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APRIL 2011

san José state university presents:
your **all-access pass** to san José's age

BLUE ROCK BBQ

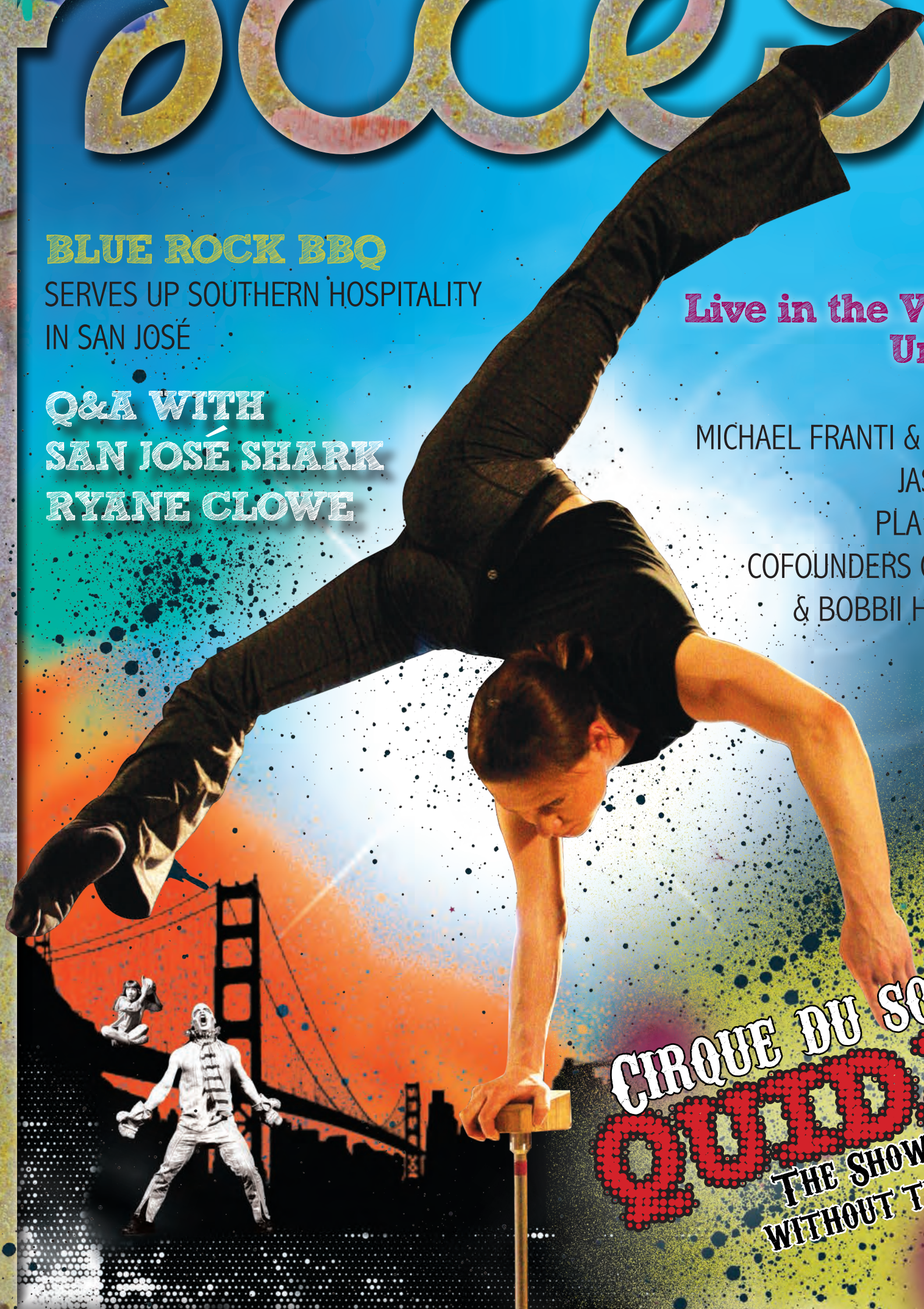
SERVES UP SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY
IN SAN JOSÉ

Q&A WITH
SAN JOSÉ SHARK
RYANE CLOWE

Live in the Vineyard Uncorked

HANSON
MICHAEL FRANTI & SPEARHEAD
JASON REEVES
PLAIN WHITE T'S
COFOUNDERS CLAIRE PARR
& BOBBII HACH-JACOBS

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL'S
GOLDEN
THE SHOW GOES ON
WITHOUT THE BIG TOP



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(Cover & Contents)



CLIFFORD GRODIN

(This page) photo of Mike Nguyen courtesy of Dfined Photography

THE SOUNDS AT RICKSHAW STOP IN SAN FRANCISCO.



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ANUELAH JOHNSON AT THE IMPROV IN SAN JOSÉ.



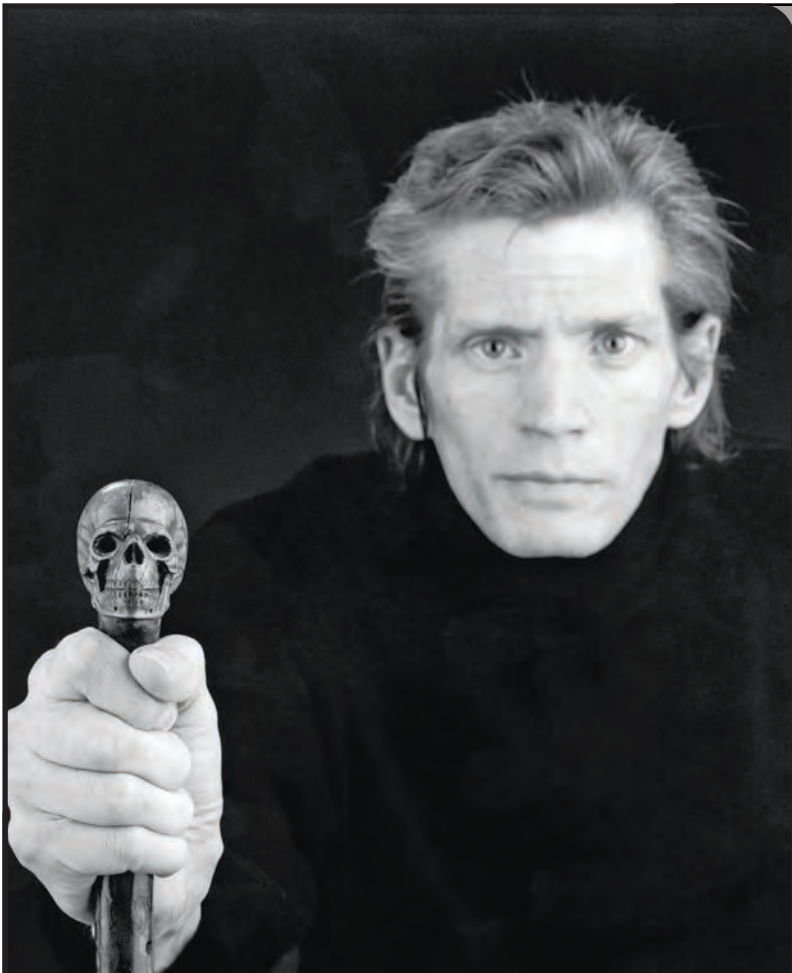
ICONS IN THE LENS: "PORTRAITS" BY ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE



JAIMIE COLLINS



COURTESY: ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE FOUNDATION



Robert Mapplethorpe was an American photographer best known for his controversial nude portraits. (Above) Mapplethorpe's last self portrait was taken in 1988, a year before his death by AIDS. His legacy lives on in collections of major museums in North America and Europe.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, New York's art scene teemed with celebrities and artists that challenged the realm of creativity. One photographer captured these influential figures on film, collecting their faces in black and white photographs to be shown for decades to come.

Robert Mapplethorpe went a long way in the pursuit of his passion. Notoriously known for the controversy surrounding his famous photographs of nudes, Mapplethorpe shows an alternative side of his talent in his collection titled "Portraits," now showing at the San José Museum of Art through early September.

Conveying 103 personalities of an iconic era, the photographs tell as much of a story about the artist as they do about the subjects, forming a vision of who Mapplethorpe was as a person, a lover and a friend.

Among the provocative portraits appear the faces of legends such as Patti Smith, Andy Warhol, Yoko Ono and Truman Capote. He also features lesser-known individuals such as his brother Edward and a drag queen he met on the street, in addition to several self-portraits.

Through his art, Mapplethorpe conveyed life and death in the attitudes and lifestyles of this epoch. While each piece is unique

unto itself, they all contribute cohesively to the collection as a whole. Some faces are smiling while others scowl, showing a range of humor and grief.

Despite Mapplethorpe's segue from nudes, several portraits still conveyed sexuality and the beauty of the human body. Provocative and shocking, these pieces show the sensual side of Mapplethorpe's subjects.

The composition of the photographs are exquisite, merging balance and proportion. The portraits appear elegant, striking and intense. The artist's use of hard and soft lighting, application of makeup and wardrobes create a vivid contrast. The pieces are extremely detailed, with every wrinkle, flaw and perfection visible. Certain photographs experiment with depth of field and visual stimulation. The objects that are in focus, however, are crisp and clear, practically bringing the portraits to life.

Sadly, this was Mapplethorpe's last creative endeavor, as he died in 1989 after a three-year battle with AIDS. Mapplethorpe contributed greatly to the history of photography and the evolution of modern portraits. While further photographs would have reaped additional spectacular exhibits, this collection proves to be a triumphant and compelling finale to an artistic career.

PERFORMING ARTS

Behind-the-scenes personnel keep Ballet San José en pointe



JEREMY INFUSINO

Whether its fitting performers for costumes, ordering a ballerina's favorite pointe shoes or deciding where each dressing assistant should be, there is a great deal that goes on behind the scenes of Ballet San José's rendition of *Carmen*.

April first through third, Ballet San José performed Roland Petit's *Carmen*, which premiered in London in 1949.

But preparation for a show starts months before the opening night. Over the summer, costume director and resident designer Maggie Heaman and her team start planning ahead and anticipating what needs to be done to ensure the company's upcoming season is as good as its last.

"People come throughout the day for their fitting," says Heaman of what is first on her checklist once the season opens.

As fall approaches, Heaman says costume preparations become more meticulous — costumes are altered, fitted and refurbished to the dancers' unique body forms.

"People are larger than they used to be," says Erika Hansen, a costume

technician of Ballet San José. "Women are taller so you need to have bigger males." Costumes are altered to fit the more toned and muscular dancers, specifically the male dancers.

Ballet dancers spend countless hours on their feet when rehearsing for a performance and can go through numerous pairs of shoes. Nick Friend, assistant costume shop manager and shoe manager, says it is not uncommon for ballerinas in a company to go through 1,000 to 1,500 pairs of shoes in a season, each pair ranging from \$26 to \$80.

When the season wraps, Friend says he talks with the dancers about their specific shoe needs from shoe count to brand preference.

"When a shoemaker dies it rocks the dancing world," says Friend. "And ballet dancers are particular about what shoe fits them."

"Most of the current ballet shoemakers are older men and there are many dancers who prefer to wear shoes made by a specific maker," says Friend. "Since there is not a young, up-and-coming generation of shoemakers this could pose a problem in terms of preference for future dancers."

During rehearsal, wardrobe designer Valerie Leitner takes valuable notes on the performance with her assistant and team of dressing assistants.

"Some nights are flawless," says Leitner. "But the next show, a bunch of things could go wrong."

But this hectic process of ironing out kinks behind the scenes is critical to the success of the live performances. With proper preparation and the right production ensemble, an extraordinary show is always on Ballet San José's handbill.

blue rock bbq ain't no KITSCHEN



(Top) Cast-iron pans hang in the kitchen, ready to bake the next batch of homemade corn bread. (Middle left) Tennessee natives Owen and Marie Jobson have run Blue Rock BBQ for two years on the motto: "Barbecue without Borders." (Middle right) A generous portion of slow-smoked ribs are slathered in homemade dry rub and barbecue sauce. (Bottom) A side of potato salad is a mix of red potato, mayonnaise, hard-boiled egg, black olive, gherkin pickle, chives and dill.



TYLER DO



CLIFFORD GRODIN



Owen and Marie Jobson may have four children, but the latest addition to the family is a modern barbecue joint called Blue Rock BBQ.

Blue Rock BBQ restaurant has been smoking meat for about two and a half years since it opened on June 30th, 2008.

Two Tennessee natives, the Jobsons are the culinary masterminds behind the booming restaurant located in south San José.

"We grew up together," says Marie. "We've known each other since we were 15."

They graduated from Emory University in Atlanta, Ga. in 1991. After getting married, the Jobsons headed to San Francisco before moving

to San José five years later in 1999.

Residing in San José ever since, the couple say their dream has always been to open a restaurant that would showcase its favorite food.

"We grew up around a bunch of Tennessee concepts like Buddy's BBQ or Calhoun's," says Owen. "We wanted to bring something of that quality — the Southeastern and Tennessee-style quality of pulled pork, ribs and chicken."

The Jobsons, now both 42, say growing up in a family-oriented setting has greatly influenced the framework of their restaurant.

"We wanted to make it 'fast casual' and family friendly, in terms of speedy

CONTINUED ON P. 24

BRINGING ON THE

LOL!

**FIVE FUNNY GUYS HARNESS
THEIR CRAFT FOR GIGGLES IN THEIR
INDEPENDENT IMPROVISATIONAL THEATER.**



W edged in a secluded business park off Interstate 680 in Fremont, a small warehouse-like garage-turned-black-box theater gives the five players of the Made Up Theatre a place to practice their craft.

The Made Up Theatre is home to 5 Play, a group of stand-up improvisers who have built their own venue and founded their own business to pursue a method of improvisation that is distinct in the South Bay Area.

“This is done out of love,” says 5 Play member Dustin Seidler, who has practiced improvisation since 2004. “We essentially started this place to build a consistent audience and to be a sustainable business. We’re not getting paid, but we love what we’re doing.”

The idea behind 5 Play’s form of improvisation is relatively simple — its execution is what’s tricky — says 5 Play improviser Ben Stephens, who is currently pursuing his Master of Fine Arts in acting at the Academy of Art in San Francisco.

Based on a prompt from the audience, the five improvisers immediately develop a cast of characters and a plot, which they play out for as long as is funny before it’s “wiped,” and the players move on to a new sketch. Players can swap out with one another when they get a good idea or when a fellow improviser gets stuck, which affects the plot in strange and zany ways.

“Improv allows you to free your mind and be spontaneous,” says Stephens, a San José State University graduate of theatre arts. “If you learn anything from it, it’s to have fun in a given moment and take every idea that comes your way.”

Improvisation-based theaters are rare in the Bay Area, but small independent theaters founded and owned by their improvisers are even rarer, says Stephens. While there are several improvisation groups in the area, most perform at whatever theater will book them.

Starting an independent improvisation-based theater from the ground up is just as risky as starting any small business, says 5 Play improviser Steve Seidler, who became devoted to improvisation during his senior year of high school.

“We’re definitely in the red,” says Seidler. “It’s just because of all the initial costs: chairs, building the stage and paint. For three months we did free shows. But we’re slowly starting to come back now.”



5 Play Improv was created by Bobby August, Steve Seidler, Sean Taylor, Dustin Seidler and Ben Stephens. The five-piece cast performs a fast-paced show of sketches and completely improvised scenes at the Made Up Theatre every third Saturday of the month. (Top: from left to right) Dustin Seidler, Taylor and Stephens create an improvised scene based off prompts from the audience. (Bottom) August (left) and Taylor (right) say the entire cast is close both on and off stage.

Part of the reason it’s such a risk is the hegemony of San José-based ComedySportz, a company from which all of the 5 Play cast are veterans. ComedySportz focuses on the more common shortform improvisation, a method with brief sketches based less on character and plot, than the longform improvisation of 5 Play.

“After you do shortform for long enough you start to feel like you’re recycling the same jokes,” says Steve Seidler. “It feels robotic at times because you know the easiest way to tickle the audience. With longform it’s a little different because you still learn tricks and tools to get them to laugh, but you’re open to more than just a specific set. We feel it’s much more difficult, but much more rewarding.”

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SHARKS



RYANE

CLOWE

HANNAH KEIRNS
CLIFFORD GRODIN

What was it like growing up in Canada?

Cold. I grew up in a pretty small town on the east coast of Canada. Obviously like football here, hockey was legend — it was awesome, we played a lot of hockey outside.

When did you know you wanted to play hockey professionally?

I've always loved hockey. Like any kid, I dreamed about it. But when I was 17 or 18 it became kind of a this could actually happen so that's when I started working toward it.

Growing up, was there a different profession you thought you were going to go into?

My dad was a crab fisherman back in Canada. That's not something I really looked forward to doing — it's harder work than this.

What's it like being alternate captain for the San José Sharks?

It's an honor. Obviously I love the team and I love San José. I've been here since they drafted me in 2001. To be a part of an organization for that long and kind of grow with all of these guys and take on a leadership role, it's been really nice.

Do you have a favorite activity you like to do in San José besides playing hockey?

I live in Santana Row so I like to — on off days, after

practice and stuff — stroll around there, sit out and have a coffee and hang out. I have a daughter now, so I hang out with her.

What's it like being a new father?

Is that on this thing or did you just make it up now? [jokes] No, it's awesome. She's 13 months now, just started walking. We got a lot of new kids on this team, guys are really poppin' them out. My fiancée is sacrificing more. I still get to come home and have my pre-game naps and go to the games. If anything, I don't get to sleep all the time on practice days, I get to play with her, which is even better.

Is she a hockey fan yet?

She's got a little jersey and she watches some of the games, just sits in front of the TV. I'm not going to let her play hockey — maybe like golf or tennis or something.

Does your number, 29, have any special significance to you?

I've always worn 22 in minors and juniors. Scott Hannan had that number [22] when I came here, so 29 was open. One of my buddies back home, that was his favorite number and he was all over me to take it.

You play a pretty hard game and are known for getting into fights. Are you tough off the ice, too?

I'm like any other tough guy, I'm just a big teddy bear off the ice. I'm a pretty intense guy and have a bit of a temper on the ice but I'm pretty laidback off the ice. I don't think I've ever gotten into a fight off the ice. Wait a minute, that's not true. But I don't like controversy off the ice.

Do you have a special routine before or after games?

Before games I like to warm up and stretch. We warm up playing soccer. Game days, there's just a lot of getting dressed and undressed — you do that like eight times on game days.

How are you getting ready for playoffs?

Just taking advantage of these days where we have short practices and days off. Doing like everyone else and trying to rest as much as possible and take care of the body.

What's your biggest fear?

Heights. I didn't realize that until the last couple of years. Now any time I look over a ledge or get up high, I'm shivering.

Who is your role model, personally or professionally?

My parents. I'm a long way from home right now and they come down here a lot to visit with my sisters. Definitely my parents, my family, it's nice to have them around. **2**



(Above) Alternate captain Ryane Clowe is known for his physical play on the ice and has the bloody and bandaged knuckles to prove it. (Left) Signs ward off visitors from the Sharks' locker room at the South rink of Sharks Ice at San José. (Below) Each San José Sharks player has an endless supply of hockey sticks in the exclusive "Stick Room" at Sharks Ice.



IN THE COMPANY OF

FOUR

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL LEAVES THE BIG TOP BEHIND AND THE QUIDAM SHOW GOES ON IN ARENAS NATIONWIDE



CALLI PEREZ
& JENNIFER ELIAS



CLIFFORD GRODIN

Performing in arenas and employing more than 5,000 people company-wide, Canadian entertainment company Cirque du Soleil has come a long way from its original group of 20 street performers working in a Big Top tent.

On March 24, *Quidam* made its way to San José as the company's third city of the North American tour. The HP Pavilion hosted the nearly sold-out show featuring the transformed circus. With the larger scale, Cirque du Soleil's show performs for an audience twice the size of traditional Big

Top circus tents.

Quidam has an urban twist lending itself to an introspective storyline on the circus performance. *Quidam*'s story revolves around young Zoé, a girl who leaves her boring life to enter into a world of bright, enigmatic characters.





“The meaning of the show is about anybody, just an anonymous, everyday person walking down the street,” describes hand-balancer Anna Ostapenko. “If you are looking into their soul, that is what you will see in the show. It is not a totally happy, colorful show, but it is really meaningful and poetic, an inside-of-the-soul show.”

Quidam had its world premiere in Montreal under the Big Top in April 1996. The show is an examination of our own world — inhabited by real people with real-life concerns. Upbeat moments are mixed with dark plots as young Zoé slides into the imaginary world of *Quidam* and meets characters who encourage her to free her soul.

Though the show appeals to all ages, performers must now be over the age of 18 because of the lifestyle an arena tour takes on.

“Big Top shows were perfect, like a little village on the move,” says Jessica Leboeuf, Cirque du Soleil’s touring publicist. “Now it’s a bit more rock ‘n’ roll.”

This meant the Chinese yo-yo segment, Diabolos, was transformed from young girls playing a child’s game to a more mature act with women. Costumes were made more racy for the women in the flirty, playful act.

“We try to keep it fresh and updated,” says Leboeuf.

In an effort to maintain the intimate feel of its Big Top circus, Cirque du Soleil’s staff decided to cut large arenas by a third and drape the venue in black curtains.

Characters and choreography were also changed to accommodate the larger-scale show. The acts of *Quidam* are performed on the stage but are mostly achieved on Cirque’s unique téléphérique (French for cable car): a massive steel arch lined with lights and a mobile track that hold the cables for movement of suspending acrobats. *Quidam* showcases several of Cirque du Soleil’s classic acts, including: aerial contortion in silk, Banquine, Cloud Swing, Diabolos, German Wheel, hand balancing, skipping ropes, Spanish Webs, aerial hoops, Statue and juggling.

Former *Quidam* hand-balancer Olga Pikhienko says she had to open herself up to more movement because of the extra stage space, not found in the traditional Big Top.

“You go on stage and you’re like ‘Oh, this probably is what rock stars feel,’” she says.

Leboeuf says the show that once took four days to come together now has a larger team working on the production. Locals join the team in each city to help with the set build-up and breakdown. The HP Pavilion also hired riggers, carpenters and technicians who wore T-shirts that read: “Arena Tours: Because Tents are for Camping.”

HP Pavilion posed some technical problems for the crew. A crew of 100 locals faced difficulty loading equipment and setting up because the San José Sharks hockey team had a game prior to *Quidam*’s premiere night. This took away two days from the crew to set up and the coach to train and practice the performers. Many of Cirque du Soleil’s *Quidam* personnel also note how the arena’s ice floor not only made the atmosphere colder than an average show but also made the performers more susceptible to injury.

But Gabriel Dubé-Dupuis, the general stage manager of *Quidam*, is no stranger to the show’s complicated elements. He grew up around Cirque du Soleil’s shows, watching his

Cirque du Soleil’s imaginary world of *Quidam* during the show and behind the scenes at HP Pavilion.



father perform in Vegas' first permanent show, *Mystère*. Dubé-Dupuis recalls his father's role as a big baby in a segment many remember from the movie *Knocked Up*.

Quidam's international cast features over 50 world-class acrobats, musicians, singers and characters.

"Cirque du Soleil is more like the U.N.," says Leboeuf. "You get 20 something different countries."

Performer Ostapenko, of Russia, is a newcomer to *Quidam*, replacing Pikhienko who left the show to work on other Cirque projects after a long run with *Quidam*. Ostapenko has been performing in *Quidam* for only three weeks, though this is her third show with Cirque du Soleil. Ostapenko says she began her hand-balancing understudy during her tour with Cirque du Soleil's *Saltimbanco*.

"Each Cirque show is really different," she says. "It is basically like a story, like a movie. Some of them are comedies, some of them are romance, some of them are dramas."

One of the toughest challenges Ostapenko says she faces is to overcome nervousness, as her balancing number is hard to do with tense energy.

"When you get on stage you realize you are the only one there," she says. "You are not in a group number anymore and everything pretty much depends on you. Whenever you do something wrong you feel like every single person saw it."

And *Quidam* certainly has a large audience. Since its premiere, *Quidam* has toured on five continents and has been experienced by millions of people. The new arena setting of the show is currently on a two and a half year tour plan in North America, which Leboeuf says could stretch for an additional six months. After its North American tour, the show will head to Europe, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

Leboeuf has been touring with the show for more than seven years.

"I don't really know anything else," she says. "When I am in one place too long I itch to pack my suitcases, go somewhere, meet new people and be in a new city and discover what it has to offer."

Ostapenko says most of the performers and crew enjoy life in the circus.

"You get used to it and there is a beauty to it," she says.

And though the cast members hail from various different countries, they are a tight-knit family.

"We live at the same hotels, we travel together," says Leboeuf. "It like a family where you didn't chose each other, but you have to make it work. We have some connections where we all chose to be here, we all love our show and we all love to travel and to meet new people. It is a really good family deal." 📍

Hannah Keirns, Shiva Zahirfar and Clifford Grodin contributed to this story.

RINGLEADER OF PUBLIC RELATIONS: KEVIN KOPJAK

Among the Cirque folk, *Access* found one of San José State University's own, Kevin Kopjak.

Once a resident of Royce Hall, Kopjak is now *Quidam's* public relations ringleader. Kopjak works for Charles Zukow Associates, an agency in San Francisco that has been representing Cirque du Soleil for more than 20 years.

After graduating in 2002 with a bachelor's degree in advertising, Kopjak interned with the Charles Zukow Associates before landing a permanent position. There he moved up to the senior public relations account executive position over the course of eight years.

Kopjak says his passion for theater, music and entertainment drove him to the field of public relations.

Working with internationally known groups and celebrities, such as Cirque du Soleil, is his favorite part about his job.

"I've worked with everybody from Julianne Andrews, Prince Charles and Camilla, to Tracy Chapman and Deborah Gibson," he says. "These are people I grew up idolizing."

Kopjak says his tasks in public relations for Cirque du Soleil include creating press releases, developing interest in the company's upcoming shows and finding different story angles for various new media outlets.

Though public relations is booming in New York and Los Angeles, Kopjak says he loves working in the Bay Area.

"I grew up here and I don't see myself going anywhere," he says.

Kopjak plans on joining SJSU's Alumni Association, which he heard about from old friend and former classmate, Paul Richardson, who is now the association's executive director.

There are three key tips to the public relations trade Kopjak says: patience, disguising anger and flexibility.

"You've to have that patience," he says. "And if you're angry or upset you never want to show the media that. When you show your anger then it shows that they've gotten to you. Be flexible, it's a part of the job."



"BRINGING ON THE LOLZ"
CONTINUED FROM P. 7

While employed at ComedySportz, the five performers attended classes at The Second City the comedy training center in Chicago, where many *Saturday Night Live* cast members have studied, including Tina Fey. When they came back, their perspective of improvisation had changed.

"We saw what improv could be and it fired us up to work on our craft," says Stephens. "We wanted to explore all kinds of improv without restrictions and without being limited to any particular art form."

Soon afterward, the members of what would become 5 Play left ComedySportz to pursue their own dreams and create the Made Up Theatre, says Stephens.

"ComedySportz was really structured," he says. "It didn't leave as much exploration as far as the craft and your ability to perform. Now we have much more freedom to create without boundaries."

However, with that freedom comes risks and sacrifices.

"I'm more nervous now than I ever have been in my life," says Stephens. "It's different now because we're up there with our own names, not someone else's. This is our baby, it's our product, so there's more emotional investment."

Every cent that the theater makes goes back into the company and they can't seem to invest

enough time in taking the Made Up Theatre to the next level.


Running an independent venue also brought some unforeseen challenges, says Steve Seidler. Since most people hear about the theater through word of mouth, it can be difficult to market it to an audience. This compounds the effects of a show that goes badly, which only increases the pressure on the improvisers to perform well.

"In bigger institutions, if you have a bad show it doesn't really matter — the show will go on," he says. "They have an established name and three more shows that week to fall back on."

Despite challenges and stresses, 5 Play improviser Bobby August says the group's strength is that they are close on and off the stage.

"Our chemistry and comfort with each other is huge," says Dustin Seidler. "You can put five of the best improvisers together on the stage, but if they don't have some connection together they won't necessarily make a good show."

In many ways, 5 Play's choice to fend for itself and create its own venue models after its craft: They started chasing an idea and are still making up how they are going to get there as they go.

"There's a saying in improv: if you're going to fail, fail big," says Steve Seidler of practicing improvisation on stage. "You have no idea where you're going and you have no idea what's going on, but each time we just embrace the moment and figure out how can we make this work." 



(From left to right) Steve and Dustin Seidler and Stephens make use of props and one another in an improvised scene.

APRIL 2011 **15**
access

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 SHIVA ZAHIRFAR
& HANNAH KEIRNS

 CLIFFORD GRODIN



Year-round Napa Valley hosts the “Mecca of the birth of great American wines,” but in April and November it is home to an exclusive crash course in wine, cuisine and music called *Live at the Vineyard* — the brainchild of music industry veterans Claire Parr and Bobbii Hach-Jacobs.



“We figured people have been eating and drinking with musical accompaniment for hundreds if not thousands of years — so we think we might be onto something,” says Parr.

Live in the Vineyard is one of the nation’s biggest radio contests. More than 300,000 people nationwide entered to win a rare invitation to this April’s event. The exclusivity of the three-day event creates a buzz and makes it something that everyone wants to experience.

Parr says *Live in the Vineyard* targets music lovers first and then those who enjoy wine and food pairings.

“Our whole goal is to make this approachable to everyone,” says Parr. “We want to encourage people to find their own taste. We are attempting to survive in a world where people are willing to pay for less and less creative and intellectual property — it’s vital that we hitch our wagon to something that people cannot live without.”

Cofounders Parr and Hach-Jacobs put on *Live in the Vineyard* in April and November with the help of “human shield” and Director of Operations, Sean Ramm, and “saving grace” Director of Hospitality, Jamie Reynolds.

“Alcohol, prayer, blind faith, a little blackmail and some good old fashioned sweat equity” say Parr and Hach-Jacobs about what fuels their humble team of four before and during the event.

Though each team member holds other jobs outside of *Live in the Vineyard*, Parr and Hach-Jacobs say everyone works year-round on ideas, planning, and artist and sponsor pitches.

“Groveling is a 24 hour job,” says Parr.

And the groveling certainly paid off this April. *Live in the Vineyard* 7 hosted acoustic sets from numerous artists including: Lenny Kravitz, *Michael Franti & Spearhead*, *Default*, *Hanson*, Marc Broussard, Colbie Caillat, Matt Nathanson, *Plain White T’s*, *Parachute*, Jason Reeves, Matt Kearney, Trent Hancock, Matthew Morrison, Dan Godlin, Matt Hires and *Grace Potter and the Nocturnals*.

Each artist performed at Uptown Theater or at various vineyards to an intimate audience of radio programmers, music executives, winemakers and lucky contest winners. Since each set is bare-bones acoustic and each artist must possess raw talent.

“We have to know the artists are incredible live, can perform stripped down and simple, and that they have something relevant to say,” says Parr. “Same for the wineries and chefs.”

And it doesn’t hurt to be well connected in the music, wine and entertainment industries, either.

“We couldn’t get access to the artists we have if Bobbii and I were not in the day to day trenches promoting and working with the labels every day,” says Parr. We know which new artists are phenomenal live and the names that can truly deliver not only amazing shows, but are willing to invite people into seeing how and why they create.”

(Top left) Taylor Hanson gets the crowd on their feet and dancing during *Hanson’s* latest single, “Give a Little.” (Top middle) The Uptown Theater in downtown Napa was the destination for musical entertainment on Saturday and Sunday nights of the *Live in the Vineyard* event. (Top right) Musician and sought-out songwriter, Jason Reeves, plays one of his multiple hits. (Center top) Between acts at the Uptown Theater, cofounders Claire Parr (left) and Bobbii Hach-Jacobs (right) announce that *Live in the Vineyard* raised \$19,000 for charity City of Hope. (Center bottom) De’Mar Hamilton drums and sings during the *Plain White T’s* performance. (Bottom left) Michael Franti, of *Michael Franti & Spearhead*, invited audience members on stage during the band’s hit single “Say Hey (I Love You).” (Bottom middle) Zac Hanson plays a cajon drum during *Hanson’s* acoustic set. (Bottom right) Colbie Caillat’s dusky vocals and acoustic guitar had the audience singing along throughout her set.



HANSON

Blessed with organic talent, Hanson brothers Isaac, Taylor and Zac have been making music together for nearly two decades.

"It's the art that bring us together and not the fact that we're brothers," says Zac. "We're lucky. I'm 25 and I've been doing this longer than probably 80 percent of the bands out there."

The band gained commercial success in 1997 with their infectious single, "MMMBop." But their transition from teen idols to adult musicians was laden with obstacles that would have crushed the resolve of many artists.

After the release of its second album, *This Time Around*, Hanson waded through a four-year struggle with corporate label Island Def Jam, whose executives restricted creative freedom and refused to record more than 80 songs.

"The struggle with Island Def Jam is really more of a struggle with the industry," says Taylor. "It was just the question of: Were we going to allow ourselves to stay in an industry where people that were from a corporation dictate what was going to happen to the music? Even at the time when we were really young, we've never been an artist that was really good at taking a backseat — I don't think we're capable of doing it."

Now veterans of the music industry and under their own record label, the Hansons say they still don't like what they see in the current landscape of the music industry. To them, the focus should be on the musicians and the relationship they have with their fan base.

"I just think the industry has to start by respecting the fans first and foremost," says Isaac. "That also starts with respecting the artist that they're working with and if you don't do that, you're not nurturing right."

And *Hanson* definitely nurtures its loyal fans by constantly keeping them updated and

involved with the band and its musical process. Zac says every year the band releases an extended play (EP) record of unreleased songs to its fan club members.

"This year we wrote and recorded five songs in five days," says Isaac. "We streamed multiple hours every single day, showing fans the writing process, showing them the recording process and they literally watched it as it happened."

Taylor says the band's fans respond to their music because they feel connected to it.

"They feel something," he says. "That's what we're selling quote on quote. It's just feeling. It's connection. It's life. Everything should be like a way to extend that and just grow it — it's making unique art, creating events that people have access to, and, honestly, helping a whole community of people actually connect to each other."

Hanson also galvanizes communities through charitable and benevolent acts. During a trip to Africa a few years ago the band saw the detrimental effect of AIDS and poverty. The band decided to speak out and make more people aware of the adverse conditions that has plague such a large population.

"We've got to set the tone for how we attack things of our generation," says Taylor. "HIV/AIDS specifically targets young women and young families in Africa. It is like this endless, crumbling thing."

"Take the Walk," an initiative *Hanson* started in 2007 in effort with TOMS shoes, has further involved the band's fans. Before each live performance the brothers invite fans to walk a mile barefoot alongside them to raise awareness and funds for impoverished sub-Saharan Africa.

It's been some of the coolest things we've done in the last 10 years," says Taylor. "You got to have something you're willing to fight for."

MICHAEL FRANTI & SPEARHEAD

The barefoot Michael Franti of *Michael Franti & Spearhead* might stick out while relaxing with his fans at a *Live in the Vineyard* mixer, but in one of the places he calls home, San Francisco, he's just one of the guys.

"The thing I love about the Bay Area, especially San Francisco, it's like the land of broken toys," says Franti. "Anybody who's a little bit weird, a little bit twisted moves to San Francisco. And you totally fit in you don't stand out like a sore thumb. And I definitely fall under that category."

The son of an Irish-German-French mother and a African American and American Indian father, Franti was born in Oakland and was adopted by a Finish American couple. His own unique background has helped him appreciate diversity.

"I love the multicultural aspect of the Bay Area and there's acceptance for people being different," says Franti.

And the sounds *Michael Franti & Spearhead* create are as unique as San Francisco: fused by many different genres together and inspired by legendary artists with various musical styles.

"We combine hip-hop, folk music, rock, reggae and maybe punk rock," says Franti. "My favorite artists are Marvin Gay, Bob Marley and John Lennon."

Before starting *Michael Franti & Spearhead*, Franti founded other musical groups like *Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprisy*, which toured with *U2*.

Franti says the most difficult thing in his life is balancing his time between responsibilities as a father and musician. While the inspiration for a song comes from personal experiences like these Franti says he tries to make his songs emotionally accessible to everyone.

"I like to write songs that have multiple meanings," he says. "They could be about a personal thing, but they are about what's in the world. They're metaphors for life. My goal is to always spread positivity through music."

Although *Michael Franti & Spearhead* have found success, Franti never loses sight of his Bay Area roots.

"I still live in San Francisco, I live in Hunters Point ... in the hood," says Franti.

After performing at *Live in the Vineyard*, *Michael Franti & Spearhead* will be touring worldwide to locations including Singapore, Australia, New Zealand and Bali.

"I really love the fact that I can write a song this morning and go onto the stage and play it and see people respond to it," says Franti.



Brothers and bandmates Zac (left), Isaac (middle), and Taylor (right) Hanson enjoy some downtime at the gorgeous, family-run Monticello Vineyards.

Want more from *Live in the*

We took more photos and squeeze into this issue. For our exclusive content

JASON REEVES

Jason Reeves' musical talent isn't a household name yet, but his songwriting has reached many peoples' ears. Reeves is the co-writer of most of Colbie Caillat songs and his talent is in high demand among musicians.

A self-proclaimed "lost boy" of Neverland, the Iowa native enjoys climbing trees and building relationships with fellow musicians.

Reeves is attempting to become a well-known musician in his own right this summer by releasing his next album and first full length body of work since 2007.

"I'm most excited about having new music," says Reeves. "That might sound simple, but after touring and playing the same songs from my last record for so long it's just incredibly exciting to have new songs. It's a nerve-wracking and humbling thing to take a collection of music that nobody's heard and throw it out into the world and just let anybody that wants to hear it. I would be scared of that, but I'm just too excited."

Reeves first started writing songs in high school when he heard legends such as Bob Dylan and James Taylor, got a guitar for his 17th birthday and decided to do what his heroes were doing through song: "Telling stories and putting so much emotion with just a voice and a guitar."

Since then, writing songs has come naturally to him. Unsure of what triggers ideas or how songs come to him, Reeves likes the mystery behind songwriting.

"I honestly don't know why or how it works the way it does," he says. "But songs just kind of exist and I feel like I'm capturing them rather than creating them. They're just little things that are flying around."

Reeves admits he has never experienced writer's block during his career, which explains his ability to churn out emotion-filled pop songs without sounding like they come out of a soulless hit machine.

"I don't know what writer's block is," he says. "I have the opposite of that — I have a problem where I cannot quit. Someday if I experience it then I'll probably be happy ... most people don't like when they get writer's block but I'll probably be like, 'Oh wow, great. I can just sit there and not write.'"

Reeves' simple hope is to make honest and real music to reach people and make them aware of their emotions.

"My only goal is to make people feel," says Reeves. "Whether it's good or bad or sad or happy, I just want people to feel."

PLAIN WHITE T'S

Tom Higgenson and Tim Lopez of *Plain White T's* decided to take a pit stop from their U.S. tour to talk about love, bandmates, music and boners.

Vocalist and guitarist Higgenson says the band has an innate need for love, a universal element that everyone is searching for. "Hey There Delilah," the band's Grammy-nominated song, was written to impress a lady one of the band members was interested in.

"We're all either in love or looking for love, and wanting to find that true love," says Higgenson. "I think we are all a group of romantics and I don't think we can help but have that trickle into the songs."

In fact, the first single off of *Plain White T's* fifth album, *Wonders of the Younger*, is called "Rhythm of Love." During the band's set at *Live in the Vineyard*, Lopez says he wrote the song for a girl he was trying to impress who had a handsome boyfriend.

Though Lopez, vocalist and guitarist, admits the song never won the girl over, it was still an opportunity for him to sing lead vocals for the first time in the band's history.

"This time Tim wrote a few songs that we all loved," says Higgenson about Lopez' demos. "We loved the way they felt with him singing it. So we just went for it."

Plain White T's have been on the music scene since 1997, when Higgenson and

guitarist Dave Tirio formed the band with other friends after graduating from high school in Chicago. Higgenson says "living in a van and not making any money" lead some members to quit. This opened the door for current *Plain White T's* members Lopez, drummer De'Mar Hamilton and bassist Mike Retondo to join the band.

Higgenson says the secret to the band's longevity is just that, a secret. He does reveal that the band has stayed strong over time because of the willingness, encouragement and care they have for one another.

"We know each other really well and we tolerate each other really well and we love each other now," says Lopez.

Their close relationships also help while on the road. The band's "Wonders of the Younger" tour continues nationwide until May 14.

Higgenson and Lopez say the "wonders of the younger" vary from person to person. They say the wonders of their youth had a lot to do with trying to understand the world, including girls and boners.

"Those early love situations when you are in elementary school and just figuring out girls and stuff," says Lopez. "That's really the wonders of the younger. When you can't stand up and write on the chalkboard because you're getting hard-ons in class."



Tim Lopez (left) and Tom Higgenson (right) of the five-member *Plain White T's*, relax and enjoy some wine at the Peju Province Winery before their band's performance that night.

the Vineyard? You're in luck!

and multimedia than we could lead to our Facebook page from the three-day event!



Just PARADIN' around town



ANNA WHITE



JENNA BARJAM

Last issue, we brought you behind the scenes of "Waterscape," the water feature in front of City Hall. Your "All-Access Pass" into the wonders of the San José Public Art Program continues this issue with a closer look at not just one installation, but 16 pieces of art created by international public artist Andrew Leicester.

Collectively called the "Parade of Floats," 16 statues represent the various gifts that help shape San José into the thriving place we live, learn, and work in today. The sculptures, made of concrete, reflect different aspects of San José's vibrant roots. The "Parade of Floats" line the sidewalk of South Fifth Street and border City Hall plaza.

"They are so familiar in that area of City Hall," says Susan O'Malley, curator and print center director of the San José Institute of Contemporary Art. "It's almost like I couldn't imagine the space without them. They represent the diversity and each of the [statues] is really different and uses a particular language."

The story behind the "Parade of Floats" shows a community engaged in a creative process. Here, one of the most prominent art collections in downtown San José is revealed and celebrated.

"There is a little bit of something for everybody," says Mary Rubin, senior project manager from the Public Art Program. "If public art is engaging the community then the artist is doing its job."

The initial idea for the project was a string of artistic objects leading to City Hall and marking the civic district. Andrew Leicester came to San José in February 1999 with more than just one project on his hands. Within the first three years of research, Leicester discovered a forgotten gem of San José: a traditional parade called "Fiesta de

las Rosas," or festival of roses.

During the 1920s and 1930s, "Fiesta de las Rosas" was an annual public parade in downtown San José to celebrate the popular and flourishing rose gardens within Santa Clara County. Half a million people gathered from all over the valley to participate in the parade. On a warm summer day in May 1929, San José State University students dressed as Spartan warriors led the parade down The Alameda with a Trojan horse float adorned with roses and university pride.

"That gave me the perfect kind of armature and theme," says Leicester. "To recall that annual parade and update it with references to contemporary social issues and history."

A questionnaire was developed to reach out to the community for ideas about the individual floats. A committee, along with the artist, reduced 250 responses into a compilation of 16 primary themes.

Armed with the list developed by and for the community, Leicester spent the next three years developing the designs, getting them approved and constructing each of the 16 floats. Six years and \$818,000 and later, 16 individual pieces of art were created with unique themes.

Leicester says some of his original designs were declined and sent back to the drawing board, such as the idea to use a Trojan horse as seen in the San José State float from the original "Fiesta de las Rosas" parade.

"The Trojan horse was a double entendre



not only to the University but in terms of information and computers,” says Leicester. He was told his horse idea was declined due to irrelevant tension from a previous horse statue in downtown San José that upset the Hispanic community because it reminded them of a white military figure conquering California.

Unbeknownst to the committee, Leicester managed to sneak in his horse into the “Children” float with a statue of a piñata.

“The piñata is like a Trojan horse,” he says. “It’s got something hidden inside of it. It’s like a double agent.”

Whether intentionally or not, Leicester disguised the Trojan horse as a piñata leaving more than one meaning for the community to discover.

“[A Trojan] obviously also has an innocent but threatening effect on modern technology. I think my computer has one right now,” says Leicester, chuckling as he tries to click through his computer and close the dozens of pop-ups that bombarded his screen. “Technology can be both frustrating and inspiring at the same time.”

The “Technology” float, as a very important piece to San José’s puzzle, can be seen from SJSU’s campus at the corner of Fifth and San Fernando streets. A tall shiny black column towers above a base of faces that represent the workers of Silicon Valley.

Leicester says he was inspired by a mural at San José International Airport that depicted workers in protective jumpsuits creating silicon wafers for the high-tech industry.

“These black shiny columns are being drawn out of this molten pot,” he says in awe of the magical transformations of silicon technology and its potential power. “That, in turn, are being turned into silicon wafers. It’s like alchemy.”

Leicester’s designs also touch upon simplicity and build upon geometric shapes. Each float has a deliberate meaning to the community but is not always recognizable at first glance.

The “Future” float seems complex and abstract. Leicester says he used the Chinese puzzle game called Tangram to tell a story. The object of Tangram is to use all seven pieces of the puzzle to form a predetermined shape. Every image seen in the “Future” float is derived from the same seven shapes.


“In our lives, we have a set of things that are given to us and it’s up to us to arrange them in such a way that we can kind of control our own destiny,” says Leicester, sharing his vision and concept of future. “It’s a game of chance that involves people making choices and their outcomes, because you can’t predict the future.”

As a public artist, Leicester develops deeper meanings in his pieces without distracting the community from enjoying them and their simplicity at the same time. You can walk by any one of these floats and enjoy its presence, bright colors and intricate tiles.

“If something is beautifully crafted, you don’t really think about it when you look at it,” says O’Malley, who has served on two review panels for the San José Public Art program. “It just sort of transports to you what it is. These pieces are all successfully crafted.”

O’Malley suggests to take a walk through these floats a little more thoughtfully. Not until you sit for a while and study one of these floats, do you begin to realize its true significance, personality and historical reference.

“It touches us,” says Leicester. “It tells us that our city wants to provide us with things that enrich our daily environment.”

And his timeless public art pieces in downtown San José will continue to participate in our perceptions of our city through rain or shine. 



(Far left) The “Recreation, Play, Sports” piece (left) includes soccer, ice hockey, football, cricket, basketball, tennis, baseball and golf. (Center) The “Natural Environment” float shows the game board of the Santa Clara Valley where pieces represent the natural features of the area and of human intervention. (Above) Neighborhoods play a vital role in San José. Leicester’s “Neighborhoods” float pays homage to the neighborhood’s physical architecture and its interaction with the local climate.



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PAGING MIKE NGUYEN

DRIVEN EVENT PLANNER GETS THE LOCAL PARTY STARTED TO RESUSCITATE SAN JOSE'S NIGHTLIFE.



ANGELA MEDINA

COURTESY:
DFINED PHOTOGRAPHY

Scrambling around wearing costume scrubs, the thickly-built event planner and nightclub promoter Mike Nguyen makes sure every invited guest is let into Motif Lounge's iron-barred doors. With the line extending out the door, he ensures that guests walk in at a constant pace.

For Nguyen throwing parties is an opportunity for people to experience escaping to a new place for a night.

"When you create events, it's like your own product and you put it out there," says Nguyen. "You're not putting out an actual, physical product, but it's something people experience. And when people come and they have a good time, it's a great thing."

Interacting with new people and socializing with friends in the exciting nightlife setting are the main reasons Nguyen has continued to work as an event planner and nightclub promoter for the past five years.

"I can speak for everybody when I say people love meeting new people," says Nguyen.



Nguyen's outgoing personality and networking skills are a couple reasons he has become a successful event planner and nightclub promoter from humble professional beginnings.

First Party

Beginning his journey in the nightlife scene as a bouncer for Smoke Tiki Lounge in San José, Nguyen eventually became head of security. Pretty soon, his large circle of friends provided him an opportunity to promote his own party.

Nguyen's first job as a club promoter was in 2006 at Smoke Tiki Lounge on a Thursday night.

"My first night I had 170 people," he says. "The second week I had like 250, the third week 300 and the fourth week was like 400 with a line out the door. And I never really looked back after that."

With a strong base in San José, Nguyen's familiarity with his native city leads much to his party-planning success.

San José, he says, has a strong hip-hop culture which always

sways his events towards hip-hop music. It's crucial for club promoters to know what kind of music their crowd likes. Otherwise, the crowd will find other parties that cater to their musical taste says Nguyen.

"I do appreciate [the hip-hop culture] of San José... we're unique," says Nguyen. "You don't want to be the same as everyone else if you can help it."

Above The Rest

In a major city, standing out from the competition is vital. Nguyen has maintained his strong San José base by being an assertive and kind businessman in San José's nightlife.

"I'm very detailed. I plan in advance," says Nguyen. "I'll plan a party three months in advance, while most promoters will create one in three weeks in advance. You got to get the right people together, it takes time."

His job entails creating themes, booking disc jockeys and staff and negotiating with nightclub managers.

"I know how to run a business," he says. "I don't know how to run all of it, because there's different aspects of it. But for the promotion side and customer service side, I know a lot."

In this industry, attitude counts for a lot. Nguyen's humbled, good-hearted personality only help his nightlife success and extensive networking.

Danny Van Lairon, Studio 8's VIP Marketing Director, has hired Nguyen for many of Studio 8's events in the past two years.

"What stands out about Mike [compared to other club promoters] is his integrity, and he's a team player," says Van Lairon. "Most promoters tend to have a big ego and it's not often to meet one who is genuinely nice person."

The nightclub industry is cutthroat with plenty of "backstabbers" says Davina Cordero, an event host and former co-worker of Nguyen. "And among the crowd of nightclub promoters, he [Nguyen] sticks out because of his big heart."

While it works to Nguyen's advantage, having a big heart is not the only necessity to survive in the social nightclub business: networking is the most crucial quality to have in the nightclub world.

"Every year to survive you have to reload," says Nguyen. "You really have that crowd for a year or two, max. They get older and move on to other things, so you have to reload. You have to get new people on your team. You have to meet new people to get them to come out. So your typical lifespan [with that crowd] is about one year in San José. The ones that are smart enough to reload, to capture new business, can last long. I've been doing it for 5 years now."

Branching Out

Eventually, Nguyen wants to make a name for himself as a successful event planner and nightclub promoter around the Bay Area. Branching out of San José is a goal he is slowly striving for.

"The number one thing that drives me is I want to challenge myself," says Nguyen. "Where I want to lead [event planning] to and why I keep doing it is eventually to open my own spot."

Creating an exciting atmosphere for clubgoers is a task Nguyen wishes to expand across the Bay Area.

"I'm a people person, and [planning and promoting] helps pass the time by faster than at a desk," he says. "I've had that job before. I need that interaction. I need to be on my feet." 🌀



(Left) San José event planner and nightclub promoter Mike Nguyen enjoys interacting with new people and socializing, like go-go dancers Tina Lee (left) and Kay Jay (right) during a "Naughty Nurse" benefit at the Motif Lounge. (Above) Nguyen began his nightlife career as a bouncer and head of security before he became an event planner and nightclub promoter.

"BLUE ROCK BBQ AIN'T NO KITSCHEN"
CONTINUED FROM P. 5

service and convenient pricing," says Marie. "A marriage of the types of barbecue restaurants we grew up with — with a modern, contemporary edge to it."

The restaurant is unlike several other customary barbecue joints people may be familiar with because it lacks the clichéd country theme most barbecue restaurants offer.

Owen wanted the restaurant to take on a clean and simple design that doesn't patronize customers.

"It does not have hanging pick-up trucks from the ceiling or loud country music," says Owen. "Because that's not really a restaurant."

Growing up in the South, the Jobsons say they were both raised with a little something called "southern hospitality." As a result, the focus of the restaurant is not only about the cuisine, but the philosophy and quality of the service behind it.

"We differentiate from other places, in the sense that our relationship with the people that we serve are really important to us," says Marie.

Philip Seys says he comes to the restaurant twice a month because the atmosphere in the restaurant is extremely friendly and he feels at home.

"I talk to the owner and he always asks if I need anything," he says.

The flavor of the restaurant's homemade barbecue sauce and the texture of the soft, succulent meat are big reasons Seys says he is a regular at Blue Rock BBQ.

Owen also stresses the service-oriented ideals of Blue Rock BBQ because the restaurant was initially built to help send his kids to college and reach out to the community through philanthropy.

However, success did not come easy Owen recalls. He and his wife endured

many hardships in their first year of business. He remembers catching pneumonia within the first few months while his wife struggled to manage the restaurant and be a proactive mother.

"It's a hard balance," says Owen. "Ultimately, it's good because it shows our kids that life isn't handed on a silver platter and they see that Mom and Dad really have to work for it."

Marie says she tries not to think about the days when she worked non-stop and slept in the booths of the restaurant during preparations for the restaurant's grand opening.

"Those first couple of months were extremely hard," she says. "Now it's rewarding because we see the fruits of our labor. It's fun and hard, that's kind of our life ... I think we must like that."

Owen says their "culinary offspring" has been a roller-coaster ride.

"The highs and lows of running your own business has produced a sundry of great highs such as meeting new people

and being able to touch the lives of others," he says.

Coming from the corporate world, the Jobsons say they're glad they decided to part with their suits and briefcases to pursue their restaurant dream filled with commercial grills and aprons.

Mike Dove, a Blue Rock BBQ cashier says he retired from the post office a couple years ago and enjoys working at Blue Rock because he feels like he isn't just a typical employee but a part of a family.

"I started six months since it opened and plan to be working here for at least another 5 years," he says with a beaming smile. "I think it will expand to another location and I might be there."

The husband and wife duo say they have been blessed and their family utterly and whole-heartedly loves barbecue.

"We eat here every day," says Marie. "I tell the kids we might not make a lot of money but we will never go hungry. It's getting that protein!" 🍔

ORDER UP!

In the name of research, our Eats Editor sampled some of Blue Rock BBQ's key dishes. Below is one of his rave reviews.

Walk in to a barbecue restaurant in San José and you will find yourself buying an overly kitschy and clichéd dining experience. Since the restaurant is not in the South, the owners feel the need to bring the South to you. In one of the most progressive places on Earth, why does our barbecue have to be stuck in a box?

Blue Rock BBQ turns this stereotypical dining experience upside-down — The restaurant is clean and modern with granite counter tops and bright lighting.

Smoking an average of 700 pounds of pork shoulder a week, Blue Rock's

owner is an expert of the pulled pork sandwich. I decided to test his skills and order the Tennessee pulled pork sandwich.

Meticulously smoked for ten and a half hours, the pork butt fell apart and was delightfully silky. The meat was perfectly moist and contained the right amount of internal fat leftover from the smoking process. Smoke from the cooker penetrated the meat thoroughly enough to take on a rich flavor that was never overpowering. The housemade dry rub added yet another layer of flavor to the delicate meat. The flavors of the smoke and rub

were balanced expertly so I could still enjoy the flavor of the pork itself.

Both the coleslaw and the bun brought different textures to the sandwich. The coleslaw that sat atop the mound of meat was subtle in flavor but added a nice crunch to the sandwich. The bun, brushed with clarified butter and grilled until golden brown, was soft and moist on the inside yet crisp and creamy on the outside.

Blue Rock's homemade barbecue sauce was another great element of the sandwich. The sauce had an superb balance of sweet, vinegar and spice.

- CLIFFORD GRODIN



The Tennessee pulled pork sandwich with slaw and side of potato salad runs patrons less than \$10.