months later, he had taken his own life. Apparently, he had gambling and relationship problems that took a toll on him. That's very sad.

The Days Following The Powder Room Fiasco

The next day, and the days that followed, back at the apartment, the mood was solemn. My buddy Rage hung out with me the week after The Powder Room fiasco. We made the best of it that we could. Branden had a girlfriend whose place he started staying at most of the time. It had been four months since I had moved out to Vegas, and the blow-up mattress was getting old—quick.

Weeks later, I finally got a part-time job with a printer delivering flyers to various casinos, clubs, and promoters around town. It paid cash, and I needed it. One Sunday afternoon around 2 p.m., I was at the apartment sleeping after leaving a club at 8 a.m. I was tired and trying to get some needed sleep, but sleeping when the sun is up just isn't normal for me, and it's hard to do. I was going in and out of sleep on my lovely blow-up mattress when something woke me up. Not sure what it was, but I was thirsty, so I got up, took a few steps into the kitchen to get some water, and I noticed the leg of a person stepping into the kitchen sink. There was a person entering through the window in front of the kitchen sink. I yelled, "HEY!" The guy got startled, jumped down from the window, and started to run down the stairs of the apartment. I started to run toward Branden's room where he had a shotgun. Then I stopped in my tracks, thinking what if someone else was with that guy and he's already inside the apartment. Shit! Maybe I'm not alone, and another person is in the apartment. Maybe he already has the shotgun and is waiting for me to enter Branden's room. Quickly, I decided to leave the apartment too.

HOT HOT HOT

Quickly, I decided to leave the apartment too. I started yelling to my neighbor to call the police. It turned out the guy was alone. I had caught him right at the moment he was breaking in. Thank God, that could have ended worse.

Around this time in Vegas, when the heat starts to roll in, it gets hot, really hot. I made it a point to keep the windows locked and the AC on when I was in the apartment. The bill would be higher, but I was willing to pay for it. I was also giving Branden half the money for rent as well. He was staying at the apartment less than half the time, and the lease was ending in a couple of months. Around the same time, I was looking for a room to rent because I couldn't afford the apartment on my own. I ended up pawning my computer to pay for rent and the utility bill. I gave the money to Branden. About a week later, one Friday, I came home from delivering flyers, and I noticed the electricity wasn't working in the apartment. Immediately, I called Branden. "Oh shit!" he says. "I forgot to pay the utility bill." I'm like, shit! Well, pay that shit tomorrow. He's like, well, I kinda lost the money, playing blackjack. What?! Yeah, sorry dude. Ok, when can you pay it? By Monday. Ok. This meant I needed to stay in the apartment Friday night, Saturday, and Sunday with no AC, no electricity. Each consecutive day was hotter than the next. Sunday night was north of 120 degrees inside that apartment. I simply could not sleep in that kind of heat. I even left the windows open. I didn't give a shit if someone broke in again; there was nothing to steal except my life, and it felt like I was going to die in the heat, so big deal if the windows were left open in the crime-ridden neighborhood. I was too damn hot to sleep, and I needed sleep. The air in my dumb blow-up mattress seemed hotter than the apartment air. I was at my wits' end. Then I had a genius idea. What if I filled up the bathtub with cold water and slept in the bath? That's what I ended up doing. However, it seemed the moment I got into REM sleep, my butt would slide in the bathtub, my head would submerge under water, and I'd start choking on water. I kept waking up throughout the night, wondering if it's possible to drown in the bathtub. This for sure wasn't one of those Calgon take-me-away kinds of baths. It was an awful weekend in my life that I won't soon forget. All I knew was something needed to change, and change fast.

My job of delivering flyers was steady work. The owner of the printing company, Darren, was a cool guy. He was always willing to help when I asked. If I asked him for more work, he'd give it to me, and he always paid me cash. Darren supplied most of the clubs in Vegas with printing services. Sometimes he'd take payment in barter with the club owners. He liked to party, and he was a fun guy to hang out with. We hung out quite a bit, and he never made me feel like I was working for him. He might have done a little too many drugs at one point, but it wasn't noticeable in our interactions. Anyway, I was appreciative of the cash work he was giving me.

VEGAS OOPS

On all The Powder Room flyers, we promoted our second event. These are the flyers we handed out during The Powder Room. However, after the fiasco that occurred at The Powder Room, the subsequent two events never happened.

JOIN OVER 2,000 MANIACS!!
FRIDAY, APRIL 27TH, 2001

THE POWDER ROOM RETURNS WITH:
NIGHT OF THE LIVING DOLLS

AT D STARRING: THEY HIDE,
AT A SUPA DJ DMITRY, LADY BUNNY, SASHA
AT N JIMMY JAMES, BILLY BEYOND, DJ WILL
PR A AMANDA LEPORE, SOPHIA LAMAR

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THE POWDER ROOM RETURNS WITH:
NIGHT OF THE LIVING DOLLS

SOUNDTRACK BY: **SUPA DJ DMITRY (DEEE-LITE)**

utopia LAS VEGAS

For More Info: 702.380.7844

PUSH IT

The thing that sucked was my beautiful 1987 BMW 635csi was getting old. I was driving it a lot doing deliveries. Out of nowhere, my AC stops working. Shit! It's starting to get hotter by the day. Repairs on BMWs are not cheap, and I'm not good at fixing cars myself. I'm not a car guy. I knew how to add gas and water to a car; that's it. If the car broke down, I'd call AAA or I was screwed. I lost count of how many times in high school the cars I got from my Dad would break down. This happened several times in the middle of dates. Can you imagine the embarrassment of being on a first date and having your car stall in the middle of an intersection, needing to get out and push the car? Then asking my date not to get out and push because they tried and it made me feel even more embarrassed. I'd ask them to steer the car as I pushed it to the side of the road, all the while as cars were honking and yelling at me. If your Dad fixed smashed-up totaled cars and made them look new again, you might know the feeling of breaking down in the middle of an intersection, with a date. There is always something wrong with those cars. If you ever wonder what's the most important part of an engine, let me tell you, all the parts of an engine are important. Even the littlest broken part of an engine can ruin your day.

For over a month, I did deliveries with no AC in hot-as-hell temperatures. In between times, I'd go to interviews for a full-time job. Showing up to interviews with no AC in the car, and figuring out how not to be a sweaty mess took skill and planning.

By the summer of 2001, I had finally landed a great job, and life was starting to improve. I had also moved out of the apartment with Branden. I found a room to rent in an awesome house where the owner was about my age, a cool guy who I'd occasionally hang out with. During the first month of my new job, I worked my butt off and didn't go out to clubs at all. Through people, I had heard Darren, my friend who I had been working for, was acting really weird around town. I hadn't seen or talked to Darren for a month. I had called Darren because he owed me a few hundred dollars for the last bit of work I did for him. I wasn't worried about the money. I knew Darren was good for it; like I said, he was the kind of guy who would go out of his way to help you. When I talked to Branden, he asked me if I'd seen Darren lately. I said I was about to stop by his warehouse and pick up some money. He laughed and told me to call him after the meet to let him know what I thought. Branden was being coy; he wouldn't specifically say what was going on with Darren. I pressed Branden a few times, and he still wouldn't tell me.

On my lunch break, I went over to Darren's warehouse office to pick up the few hundred dollars he owed me. As I entered the office, I noticed a few people I had never seen before. I asked if Darren was there, and they told me he was in the back and pointed for me to go towards the back of the warehouse. Walking into the warehouse, it's noon, but it is dark in this windowless warehouse. I saw Darren's office lit up at the end of the warehouse. I'd say maybe thirty yards away.

EVIL

Only a few steps in, I felt the energy of the air shift. I don't know if it was a particular smell or some kind of thickness to the air. I could just sense the area was different. I was about halfway there, and then I saw a group of people to my left. It's dark enough to see six to seven people huddled around a couch and table. I didn't see them when I first entered the warehouse, so they kinda startled me when I noticed them. I think I stopped in my tracks when I saw them, or maybe I was still walking, I don't know. They were staring at me in a piercing way. It made me feel like everything was in slow motion because they all turned and looked at me at the same time. It was creepy. I just wanted them to stop looking at me. After the slow-motion feeling ended, I had an overwhelming feeling that those people were evil. I mean, it hit me like a ton of bricks. As this overwhelming feeling was hitting me, I entered Darren's well-lit office. Darren came up to me and hugged me. We hadn't seen each other in over a month.

I'm looking at Darren, trying to figure out what is different about him, thinking about the mysterious suggestion Branden planted on me about Darren. I can tell Darren's on drugs, speed or coke, something because he's talking a hundred miles an hour. But I've seen Darren like that a dozen times before. He talks about all these different things, bouncing around from one concept to the next. Everything keeps going back and forth, as he repeats this number sequence. I tried to get a word in and tell him I'm there to pick up the money he owed me. He says ok and goes right back into his diatribe about the number sequence. After about ten-fifteen minutes of this nonsense, I ask him what all of this means. He flat out says it: he says I figured out that I am Jesus. I kinda giggled and asked him ten different ways to clarify what he's telling me. As this back and forth questioning began, I started to see one by one those creepy people enter his office to listen. The looks on their faces were telling me this matter wasn't something to giggle about. The tone in Darren's voice was not asking me to believe him; it's more in line with he's telling me to believe him. He kept going through the number sequence, writing it on paper and showing me, asking me if I saw it. Then several members of the creepy bunch started asking me if I saw it. Finally, just when I think they're going to chop me up and eat me, I say look, I'm bad at math. I just came here to pick up the money you owe me. I can come back if you like. I'm just trying to lighten the vibe and shift the topic. These people were spiraling out of control. Plus, I was nervous as fuck; I thought these people were about to kill me. I can honestly say, I was more scared at that moment than any time during the LA riots or Mexican prison. I realized that I'm bad at math joke didn't land so well. I knew mentioning the money Darren owed me and that I could come back would stick in his craw. I was implying Darren didn't need to pay me if he didn't have the money. One of Darren's pet peeves was people owing him money or owing other people money. He liked clean slates. Once, I had seen him obsessing over owing someone twenty dollars. In fact, he paid me twenty dollars to deliver twenty dollars to the person he owed it to. I knew the moment I said what I did, he would want to pay me then and there. And that's exactly what he did. This shifted the tone.

JOHN ENGLISH

He whipped out his wallet in front of the creepy bunch, who had started to disperse now, and paid me the couple of hundred dollars he owed me. After he paid me, he started to get right back to the number sequence. I spoke up and said I'm on my lunch break and needed to get back to the office. I hugged Darren and got the heck out of there as fast as I could. When I got a few miles away, I pulled over and caught my breath. After I caught my breath, I called Branden and chewed his ass out. I was so pissed he didn't warn me about what to expect. I walked straight into evil and crazy all rolled into one. The future updates on Darren were not good. I heard he got put into a psychiatric hospital. I hope he got the help he needed. Darren was a helper at heart.

A New Chapter in Vegas

My job was panning out great. It was commission-only, but I was busting my hump and quickly picking up clients. I was working for John English, who at the time was very well connected in Vegas. John became a notable figure in the sports betting and gaming industry, recognized for his significant contributions and innovations over a career spanning more than four decades. His contributions to the industry were recognized posthumously with his induction into the Sports Betting Community Hall of Fame in 2024.

When John English hired me, he too was rebuilding after a big financial tumble. I remember the interview vividly. John was writing these numbers on a piece of paper, showing me how I could earn a million dollars a year with him selling lists of names and addresses to catalog companies. This was his thing. This sequence of numbers John was showing me I saw perfectly clear. Plus, I needed a job badly, and no one else was getting this job. Meaning, he was only looking for one person to head up this position. I thought I could make some money doing this job, at least enough to stop delivering flyers in the heat.

The year before, John had lost a million-dollar lawsuit against the State of Florida. He had become part of the lawsuit against Publishers Clearing House, the company whose advertising claimed, "You've Won \$1 Million Dollars." Well, John English wrote the copy for those mail pieces. The state found the copy to be misleading. Really? I'm amazed they still get away with the copy they have to this day. They thread the needle on compliance. So as John tells me, he's rebuilding his fortune and business. I guess I could relate to that too.

The names and addresses of the people I sold were recent registrations at the various hotels and casinos around Las Vegas. We didn't disclose where they stayed; we just knew these people had registered as guests at one of the hotels and casinos around Las Vegas. I didn't know how John got this information each month, but he did. And it was my job to sell it. My clients were Land's End, L.L. Bean, J. Crew, Williams-Sonoma, and Cabela's, and all the smaller catalog companies like them.

LUCKY WANG

Plus all the long-distance phone companies. I could see how I could build a solid book of business with John English. Plus, John had the ultimate list of high-rollers he'd get every month. This put him in business with every casino host at all the major casinos. I couldn't sell that list, but if I wanted access to special privileges at a certain casino, all I had to do was call John, and he'd have one of the casino hosts take care of us.

By the start of Q3 2001, I was making decent money at my job with John English. I had money left over each month. I had a girlfriend, and we had moved in together. Life was better; I was movin' on up to the deluxe apartment. Better yet, Branden and I had been back at it, collaborating once again on an innovative business plan for the Las Vegas nightlife. This time we wanted to start an after-hours club. We wanted to compete with Drai's After Hours club. And we had a location scoped out, down the street, only two buildings away from Drai's. The location we found and had negotiated was in an older hotel on E. Flamingo Rd., on the same block as Drai's, across from Bally's, in between The Westin and where Drai's is located. This hotel had a 10,000 sq ft basement. Plus, the hotel was allowing us to transform the entire first floor of hotel rooms into themed VIP rooms.

If you don't know, Drai's After Hours is an institution within Las Vegas nightlife. It was back then, and it still is today. Drai's After Hours Las Vegas is the #1 Las Vegas after-hours club and has been since it first opened. We liked the idea of competing with the market leader. The way you become #1 is you compete with #1. And the way to win is to do something completely different. Not just better, different.

Late August-early September 2001, we had gotten a green light on our project. An investor associated with John English loved our business plan and concept. He had a deal to get \$1 million to start our after-hours club. We were going to build **Lucky Wang's Pussycat Lounge**.

We had conceptualized an amazing after-hours club experience. Again, we had invented a character. This time his name was **Lucky Wang**. He was a 40-year-old, ultra-successful, Asian man, a playboy jet-setter. We were going to hire an actor to play this character in photos, then plaster the entry hallways with pictures of the mysterious Lucky Wang with celebrities and business titans. Think of the way they did it in the movie *Forrest Gump*. As patrons entered the club, they'd learn the story of who Lucky Wang is through pictures. We were building the narrative. As they entered the club, think old school Vegas. Plush booths and a clamshell stage. There would be food. Great food for drinking and soakage—Dim Sum. Waitresses in old school Vegas outfits would be pushing Dim Sum carts. This was the vibe. Then on the second floor, accessible via stairs or by elevator, you could visit the entire floor of hotel rooms transformed into themed VIP experiences. Think similar to The Madonna Inn, a motel in San Luis Obispo. These private rooms were for rent and came with your own wait staff, bottle service, the whole nine. Keep the party private or leave the doors open and invite party-goers to join you in the festivities.

9/11

Within a month of pitching this business plan, we had an investor. It was a unique opportunity, and we could make it happen. This was going to make millions of dollars per quarter. We were ecstatic.

Then came September 11, 2001, and the world changed. Most of us remember where we were when it happened. My girlfriend and I decided not to have a TV in our deluxe apartment, so we heard about it on the radio. We then spent the day in a nearby bar watching the horrifying events play out on TV. In the subsequent weeks and months that followed, Las Vegas had become a ghost town.

Over the next two weeks, I received a cancellation notice or pause request from 100% of my catalog clients. I went from having an income to having zero income. To make it worse, the Lucky Wang project was put on hold as well. The million-dollar investor put on the brakes to see what would happen to the Las Vegas market. I remember constantly hearing this rumor in Las Vegas that the New Year's Eve celebration on the Strip was going to be hit by a biological terror attack. I was suddenly back at square one. Except this time, I had more overhead and a girlfriend. My problems paled in comparison to the thousands of families dealing with the horrific attack on 9/11. The following year after the 9/11 attack, I remember visiting NYC for a convention and seeing smoke or steam still coming out of the rubble and hole in the ground—the remnants of the Twin Towers. Many years later, I had the opportunity to visit the World Trade Center Memorial and 9/11 Museum. It's a poignant and powerful tribute to the victims. It's a place of remembrance, reflection, and resilience. If you ever have the opportunity to visit, do so.

This foray into the Las Vegas nightlife was the last time I'd be pursuing any nightclub or party business endeavors. To pay the bills, I went back to another business model I was familiar with—lead generation. I do tell the prologue to that story here if you'd like to read it: [Chief Rainmaker](#). At some point, I hope to begin to tell a more detailed version of stories on my blog [Gil Ortega](#). Hopefully, one day, my ramblings will expand there.

ORIGIN OF RICK BLISS

In 2005, I was at the helm of Leads to Wealth, Inc., co-founder and CEO of a successful lead generation company. My business partners, young tech entrepreneurs fresh out of college, suggested—well, more like told me—to take a three-month vacation. They were trying to figure out how to ramp up and onboard the large amount of business I was bringing into the company. Pissed at their solution, I reluctantly took the three-month break. I was making more money than ever before and now found myself on a forced vacation.

I took a few short trips to Vegas and NYC, but I'm not great at traveling for more than two weeks at a time, especially without a girlfriend. Traveling solo just didn't have the same appeal. Having been working nonstop to build the business, I suddenly found myself with an abundance of free time and no idea how to spend it.

One evening, while watching TV, I saw a segment on Entertainment Tonight covering a charity event by The Keep A Breast Foundation. They were auctioning off plaster breast molds of various celebrities, painted by artists and fetching \$20,000 to \$40,000 each at auction. An idea sparked in my mind—what if I could do something similar, but instead of plaster molds, I used abstract painting directly on bodies, creating unique artworks to raise money for charities?

I remembered body painting go-go dancers at the Atlas nightclubs (thanks to Grant) and a specific moment in Vegas when Branden used a paintbrush on Beth. The thought crossed my mind: could I create a unique work of art by painting a body and then stamping it onto a canvas?

I grabbed a pen and paper and started crunching numbers. Could this idea raise \$1 million for charity? I envisioned partnering with a celebrity like Carmen Electra or Pamela Anderson, who had a large fan base. Playboy Magazine paid top models \$100,000 to \$300,000 to pose nude. My idea promised a \$1 million tax-deductible donation to their favorite charity. If plaster breast molds sold for \$20,000 to \$40,000, an original body stamp could easily fetch \$10,000 to \$30,000. Selling 1,000 prints at \$1,000 each or 2,000 prints at \$500 each seemed feasible, building a catalog that could raise money year after year.

However, there was one challenge: I had never body-stamped anyone before. I wasn't an artist, and I had only painted out of necessity for murals in my nightclubs and on go-go dancers. That night, I hilariously tried body stamping myself—my hands, my arms. It didn't work out so well. I needed a model.

I placed an ad on Craigslist, offering an hourly rate, and dozens of models applied. Sometimes, they met me at my office, where I was supposed to be on vacation. My business partners saw all the interviews and initially thought I was a pervert. However, after seeing the final works I produced, even my most skeptical critics conceded I was creating artwork worthy of selling. The first step was accomplished. Now what?

2005

PLAYBOY MANSION

Since the late 1980s, my biggest art influence had been Gerhard Richter, with Mark Kostabi as my biggest art marketing influence. Kostabi's approach, leveraging outsourcing and over-the-top hype, inspired me. The Guns & Roses album cover "Use Your Illusion" is a Kostabi, even though he didn't paint it himself.

I decided to paint and sell my artwork online under a pseudonym—Rick Bliss. The .com was available, so I used it. Plus, there was already a famous Southwest artist named Gilbert Ortega.

Researching online, I found other body painting and stamping artists but was particularly intrigued by Yves Klein, a French artist who invented body stamping in the 1960s. Klein's work influenced the painting of the 007 golden woman in the 1964 movie "Goldfinger." Klein's works sell for hundreds of thousands of dollars.

A year of painting models and producing abstract body stamps later, my three-month vacation was long over, and I was still painting. My friend, Mike Ibe, who produced live and silent auctions for charity events, approached me to sell my artwork at these events. Initially shocked, I quickly said yes, though I was scared. Mike invited me to a charity event at The Playboy Mansion to sell my artwork for a cause.

At the event, my artwork was listed for sale at a reserve price. I could keep the reserve price, and any amount over went to the charity. I loved the concept. Plus, I was getting invited to The Playboy Mansion. I brought two mounted prints for the silent auction. By the end of the night, I sold both prints—\$1,200 and \$1,800. Though I barely broke even, I was ecstatic. Selling my work was an amazing feeling, and running into Grant King and calling Branden Powers at the event felt serendipitous. Both played pivotal roles in creating Rick Bliss, even if they didn't realize it. The Universe or God aligns moments in a special way, and noticing these serendipitous moments makes everything feel unique and significant.

After that first Playboy Mansion event, my friend Mike asked me to paint live at the next one, auctioning off the artwork during the process. Initially terrified, I realized I couldn't pass up the opportunity. I practiced painting live, inviting people to my studio, and by the time the event arrived, I was mostly confident. The live auction was a success, and I even accidentally left a colorful mark on Hugh Hefner's white jacket. I guess you could say I indirectly painted Hugh Hefner at the Playboy Mansion!

Since then, I've returned to the Mansion numerous times, painted live at countless events, and sold hundreds of pieces for charity. While the million-dollar celebrity commission hasn't happened yet, I haven't given up hope. One memorable event was The Margarita Ball in Dallas, where I painted live in front of 10,000 people, following in the footsteps of Michael Godard. The experience taught me invaluable lessons.

ONE IN A MILLION

Painting and creating body stamps transcended my own desire for expression, becoming a collaboration that spoke to a deeper truth about existence. I was drawn to this process, not as a master but as a student of its possibilities. My initial forays into the fusion of body and art ignited a passion within me, exploring abstract expression and the human form. Now, I walk a path I never imagined, as an artist by calling, forever intertwined with the human form and creative spirit.

This profound journey owes everything to the people and moments that illuminated my path, showing me the magic in the unexpected fusion of body and art and the endless possibilities when we dare to let go and create. Be the creator.

One In A Million

I'm going to tell one more story—how I met my wife, Renata, also known as Mrs. Bliss. If it weren't for her, Rick Bliss and all the artwork would be gathering dust, never meant to be.

During my three-month forced vacation, while I started painting, I also came to a crossroads regarding my dating life. My subscription to Match.com was coming up for annual renewal, and I figured since I had zero dates from the service, I might as well cancel it.

The fact that I had completely failed at online dating made me mad. Why didn't I have any dates? I started searching for services that would improve your dating profile so you'd get dates. I knew three friends who had gotten married from online dating services. I was certain online dating could work, but why wasn't it working for me? I mean, I wasn't even getting a single date after a year of having the subscription.

My years in the nightclub business made for a steady dating schedule. I didn't even need to try. Somehow, girls were interested in dating me despite my being short and pudgy. The magnetic nature of running nightclubs did wonders for my dating life. But outside of that environment, I realized I had no game. I didn't know how to pick up girls in a bar, and going to bars felt like work, so I hated it.

I once had a conversation with an old promoter friend who had the same problem after leaving the industry. We laughed at the predicament. It was so easy back then. Now, I was determined to figure out why online dating wasn't working for me.

I reviewed my Match.com profile and realized there was a unique outcome that puzzled me. When I saw a profile of a woman I liked, there was a button that said, "find more profiles like this one." About half the women were listed as "One in a Million" by Match.com. I thought, why?

MATCH

This designation came from the detailed questionnaire people filled out. About fifty percent of people filled out only the default required information, while the other fifty percent provided detailed information about their interests. The latter were considered “One in a Million” because no one had filled out the profile exactly as they did. I wondered if these women knew they were considered “One in a Million” by Match.com.

I was frustrated, having sent thousands of messages without getting a single date. I decided to figure out the system and hack the process. I crafted an email with the subject line: “Do you know Match.com considers You to be ‘One in a Million?’”

I sent this to every woman who was “One in a Million.” The open rate was almost 100%, and I got a 60%-70% response rate, regardless of how beautiful or out of my league the woman was. The email included a screenshot of their “One in a Million” designation, congratulated them, and suggested we meet for coffee or at least have a phone conversation.

From this email, more than half the women sent me their phone numbers. I went from zero dates in a year to a date every night of the week without changing a single thing about my profile or pictures. I had so many dates I had to come up with a system to streamline the process.

Lies and Coffee

Initially, I arranged dates after substantial conversations, sometimes picking up the woman at her place. But about half the women lied about who they were, using older pictures and inaccurate descriptions. It was uncomfortable to be stuck on a dinner date with no chemistry.

I realized I needed a system. I decided on coffee dates. We’d meet, and the date would last as long as the coffee. Sometimes it was quick, sometimes slow, and sometimes to go. About 20% of these dates led to a second date. This system worked well, allowing me to quickly assess if there was a connection. I started running out of women to date in San Diego and began dating women in Las Vegas. This increased volume gave me a good sense of what I wanted in a relationship.

That’s when I got the “wink.” My future wife, Renata, winked at me on Match.com. Yes, we met on Match.com. Turns out, Renata was not a “One in a Million” profile—she was one in several billion and the one for me. Her girlfriend Heather had created her profile and filled out the default information. I wouldn’t have sent the “One in a Million” email to Renata. Later, I learned it was Heather who winked at me on Match.com, prompting me to email Renata and ask for a phone call. It was like pulling teeth to get that first call, but it was worth it.

RENATA

Our coffee date lasted over three hours. On our first dinner date, I arrived early and chatted with her as she got ready. I commented on the glitter on her shoulders and shared everything about my art as Rick Bliss. She was overwhelmingly supportive, unlike some women I had dated. We were engaged within six months and married a year after we met. We both knew what we wanted.

By the time I got invited to The Playboy Mansion to sell my artwork, we were engaged. Renata insisted I go without her. When I was asked to paint live at the Mansion, she helped me see the opportunity and encouraged me to do it. Without her support, Rick Bliss would have had a short life span. Now, art is part of our lives every day. My passion for art wouldn't be part of my life without my beautiful and supportive wife, Renata. And I feel so lucky to have her in my life. LAVASH.



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 1, Cleoz, No Sellout, MifFresh, Bo Bo, Yambro, MC Replay, Flavon, SGAE 3
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