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FEATURES

GREAT ADVANCES IN MEDICAL SCIENCE
the amazing resiliency of mankind through great minds and a few lucky mishaps
page 16
by Esmeralda Rupp-Spangle

GREEN ROOM DIARIES [DELTA-8 UPDATE]
exposing the ever-changing landscape of cannabis laws
page 20
by Stone Cold Sativa Awesome

THE MONTHLY COLUMN [SUMMER EDITION]
road trippin’ with Wombstretcha — with severed limbs, flaccid cocks and massive nuts
page 34
by Wombstretcha the Magnificent

TALES FROM THE DJ BOOTH
the bustling business of tits and ass before calamity comes to pass
page 42
by DJ Hazmatt

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As we begin to collectively emerge from what might well be the weirdest year anyone under the age of 110 might recall, as bumpy as it is, it can behoove us to reflect on some of the most important and impactful medical advances in human history. Things that allowed our frail species to live and fight another day. Because, if we’re not fucking, we’re fighting. That’s just how humans roll. It’s served us well enough to not be extinct yet, so let’s take a look back at how the greatest human minds have tackled some of the deadliest biological threats we’ve yet faced.

The Black Death

We’ve all watched enough overdratimized historical documentaries to know that innovative ideas like blaming the Jews, stuffing herbs into nightmare-fueled masks, killing all the cats, and shrieking about miasmas were perplexingly ineffective against this nasty little bacterium. Fortunately, though, there was French-born physician and surgeon Guy De Chauliac, who advised Pope Clement VI to lock himself in his chambers and admit no one. This may well qualify as the first time social distancing was ever employed. Despite his revolutionary work and insistence on continuing to treat sick patients rather than fleeing in terror like his more sensible peers at the time, he did eventually kick the proverbial bucket in 1368, but not before contracting—and apparently overcoming—a bout of Bubonic plague himself. Count this one as a true badass of history. His reasonable, compassionate medical treatise on plague remains a high point from a time that most sensible people assumed the end of the world was nigh.

Smallpox

Despite its diminutive name, this absolute downer of a disease had been a scourge of our species for pretty much ever. If you weren’t covered in horrible, disfiguring scars from beating it, you were almost certainly dead—at least, that is, until this English country doctor from Gloucester was making eyes at milkmaids and happened to notice they seemed to be largely unaffected by arguably the worst disease in human history. He’d noticed the milkmaids would get one gnarly pustule on their hand (I assume this was during a clandestine tryst—“WTF?! No girl, just bend over and do NOT touch me with that shit!”), but then they would never get smallpox. He got the bright idea to cut open one of their pustules and rub the diseased goo into a scratch he made on the arm of one of James Phipps—then, an 8-year-old son of one of his employees. Despite violating like every OSHA rule ever, it actually worked, and thus the very first vaccine (called variolation then, for whatever sciency reason) was born.

Bacterial Infection

Strep, staph, gonorrhea, pneumonia, and a host of other less-than-awesome infections we now regard as little more than itchy irritations, were once a major, major problem for humanity. Lucky for us all, there was Sir Alexander Fleming, a Scottish researcher and intelligent slob, who accidentally left some of his research in less-than-sterile conditions. One fateful evening in 1928, after returning from a 2-week holiday (bender, I assume), he noticed the specimen plate he’d coated in staphylococci
had grown mold on it. Amazingly, this mold had retarded the growth of the bacteria, and thus the first antibiotic, penicillin, was created. So next time you ignore your dishes for a couple of weeks, and someone gives you shit about it, just claim you’re a misunderstood bacteriologist like Fleming.

**Angry Rose Bushes (AKA Penicillin Part 2)**

Howard Florey, Ernst Chain, and some other nerds eventually realized that Fleming’s discovery was like, mad dope, yo. In 1941, they decided to trial run their antibacterial drug (penicillin) on one poor shub named Albert Alexander, who was dying from an infected scratch on the face he’d sustained from “falling into a rose bush” (right, whatever man). At the time they administered the first dose, he was at death’s door. Within 24 hours, he was walking, talking, and ready to kick that rose bush into powder. Unfortunately, despite isolating the penicillin from his urine and re-injecting it, the team ran out of the life-saving drug, and Alexander lapsed back into a coma and died. The moral here is definitely do not fuck with the wrong rose bush. Also, maybe make enough of a medicine to cure someone instead of just “almost” curing them. That’d be cool.

**Malaria / Yellow Fever**

Jesse William Lazear is arguably the first guy who thought dying of a hemorrhagic fever would be super. He’d been studying these afflictions at Johns Hopkins since 1895, and in 1900, decided moving to Cuba and seeing them firsthand was the only way he could make this happen. At the time, malaria and yellow fever had killed more soldiers than had died by human hands in the Spanish-American war. Lazear was bunking with these very military folks when he made the trek down there and there hatched his brilliant scheme. Most physicians thought these fevers were the result of “contaminated linens” (ookay?), but Lazear had other ideas and secretly exposed himself to an infected mosquito. He’d suspected they were vectors for the parasites that were the source of all this woe. Lucky for him, he totally scored and died of yellow fever in 1900 while still working on a vaccine.

The list goes on. Humans have never coped all that well with disease, even at our most sincere. The crux of this—the lesson to be had while reflecting on these medical breakthroughs—seems to be this: Disease is ugly, and humans are at least that bad. You thought I was going to add a happy caveat to that, and I totally didn’t; joke’s on you, microbiology will always win. All we can do is muddle through, try to make the best of it, and please, don’t run around in a cloud of malarial mosquitoes?

Esmeralda Rupp-Spangle has never even once intentionally exposed herself to an incurable disease... so far. She can be found on Facebook as Esmeralda Marina and Instagram as @EsmeraldaMarina. Please, keep your filthy human germs to yourself.
Open. I like open. Open is good. In fact, it’s better than good—it’s wunderbar! Think of all the great things that involve “open.” Open mic, open bar, open-minded, U.S. Open, open-source (shout-out to my nerds), open relationship, wide open, open-mouthed… umm… okay, you get the point. Open is fucking awesome, and we should be celebrating the fact that our industry is back open—and most likely for good.

Hard to believe, right? Yup, I know. After enduring three closures scattered across 13 months, it’s hard to trust that our latest re-re-re-opening will be the one that sticks. What’s even harder to believe is that our industry’s ability to stay open depends on you. Well, you, Uncle Ernie, your neighbor Lula and that asshole at Starbucks who always spells your name wrong on your Vanilla Sweet Cream Cold Brew. That’s right… you’re not off the grid, Einstein, because you carry around that tablet-sized phone and can’t stay off IG for longer than five minutes. No, you won’t develop autism, die of a stroke, become infertile, or have your genetics permanently altered. And no, you won’t be injected with any form of aborted fetal cells. This is the kind of ludicrosity that festers when your major source of news, social life, and anything else related to human contact comes from social media.

But wait! It’s your personal choice! Right? Wrong. “Personal” implies that it’s a choice that only affects you. When your choice affects my privilege to see naked ass, that’s where a line must be drawn! In short, don’t be an anti-vaxxer prick (or prickess), and please go get pricked. Do it for the titties!

Next month, it’s official. Exotic will turn 28 and likely be older than many of your favorite industry watering holes. That breaks down to 328 months (COVID math—it’s complicated) of Exotic being put into sweaty little hands across the region. In fact, Exotic is now the third-oldest publication in the Portland metro area and the second-oldest industry magazine in the U.S.

Now that I’m fresh out of fun facts to share, it’s time to be serious for a moment. We are a local, homegrown magazine that serves a very niche market—we’re very aware that the only reason we’re still alive after 28 years is because of our loyal advertisers and diehard readers, who routinely pick up each and every issue. You’ve supported us for over a quarter of a century, and we hope you continue to do so.
Let’s visit the proverbial “memory lane” and take a look at what started it all—the May 1993 issue of Exotic. While our logo and cover art has drastically changed, we’ve stayed true to our original issue’s hallmarks. We’re still a FREE publication with a complete map guide, calendar of events, and full of informative ads with beautiful girls.

We look forward to celebrating our 28th anniversary next month, within the pages of our July issue. You don’t have to own a strip club, lingerie shop, smoke shop, dispensary, or other business to take part in our anniversary issue. You can place any type of ad that you want to show your support. Rather than begging for your donations like certain other local publications, we will be giving you something in return: your photo, social media handle, or whatever else tickles your bits—all in full color, glossy brilliance. You will be instantly famous and the talk of all your family and friends (okay, maybe not, but it’s still going to be pretty fucking cool!)

Tantalized yet? We thought you might be. Seriously though, if you’re interested, hit us with a DM, text message, or email, and we’ll make it happen. We’ll appreciate the support, and you’ll love being industry-famous, even if it’s only for a month.

Until next month, stay safe out there.

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What a long, strange month it's been. While Delta-8 (see last month's Green Room Diaries) remains somewhat legal on a national level, it is no longer available at Oregon-area dispensaries. Moon Wikr Delta-8 gummies are still available online (go ahead and have some delivered by federal carriers), and GWAR of all people sold me a bottle last week (thanks to Consequence Of Sound). But, alas, you cannot pick the stuff up when you're buying flavored hash pens that absolutely nobody over the age of 22 uses.

As it stands at the time of editorial submission (mid-May, 2021), Delta-8 is currently playing the definition game that has applied to nearly every political or legal debate in the last few years. "Well, it's not technically a rifle, because I stripped down the barrel and made it into a handgun" or, better yet, "Even though I am biologically THC, I present as CBD due to my status as being hemp-derived" sounds like something that belongs in a politicized argument not dealing with cannabis (and, no, I'm not attacking gun owners or trans people—I'm attacking people who pretend to be gun owners and trans people, simply to win an argument by changing the agreed-upon definitions).

Delta-8 is a drug. It's a fantastic, intoxicating high—one that cannot be produced by smoking hemp or taking CBD gummies. However, it is technically a type of hemp-derived substance (true) that is also a type of THC (also true). So, by skirting technicalities the same way I would to prove that I'm "technically" black (read Irish history), Delta-8 is a truly current-year phenomenon.

And, it won't last long.

Already, laws are being put into place by politicians and lawmakers who are able to call a skunk a skunk, regardless of how well it hides its odor. Just last month in this column, I was snitching on the Delta-8 crowd on our around the 10th of the month. Shortly after we went to press, the following headline appeared via Green Light Law Group's website: BREAKING NEWS: OLCC Determines Delta-8 THC To Be A Prohibited Additive For Recreational Marijuana Processors. According to the article:

"In a webinar put on by OLCC personnel for the Oregon State Bar's Cannabis Law section, OLCC personnel discussed the emerging issue of Delta-8 THC. While the discussion focused primarily on the unregulated nature of products containing Delta-8, primarily because it is derived from federally-legal hemp products, OLCC took the position that its current rules prohibit the manufacturing of Delta-8 THC by OLCC-licensed processors."

Welp. There goes the idea of taking the family to the dispensary for after-dinner treats. Medical patients, however, get a break:

"The OLCC doesn't necessarily have a problem with Delta-8; they have a problem with safe, legal fun."
of the hemp plant but rather pointing out that cancer patients already have Rick Simpson Oil and horse-tranquilizer-level THC gummies. The OLCC doesn’t necessarily have a problem with Delta-8; they have a problem with safe, legal fun. Get shit-faced and hit the road? No worries—there are two, maybe three cops in the entire Portland area. Eat a gummy and giggle while feeding the ducks? Bye-bye, dispensary.

By the way, you can still get Delta-8 in Florida. “Progressive” Oregon and Colorado are, as of May 2021, more anti-cannabis than the state that brought us mask-free flag waves.

In even more irritating news, cannabis may soon be federally decriminalized (as in, no longer a Schedule X Super Bad AAA Felony or whatever), thanks to... Republican lawmakers? That’s correct—in more “maybe voting blue is a bad idea” news, MarijuanaMovement.net reports the following:

“A pair of congressional Republican lawmakers have introduced a bill to federally legalize marijuana, protect banks that service state-legal cannabis business and ensure that military veterans are specifically permitted to use marijuana in compliance with state laws.”

The Common Sense Cannabis Reform for Veterans, Small Businesses, and Medical Professionals Act is being sponsored by Rep. David Joyce (R-OH) and Rep. Don Young (R-AK).

The main crux of the legislation is to federally deschedule cannabis—and it’s similar to past bipartisan proposals—but this one goes a few steps further, with language on legal protections and mandates for federal studies into medical cannabis. It does not contain social justice provisions to repair the past harms of the war on drugs, however.

‘With more than 40 states taking action on this issue, it’s past time for Congress to recognize that continued cannabis prohibition is neither tenable nor the will of the American electorate,’ Joyce, co-chair of the Congressional Cannabis Caucus (CCC), said in a press release.”

The fact that any legislation is seeking to reduce the criminality of cannabis use—for any reason—should be championed. Further, anyone who has read this column for more than four weeks and twenty days knows that I’ve been calling for overturning any and all weed offenses for those currently locked up, as well as the racially biased history (and enforcement) of cannabis laws. With that said, the phrase “... (the legislation) does not contain social justice provisions to repair the past harms of the war on drugs, however,” makes me cringe laugh—how much profit does Green District Holistic Cannabis Recreational Paradise Outlet donate to “social justice provisions” (and, no, yard signs don’t count)? My inner Gadsden flag unfurls every time a right-of-Stalin lawmaker does something actually progressive, only to be met with the screeching hiss of the social justice mob (all of whom cashed their Trump-singed stimulus checks without a second glance and/or donation to social justice causes). If Orange Man mandated vaccines and masks, Oregon would be re-opened, and Kate Brown would be hosting sweaty, naked hug piles to protest racism or whatever. I’m so fucking sick of the faux sports game being played.

I don’t care if AOC or Tucker Carlson grew my weed—it’s weed, and I’m glad that anyone is in favor of it.

Okay, rant over. Back to the lecture at hand...

Leafly reports that the legality of Delta-8 will ultimately be determined by... wait for it... the ability for Delta-8 to be regulated: “Ultimately, delta-8 needs stronger regulation,” said Kelly O’Connor at Columbia Labs. ‘Because without it being regulated like a drug, it’s being sold on the open market in a way that is bypassing a lot of the contaminant testing and batch traceability that you get from a highly regulated market, like a delta-9 market.’

Again with the intensifying libertarianism, are we seeing a trend? If it’s innovative, natural, and good for you, the government won’t be having it (at least, not without regulations). Keep this in mind while exchanging your proof-of-Pfizer-vaccine for a free Krispy Kreme donut.

Stick around for more updates on Delta-8.
This may be the side effects of fourteen months in isolation talking, but I can think of no better way to kickstart the first summer after this absolute shitshow of a year than a cock-out rock-out party on everyone’s favorite nude beach in Portland.

Now, hear me out. This is a fairly modest proposal. I mean, let’s be honest... if they aren’t happening already, amongst the anti-maskers and anti-vaxxers, there’s going to be an unprecedented number of open-invitation, pansexual, bareback fuckfests across the globe—to ring in the end of these rolling lockdowns. The sheer volume of fluids exchanged in Miami alone will defy physics.

What I am suggesting will be Tele-tubbies by comparison. We all miss live music. We miss seeing faces not on Orwellian Zoom screens. Let’s just swing the pendulum a bit further in the other direction and bare all. I don’t believe that some hipster shuffle fest in the Widmer parking lot is really going to cut it after a year of pajama bottoms and existential dread.

Consider these bullet points:

- It Will Naturally Be Socially Distanced

In the likely event that we’re “still not out of the woods,” as we’ve been told for the past, who knows or cares, I still think we can go ahead with this tits-out jamboree. Anyone who has ever been to a nude beach knows that you really do tend to keep to yourself and whomever you’re fucking. Guaranteed, the crowds will tend to be a bit... spaced out. Nothing puts a six-foot barrier around people like genitalia they’re not already familiar with.

The Naked Bike Ride Is Canceled

For better or worse, Portlanders need a giant gathering of loose wangs. Out of an abundance of caution, it appears our favorite birthday suit parade is not happening for the second year in a row. This will not stand for the alarming number of us that insist on showing our unflattering bodies. The anti-clothed can’t hold it in anymore, and something bad is going to happen if they don’t have an outlet. It seems like a good compromise. Plus, they won’t hold up traffic or offend the eight Christians in town.
Out Of Sight, Out Of Mind

An addendum to the above bullet point, this junk-free jubilee will be miles away from any prudes, shrewds, and general Debbie Downers. Unlike the World Famous Naked Bike Ride, which sort of… asserts itself into everyone’s business, this flesh fest will be on a literal island, with one bridge in or out. It’s a hell of a drive out to Sauvie from the city, and then you literally gotta drive up the length of the goddamn island to get to the boobie-and-weiner part. If nudity offends you or you’re worried about the children (since you obviously equate a lack of clothes with sex), you’re in luck! It’s nowhere near you. Also—unlike the naked bike ride—it’ll be harder for the creeps and perverts to lurk and do their thing. I mean, unless they got boats. Hopefully, they don’t have boats.

You Get To See Your Favorite Artists Naked

Still not positive who we can buckle down for this besides an older-than-you-realize Red Hot Chili Peppers and like Amanda Palmer or something, but I can guarantee that the performers will be as naked as you, but more famous. Leaked nudes are tacky and invasive, but just straight up belting bare would be a much more magical way of seeing your favorite singer buck naked. Come on. Don’t pretend you don’t wanna see what your local music crush’s dangly bits look like. What’s more punk rock than that?

It Would Get You Outside

Let’s face it; if you’re not one of them fancy essential workers literally holding the world together, you’ve either been inside in your undies playing video games or inside in your undies and a suit-and-tie top, pretending to work on Zoom. You need to get the fuck outside and give your skin some fucking sun. We can’t half-ass this. Full-ass is very necessary, after this year in the dungeon that is our home. Trust me, you look worse than Max Schreck in full makeup, and you need some goddamned vitamin D. Post-pandemic, we will all need some fresh air and maybe a shade or two darker. You might think that getting buck-ass naked at a music festival with many other equally naked folks isn’t the best way to re-enter society, but you would be wrong. Buckle up, buckaroo—we’re going helicopterin’ at a non-clothed NOFX show. Or, whoever. Still working out the deets on which musical acts are okay with performing sans threads. Oh GG, where are you when we need you the most.
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Alabama
In the Southern state of Alabama, there exists a town called Dothan. This is a worthwhile stop for the road tripper as it contains within its borders not only a “Monument to the Hog” (which is a 26-foot-long pig made of metal) but also the World’s Largest Peanut Statue. If that’s ‘nut’ enough for you, there are also smaller peanut statues scattered throughout town, including a golden peanut and an Elvis peanut.

Arkansas
There’s a 30-foot tall, giant, dancing hog—the second hog-related entry on my list. It doesn’t actually dance but is instead frozen in mid-dance step. Also present in the state is a Monster Mart, enshrining the local version of Sasquatch, known as the Boggy Creek Creature. And speaking of monuments to strange creatures, you can also visit the house where Bill and Hillary Clinton got married.

Arizona
In Phoenix, there’s a pyramid constructed by a beloved early 20th-century governor, which actually is his (and his wife’s) tomb.

California
Cali is known for many popular tourist attractions but seldom mentioned are the Alien Fresh Jerky outlet in Baker, which sports statues of UFOs and giant little green men. There is also a Pee Wee Golf place in Guerneville, with utterly bizarre mini-golf statuary, such as cannibals cooking a man and a deranged head of cartoon Yogi Bear. They, too, have a giant metal hog named “Lord Snort” in Healdsburg.

Colorado
There is a castle made of scrap aluminum, mostly beer cans, in Antonito. It is run by an eccentric fellow named Cano, who built it because God told him to. Also made of aluminum is the largest fork in the US, which is not.

Alaska
Alaska is huge, and it’d be impossible to name all the weird shit they have there, but notable is “Mukluk Land,” in Tok, where can be found not only a giant boot but also a sight called “Santa’s Rocket Ship.” The jolly old elf went all space-age on us. Additionally, of the famed dog runs bringing precious serum antidote to quell the 1925 Nome diphtheria outbreak, we recall Balto, who got a couple movies, but seldom his fellow sled dog, Togo, who is taxidermied and on display in Wasilla. Also, there’s a place called Trapper Creek, which has a store called “Wal-Mike’s,” that retails junk and boasts a jar containing a severed human hand of unknown provenance, begging for your gander.

Arizona
There’s also a rock in Scottsdale which looks like a floppy, flaccid cock, featuring free parking nearby. Moving on to Sun City, which is itself a giant old folks’ home, has a museum about... old folks’ homes.
Connecticut

PEZ museum! Everyone's favorite candy dispensed by heads on a stick has a whole museum dedicated to its existence and thousands of unique dispensers. It's in the PEZ factory in Orange. CT also sports another severed limb attraction: the severed arm of St. Edmund, in the appropriately named town of Mystic.

Delaware

Delaware has a “merman” on display in Lewes, one of the famous “Fiji Mermaids” from the mid-1800s. It's appropriately gross and cheesy at the same time. The municipality of Milford also has a large statue of an Amish man, and Georgetown contains the World's Largest Frying Pan. You could fry a whole cow in this thing, or as they tell you, 200 chickens.

DC

Behold the nightmarish landscape that is the seat of the United States government! Postcards available.

Florida

There's a headless brontosaurus statue in Brooksville. It's headless because the guy building it fell off a ladder and died halfway through, so the citizens said “fuck it” and left it there for the last 54 years. Jacksonville has a restaurant, Clark's, which has a taxidermied sasquatch head, among thousands of others, as well as a live alligator. Also, while you're in FL, visit Marathon and see the grave of Flipper, the TV dolphin who captured the hearts of a generation, which is, you guessed it, a giant statue, though not in the “world’s biggest” range of size.

Georgia

So, this one may be more well-known than some of the others, but it's another giant peanut—this time with Jimmy Carter's trade-mark grin, and it lives in his hometown of Plains. It has been featured internationally in the popular Internet meme, “this pleases the N U T.” There is also a lunch box museum in Columbus and an amusement park of sorts, called “Tank Town,” in Morganton. Here you can drive tanks (actually, tracked APCs?) over junker cars for a couple of hundred bucks.

Hawaii

Hawaii seems like an outlier here, as you can't really drive there. That said, for completion's sake, here it is on the list. There is, for some reason, a statue of Abe Lincoln chopping down trees with an ax in Ewa Beach and a giant bust of Jack Lord, from Hawaii Five-O, in Honolulu. Hawaii also sports its own phallic rock in Molokai. I've actually been to this one. It's decidedly less cock-like than the one in Arizona but is sufficiently cock-like nonetheless.

Idaho

Potato-themed stops are the norm here, the more notable of them are located in Driggs, with its giant spud drive-in theater and the Big Idaho Potato Hotel, wherein you can actually stay in the eponymous tuber, which has way more room than you might think. There's also a museum to prostitution in Wallace, called the Oasis Bordello Museum.

Illinois

There's a Dungeons and Dragons-themed park featuring sculptures of wizards, knighthood, ogres, and, of course, dragons littering the grounds. There is also a maze of hidden passages and secret doors. Sounds pretty boss. The town of Casey is home to not only the World's Largest Pitchfork but also a gigantic mailbox, birdcage, and pair of antlers, for some reason.

Indiana

There is nothing of note in Indiana. Please avoid the entire state.

Iowa

There's a giant spider sculpture in Avoca, where the spider's body is an old Volkswagen Beetle. There is also a tour, by boat, of “Spook Cave,” which is a haunted house-type deal with extra cheese, but the water and the boat trip are the real deal, and all in an underground cave. There's also a movie theater in Newton, where there's a domestic pig who sits in on every showing, in a seat of her own, often sporting costumes related to the film being shown.

Kansas

These motherfuckers keep the World's Largest Ball of Twine in Cawker City. There is also a 60-ton concrete buffalo in Longford, and Lucas features “America's Most Artistic Giant Toilet.” No word on whether there are larger, more artistic toilets in other nations.

Kentucky

Kentucky features the world's premier hillbilly museum. Located in Calvert City, it's chock full of, well, hillbilly art and is curated by a man who once played a Romulan on “Star Trek: The Next Generation.” Admission is free. You can also see famed frontiersman and politician Daniel Boone's skull in Frankfort.

Louisiana

Behold! Another severed limb! This time, it's the arm of St. Valerie. Would it be too much to ask for a leg at some point? The arm can be seen, though not touched without a significant bribe to staff, in Thibodaux. There's also a Jerry Lee Lewis Museum and Liquor Store in Ferriday. They have his training toilet from when he was a small child. Lewis, who is still alive as of this writing, presumably doesn't care that people come to see where he shat as a child.

Maine

They have their own desert. A freak natural phenomenon, the desert of Freeport looks nothing like the rest of Maine. It's an arid collection of sand, dunes, and sand dunes. It's buried its surroundings in the 100-some-odd years since it showed up and remains to this day. Also, be sure to visit the Future Burial Site of Stephen King, an open pit in Bangor, just waiting for his corpse to be tossed in.

Maryland

Baltimore has, like, a dozen Edgar Allan Poe places, including two of his ostensible graves,
but if you must truly visit Bodymore, you should see the head of Frank Zappa on a pole. Well, it’s a sculpture, not his real head, which is presumably interred with the rest of him. You can also visit the grave of famous drag queen Divine in Towson and Van Gogh’s “Starry Night,” recreated in doorknobs in Bethesda.

Massachusetts
You can see the skull of legendary cranial puncture veteran Phineas Gage, as well as the giant steel rod which penetrated it in Boston. If you’re keen, you can also see that “controversial” statue of Baphomet in Salem and the grave and statue of a man “Persecuted for his Beard” in Leominster.

Michigan
In Mackinaw City, there’s a 65-foot hot dog, the world’s largest, atop a restaurant called “Wienerlicious,” which serves smaller versions. Ossineke features a “Prehistoric Zoo,” which has statues of dinosaurs, some of which you can go inside of... only to find statues of Jesus. Gotcha! There is also another taxidermied dog inside Crane’s Pie Pantry in Fennville.

Minnesota
The SPAM Museum in Austin. That’s all I have to say about that. Oh, and MN boasts the world’s largest statue of fictional lumberjack Paul Bunyan in Akeley.

Mississippi
Ever want to eat well-reviewed “home cookin’” underneath the skirt of a giant Aunt Jemima knockoff-shaped building? Well, visit Mammy’s Kitchen in Natchez to do just that. Also, if you’re really into that antebellum South vibe, you can stay in “a cotton picker’s shack” as part of an odd motel called Talahatchie Flats. You may pick your very own cotton while there if you so desire. In fact, you can pick as much as you like and do whatever you want with it. Cotton gin not provided.

Missouri
Not to be outdone by the other “world’s largest” objects in the rest of the country, Missouri claims, as their own, the World’s Largest Goose. No, not a real honker, but a 40-foot-tall statue of one, in Sumner. Also, they feature a 12-foot pecan with the title of former World’s Largest Pecan, having been surpassed in giantness by another pecan sculpture in Texas about a decade ago.

Montana
Okay, I finally get to mention Cut Bank. An eye-blink of a place, purportedly the “coldest spot in the nation,” is made more prominent by a 27-foot-tall, giant, talking penguin. It is a statue that does indeed talk. It doesn’t converse but instead plays an endless loop of telling people to buy postcards with its likeness. For yet another severed limb, visit Virginia City to see what they call “Club Foot George’s Club Foot.” You could probably make an entire road trip out of just seeing preserved limbs.

Nebraska
The Cornhusker State is the birthplace of popular beverage Kool-Aid and has a Kool-Aid history museum, called “Discover The Dream,” in Hastings. In Omaha, you can visit the Alpine Inn, which features large windows, so you can watch raccoons eat the leftovers they throw in front of them while you, yourself, eat ideally fresher food. There’s also a creepy “Klown Doll” museum in Plainview, which is worth seeing if you sleep too easily.

New Jersey
The famed Atlantic City has many an interesting sight within its borders, but one of the lesser-knowns is “Hot Lady Liberty,” a fully nude statue of the famous patroness of freedom, seductively posed atop... a mound of dead WWI soldiers. Newark features the so-called “Catacombs of St. Joseph.” You might be thinking there’s another severed limb here, but nah, just weird wax replicas of saints in tombs.

New Mexico
The famousatomic town of Alamogordo, apart from many nuclear-themed attractions, sports the World’s Largest Pistachio, at some 30 feet tall. You can also visit the grave of the real-life Smokey Bear, upon whom the famous cartoon character was based, in Capitan.

New York
The locality of Flanders hosts a building shaped like a duck, known appropriately as “The Big Duck,” which sells merchandise of itself inside. On a farm in Kerhonkson, there exists the World’s Third-Largest Garden Gnome, named “Gnome Chomsky,” for the famous linguist. Rome, NY contains a caveman statue dressed and armed as a US Army soldier... or maybe a GI Joe. Ooga booga.
North Carolina

The Tar Heel State has its own world’s largest, of course, and it is the World’s Largest Chest of Drawers in High Point. There’s a taxidermied horse head in New Bern of a famous firefighting horse named Fred, but the mother lode of taxidermy lies in Southern Pines, home of the Taxidermy Hall of Fame (and Creation Museum), which pretty well sells itself.

North Dakota

The world’s largests in NoDak include the World’s Largest Holstein Cow, the World’s Largest Buffalo, the World’s Tallest Salesman, and the world’s largest turtle, made from old wheels. They are not all in the same location; they are in New Salem, Jamestown, Rugby, and Dunseith, respectively. A good state for checking off a lot of very large things on your to-see list.

Ohio

The Buckeye State has a surprisingly vast array of weird shit on display, despite its boring reputation. Sadly, I can’t touch on all of them. There are severed human fingers in a jar in Bowling Green, a deformed, taxidermied set of bovines called “Andy D-Day and the 2-Headed Calf” in Brookville, and the “History of Contraceptives Museum” in Cleveland, which is free to enter.

Oklahoma

OK is OK for world’s biggest things as well, with the World’s Largest Praying Hands, in Tulsa, the World’s Tallest Gas Pump, in Sapulpa, and the World’s Largest Pop Bottle (and store) in Arcadia. Not to be missed, as well, is the Twister the Movie Museum in Wakita and the bone overload at the Museum of Osteology in OKC.

Oregon

My home state. I know about all sorts of oddball shit we have here, so it’s hard to pick just a couple, but I’ll say if we’re doing the whole state, then there’s a real-live, government-approved Sasquatch trap in Jackson County, which is out-of-the-way, but... it’s the only one such thing in existence. The Oregon Vortex in Gold Hill is fairly well-known and is the first of such “mystery spot” attractions in the USA and worth a stop. Sadly, there’s only one world’s largest here, and it’s Howard Hughes’ famous “Spruce Goose,” which is the world’s largest wood airplane in the aviation museum in McMinnville. Also in McMinnville (an otherwise dreary place) is Alf’s: a burger joint with a live monkey who fucks around and does monkey things while you eat. Avoid Portland; it’s full of assholes. Assholes like me.

Pennsylvania

Penn’s Woods is home to an edible world’s largest: world’s largest hamburger, which clocks in at 15 pounds (6.8kg) and is available at Denny’s Beer Barrel Pub in Clearfield. There’s also the shopping mall from “Dawn of the Dead” in Monroeville, and while already famous, the bones of freaks at the Mütter Museum in Philly must be mentioned all the same.

Rhode Island

Providence is home to the world’s largest bug, which is a giant termite. There is also the grave of a suspected vampire in Exeter and a rejected gravestone, intended for JFK, in Newport.

South Carolina

Their world’s biggest count includes the World’s Largest Fire Hydrant, World’s Largest Man-Made Crab, World’s Largest Boll Weevil, world’s largest child (a statue, not a real one, thank fuck), and largest boiled peanut, located in Columbia, Myrtle Beach, Bishoptville, Columbia again, and Bluffton. You can crawl through the intestines of the giant kid, but not inside any of the others.

South Dakota

In the southernmost Dakota, their world’s biggest count includes the World’s Largest Log Chair, in, fittingly, Deadwood, as well as the World’s Largest Wooden Bigfoot in Keystone, the World’s Largest Hairball in Webster, and the World’s Largest Quarter-Pounder, a non-edible statue, in Rapid City. There’s also a remarkably large prairie dog statue, but it is curiously not billed as the world’s largest, which leaves me with questions. It is in Cactus Flat.

Tennessee

Tennessee’ is Tennebeliefin’, but they have only one world’s biggest thing: the World’s Largest Museum Attraction, which features half of the legendary steamer Titanic, recreated in very-far-from-the-ocean Pigeon Forge, where it is noted that one cannot, anywhere, purchase a forged pigeon. There is also a giant statue in Knoxville in the likeness of Alex Haley, of “Roots” fame, and while it doesn’t boast of it, it is considered the largest statue of an African-American in the USA.
They say everything is bigger in Texas, but despite all that, their only prominent world’s biggest is a giant pair of cowboy boots in San Antonio. Lubbock has a 13-ton sculpture of John Wayne’s head, which I feel must be the world’s biggest one of these, but it is not boasted as such. There’s also the Texas Prison Museum in Huntsville, where you can see “Old Sparky,” the electric chair through which 361 condemned souls met their demise. Oh, and the actual World’s Largest Pecan is in Seguin.

**Utah**

Utah has the world’s biggest, uh, hole. A large, open-pit mine in Herriman, which is some 2.5 miles wide and 1/2 mile deep. There’s also the World’s Largest Watermelon Slice in Green River. Another taxidermied domestic animal, previously the world’s largest St. Bernard, has its head on the wall of the Shooting Star Saloon in Huntsville.

**Virginia**

Regular Virginia doesn’t have a lot of world’s biggest anything, save for the World’s Largest Apple in Winchester. However, they do sport the World’s Oldest Edible Ham, though they will not serve you any, and in the same place, there’s the World’s Oldest Peanut. Not sure how they’re quantifying that one, but they’re both in the same building in Smithfield.

**Washington**

The Evergreen State’s contributions to large things include the World’s Largest Collection of Chainsaw Carvings in Allyn and the World’s Largest Egg in Winlock. Also worth mentioning is the World’s Largest Spitting Clam in Long Beach, which does indeed spit water—every hour on the hour or if you shove a quarter in its clam-hole. Next to that clam is the former World’s Largest Frying Pan, since surpassed by the one in Delaware.

**West Virginia**

The Mothman State’s contributions to America’s roadsides include the World’s Largest Teapot in Chester, the World’s Largest Horse, a taxidermied equine in Point Pleasant, and a pair of mummified corpses of former insane asylum residents in Phillippi. Also, if you’re a fan of the former Weekly World News, you can visit the ostensible home of “Bat Boy,” introduced in that publication in 1992. It’s a cave in Lewisburg, and apart from that notable credit, it’s also huge, and well worth a tour.

**Wisconsin**

The Cheesehead State just might be the king of very large things. It features the World’s Heaviest Ball of Twine in Lake Nebagamon (not to be confused with the aforementioned World’s Largest Ball of Twine in Kansas), the World’s Largest Badger in Birnamwood, the World’s Largest Six Pack (of beer) in La Crosse, the World’s Largest Talking Loon in Mercer, the World’s Largest Cone-Top Beer Can in Potosi, and the World’s Largest Fiberglass Fish (which has an observation deck in its mouth) at the Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame in Hayward.

**Wyoming**

The Cowboy State has a few world’s biggest things as well, such as an archway over a downtown highway in the town of Afton (made entirely of elk antlers), the World’s Largest Jackalope, former World’s Largest Jackalope in Douglas, the World’s Largest Hot Springs in the appropriately-named Thermopolis, and of course, the World’s Largest Active Geyser, in Yellowstone. The town of Rawlins also has a pair of shoes made from the flesh of a former horse thief. They take that shit seriously there. Fuck around with a horse, and you end up as a pair of goddamn shoes.

That’s all fifty states. Nothing on territories or Canadian provinces, as yet.

So, gas up your ride, grab some friends and set out to capture the essence of the obscure, the bizarre, and, of course, the world’s biggest.

Safe travels,

-WStM
As J woke up, the wind came rushing through the boxcar with a roar that sounded like disembodied voices. They were chanting along with the clang and boom of the steel skeleton all around him—the whole operation swaying around turns and groaning through the night. He imagined the voices as ghosts of long-dead suicides by train, their warnings unheeded and unknowable. By the height of the moon flying by between the dark green sheets of trees, he determined it was late. He looked across the car at the corner where the three newcomers snored and scratched themselves in a heap of rags and half-zipped sleeping bags. Earlier that day, he had hauled the trio aboard—sunburned, windswept, and dressed in dust, with a yellow, gauzy aura. They had come trotting out from behind the sage and garbage, struggling to make pace with the train as it slowly pulled out of the yard. The three of them a strange sight, after he had spent most of the morning listening to the distant thunder of cars being picked up and dropped off in that yard—the train jerking forwards and back again in false starts, as the new shipment was built. As they had come running from their hiding spot, he knew that there was a chance they wouldn’t make it. They lumbered forward, holding up their baggy clothes with detritus fleeing from their bags, mouths, and eyes agape, as they also realized they might not make it. He thought about the last three days and nights, alone in this boxcar, that he had made his own. His signature was tagged in red along one soot-smeared wall, and he planned on staying until his destination made itself known. He didn’t generally like company, but as he watched the three struggle, his sense of comradery got the best of him, and he slid on his stomach to the door, reaching one hand out and anchoring himself with the other. One by one, he heaved the three sweaty runners up to safety before curling back away out of sight, eyeing them as they clumsily did the same. He wanted to scold them for their stupidity in trying a train on the run but held his tongue. Desperation can make a person do stupid things. He watched them sleep for a bit and pulled out his pouch of tobacco, easing himself up against the boxcar door and rolling a cigarette. His zippo stayed strong against the wind as he lit it, then clicked it shut, squinting his eyes out at the passing night, one leg straight and stiff into the floor for better balance. The forest roared by under the waxing moon, and the wind alternately whipped the smoke from his exhale away or threw it back in his face. He pulled the flask of moonshine from his pocket and sipped contemplatively at the stars. He considered his new roommates. The boy and girl were younger, with a fresh scent about them, virgin to the violations of the road. They wore new holes in the legs and elbows, with a single layer of grime forming what would become a bedrock of cover if they stayed on the streets long enough. The boy had an angry introversion while the girl was wrapped in a more confident silence. They probably hadn’t known each other long. He had a desperate and hungry look in his eye for her, and she was oblivious to it. He called himself something like Rye and was diminutive, small and pale with thin, unruly red hair that wisped about in the wind and would have looked rugged if sickly weren’t the first impression. He wore a plain, gray hoodie and black jeans with Chuck Taylor shoes that wouldn’t last the journey to wherever they were headed. He carried a polyester moun-
tainneering backpack from the eighties, hanging on to life from a hard, aluminum frame. It would have been extremely uncomfortable over long distances, and he seemed the kind of person to slog along in pain rather than speak up. The girl was pretty, though she tried hard to hide it. Large, penetrating eyes dominated a pale face, framed by raven black hair. She wore baggy dungarees and a heavy jacket, carried a small backpack with a sleeping bag attached by a bungee cord. She hadn’t offered a name.

The third one went by Nails and tried to pass himself off as a man. He had the years, but that was about it. He was tall and wiry with greasy, shoulder-length brown hair and a shaky, cornered-animal vibration. Self-inflicted tattoos on his knuckles looked desperate, rather than tough, to J, as if he were emulating some heavy-handed biker father figure from his childhood. He carried an old-fashioned, green army duffel—a burden more than an asset on the rails. Heavy and awkward without easy access. His denim jacket was patched over in band logos no one cared about. He carried himself like he was in charge, and the other two seemed to go along with it. They would come to regret it, and sooner rather than later, J suspected. After they had come aboard, the girl curled up in a corner with her back to them all, while Nails and Rye had shuffled up next to J. Nails producing a swollen-looking six-pack of warm and cheap beer. They all drank the foam and were tolerable to each other before retreating to their separate corners and watching the blurry world pass by, unhindered and apart from this small and autonomous space they rode.

He took a deeper swig of the moonshine and closed his eyes with the white burn. Pure and uninterrupted into the bloodstream, distilled the old way, by men scarred with copper burns, traded for some good or service. J had stocked up back in Virginia and was glad of it, despite the extra weight. Dry was no way to travel. And neither was accompanied by strangers. The constellations dancing above the trees offered no insight, but J focused on them anyway, their shapes familiar and strange at the same time, hovering all about him in names he didn’t know and wouldn’t learn. Hunters, animals, goddesses. Cosmic travelers. Beings too big to comprehend and just wide enough to contain the stories sky gazers filled them with. He rolled another cigarette and took another swig. By the time he finished the flask, the problem of the three newcomers was stagnant rather than malignant, and J was too dizzy to watch the sky. He unzipped, and his piss flowed majestically into the night, sped away by the wind and spattering his pants. He smiled for no reason, clutching the cigarette between his teeth, the sleeping trio formerly strangers and now just strange.

The train squealed to a crawl early the next morning and J didn’t like it. There weren’t supposed to be any crew changes for at least a few days. His head was foggy, and his mouth filled with ash. He sat up and opened a side pocket on his bag, pulling out a plastic canteen and chugging the warm, plastic water. They were passing through a small town. Red lights flashed, and bells clanged above the crossing arms as they crept by intersections filled with frustrated drivers that were going to not only be late but stuck in this part of town. J tried to discern street signs or storefronts, but there wasn’t much to choose from. It was one of those towns whose fringe was delineated by the train tracks. Piles of garbage and countless abandoned cars were interspersed with peeling huts of blanketed windows, tar paper, and dark implications. Smoke drifted from unknown furnaces. He crawled out of his sleeping bag and huddled in a corner, out of sight from the open door. The others stirred in their section of the boxcar, and Nails slowly sat up, yawning and peering out at the world passing by too slowly. J caught his eye and nodded for him to stay put. A train passing at this speed attracted bored eyes. J cringed as the squeal of brakes made its way down from the engine, and the freights boomed into each other one after the other, lurching and groaning into a final, heavy stop. A period at the end of the sentence. Outlook, not so good.

It was now time to focus on staving off panic and not doing anything stupid. They all managed to be still for close to an hour as the train sat in the stifling heat, everyone on high alert for sounds of crunching gravel footsteps or the slow
creep of tires making their way down the line. J passed the time watching the mathematical progress of a gigantic, square, yellow crane—two stories tall and almost a city block wide, moving among the cubical forest of boxcars, lifting and lowering, blinking and beeping—arranging the yard in a massive Tetris. He wondered if the machine were manned, and if so, what that person’s life was like, organizing the goods of civilization M-F, trying not to crush anyone.

Finally, the booming started up again, and the train inched forward. Rye and Nails looked about to jump for joy, but J silenced them with a raised palm. The train was little help, as it took its time moving forward and backing up again, building and rebuilding. Hopes raised and hopes dashed until J found himself nodding off from the heat and tedium. He slipped into waking dreams, unfamiliar faces mouthing mute prophecies at him, with a look of disappointment when he couldn’t hear them. There was a moment when he saw through closed eyelids, the interior of the boxcar in dark relief, the silhouettes of the strangers in their corner, and in another, an old man sitting cross-legged with a skeletal white grin on his shadowed face. J vaguely wondered how he hadn’t seen the man get on. He then kicked awake with the train, as it ground, banged, and hissed its way into forward motion, and the strange dream gone like a disengaged eyelash. As the edge of town came rushing by them and the smell of smoke passed through the wind, J had a feeling that there was another train they were on. A train that never left the yard and had dumped them into the arms of authority and jail, or some other, worse, small-town scenario—that this train moving on was a delusion that he was now living by choice, instead. He shivered and pulled out his kit and moonshine, building the fix on auto mode and high, before he knew what happened. He sipped at the booze and lit a pre-rolled cigarette, no longer concerned where he was or why, feeling the wind water his eyes and clean his hair.
In recent years, a lot of local Portland-area businesses have closed, re-opened, closed again, and then tried to open up once more, only to find their numbers in the red before they give up and pass the lease on to whatever SoCal-based taphouse owner is in town for the week. But, this has nothing to do with COVID lockdowns, the economy, or even location—there are several ways to run a business into the ground, and of all the businesses that I’ve seen trampled by bad decisions and internal cluster-fucks, the majority have been live entertainment venues. How somebody manages to fuck up the “stare at naked women while drinking alcohol” business model is beyond me, but it happens all the time. On the flip side, I have seen some of the least likely locations stick around like a post-nuclear-war cockroach, regardless of a pandemic, economic recession, or Yelp mobs. And, they do this by following some basic (but all-too-often ignored) rules.

To keep this column interesting, I will be avoiding the “what to do right” tone (which usually draws the interest of two to three readers) and replacing it with the much more appetizing and gossipy “what not to do wrong” format that keeps internet clickbait articles in circulation. It’s time to talk some shit, and over the course of the next few articles, I will be presenting to you, the entrepreneurial reader, a series on...

HOW TO RUN A STRIP CLUB INTO THE GROUND

TALES FROM THE DJ BOOTH

BY DJ HAZMATT

FOR SALE OR LEASE

Part 1: Let Dancers Run The Club

As with any form of entertainment, the easiest way to place a giant wedge between paying customers and onstage talent is to make sure that the entertainment (not the management) is in charge of the venue and its operations. Forget strip clubs for a second and let me first share two stories that come from the realm of live music and comedy, respectively, as these lessons apply to every form of live entertainment that doesn’t involve animals (and, even then, monkeys shouldn’t be put in charge of the zoo).

For a while, Front Avenue Nightclub was the best place for an up-and-coming band to perform, regardless of genre or following. Thanks to great staff, an even better location, and a properly promoted roster of live music, Front Ave was also the only spot in Town Omitted, or to perform as a live musician. As a result, rappers, rockers, indie folksters, and even industrial bands would grace the stage. This was the case until the summer lull hit, and most of the weekend drinker crowd took to the lakes and campsites, leaving venues at less-than-half capacity for the summer (if you think lockdown laws are bad for business, you should experience a summer in Oregon that reaches over seventy degrees for more than two days, resulting in a weed-fueled exodus that drives everyone from the barstools to the woods).

To fight the low attendance of music nights, Front Ave’s manager put a “resident” (house band) hip hop collective in charge of booking the venue’s live music for the summer. This was because said hip hop collective always had a packed house and one that drank heavily, never asking for hookups or special treatment. The first few weekends were fine until it became clear that ninety percent of the new “regular” crowd were relatives, roommates, and friends of the collective. Further, the hip hop collective booked, well, just hip hop. No rock, no folk, not even “regular rap” or open mic freestyle nights—just the same twelve guys in backpacks, emulating Rhymesayers artists while rapping over dubstep (both of which were popular for exactly six months sometime around 2009). This was every night of the week.

With each week that passed at the “New” Front Avenue Club, the few former regulars who remained loyal eventually found other venues to patronize. Bands that were once popular got back from their month-long camping trips in August, only to find that they couldn’t get any stage time at the club. Eventually, the lead emcee of the hip hop collective was effectively managing the club because the club manager had turned over their power to the emcee. And, after one single, solitary disagreement between the two
parties, the hip hop collective decided to boycott the venue by taking their friends, relatives, and roommates elsewhere, two towns away. With this, Front Ave turned into a ghost town for a few weeks before burning down after a suspicious “kitchen fire” (caused by either a microwave, a deep fryer, or the world’s dumbest insurance claims adjustor).

This is the first lesson—diversify your patrons or risk losing all of your investment by putting it into one basket/crowd. By putting your entertainment in charge, you are investing in exactly one “stock,” so to speak. If everyone at the venue is friends with your staff or entertainment, then all it takes to lose your entire customer base is a simple falling-out or petty argument. And, in the case that you should need to regulate with some “fascist, dictatorial” rules, such as “no smoking weed in front of the OLCC” or “leave your switchblade in the car,” a coup will dry up your customer base. Club owners don’t belong on stage, and on-stage entertainment doesn’t belong in management.

The next example involves stand-up comedy, a phenomenon that has all but died thanks to Generation Daycare. There is a life-and-death cycle that every single live comedy venue experiences, one that always signals a swan song (I challenge anyone to prove me wrong).

Whether a professional stand-up comedy club or a “Yeah, we book comedy whenever the poker crowd is out of town” dive bar, the same sad, predictable story occurs with minimal variation (I call it “comedy _Colombo_”). First, a venue owner somehow learns that comedy shows draw more people than whatever tired cover band or karaoke night is driving out regulars. In the case of comedy clubs, this step is already covered (still, rest assured, Bob’s Laugh Den used to be a steak-and-lobster jazz bar before they went into the red and were forced to sell most of their speakers, replacing nine-member-deep musical ensembles with road comics and open-mic nights). In the dive bar situation, this phase occurs after one of the regulars offers to book his comedian friends for a night; the night goes well, and then the owner says, “Hey, this comedy thing worked once, how about we do it every single Friday and Saturday night?”

Next, the owner tries to book comedy by themselves, which is next to impossible. For one, most of the good Portland-area comics aren’t available because they already moved to LA and are currently happily living in a ghetto while writing for the _Late Late Later Show With Unlikeable British Asshole_. So, this means that it’s up to local staples and touring road comics to fill the slots. Since there are approxi-

mately two good comedians for every twenty open spots at comedy shows, the duty of “booking funny people” is eventually passed on to the resident host, who is usually an amateur comedian or part-time strip club DJ. Of note, hosting is a win-win situation as a comedian because if you’re funny, that’s awesome, but if you bomb, you can just cut to “...okay folks, get ready for our next comedian,” passing the mic to someone else, who now has to follow your poorly executed jokes. Being a comedy show host is like being a side dude—no one expects anything from you, and there is minimal responsibility (plus, the next asshole has to clean up your mess). Anyway, the host is given the duty of booking comedians, and this is where the disaster starts.

At first, there will be a steady roster of good comedians... for about a month. This is because the host is already sitting on a dozen or so Facebook messages and/or favors from established comedians who think, “Hell, why not, I’ll give the Brewberg Oregon Pint Palace a try.” Then, after a month of booking talent who will never, ever return for “twenty percent plus drink tickets” again, the pool dries up, and ninety percent of every bill gets filled with no-name amateurs, who were booked because they are friends with the host (and, likely share their specific style of humor, politics, attitude, etc.). Suddenly, it’s Amateur Night every night, and on the rare chance that a professional comedian at-
but-enthusiastic dancer in charge of the booking process, the club will develop an unspoken theme and draw a specific type of dancer—that being, “whoever gets along with the dancer in charge of booking and/or fits her style/clique/class/etc.” Worse, once the trend is established, it will stick around long after the dancer in charge of booking retires, deterring any new breed of dancer from coming in. Any club that has had to remove the stigma of the previous owner/name/location knows exactly what I’m talking about.

When you turn Semi-Popular Dancer into Queen Bee In Charge Of Night Shifts, you get the same show, over and over. Friday night with two dozen girls? Every single one will dance to the same music, share the same hairstyle, drink the same thing and draw the same customer type. In Portland, this usually results in “Green-Haired Shoe-gaze PBR Night” every night. Bonus points for the touring pornstar or Haired Shoegaze PBR Night” every night.

This brings us back to the theme of this column—strip clubs. People come to strip clubs to see beautiful performers, end of story. This applies to traditional strip clubs, male strip clubs, dive bar strip clubs, steakhouse strip clubs, vegan strip clubs, virtual strip clubs, drive-thru strip clubs, and strip mall strip clubs alike. And, trust me when I say that the easiest way to make sure beautiful performers stop showing up to perform at your strip club is to put a beautiful performer in charge of booking the beautiful performers.

Because I’ve mainly worked in traditional, naked women strip clubs, I cannot speak to male strip clubs. With that said, my experience has been as follows: often-times, semi-hot women who compete for money and attention don’t want hotter, more attention-worthy women competing with them. Is this sexist of me to point out? Very much so—but it’s true. “Misogyny” is when men treat women the same way that women treat women—put simply, many women just seem to hate other women. Okay, let me correct that... women hate other women who are more attractive/successful/fat/skinny/blonde/brunette than they are. Make no mistake—the phrase “Oh girl, your hair looks so good” is an insult, with the amount of emphasis put on the word “so” being proportional to the amount of hatred behind the sentiment. Whereas men will beat each other up and then have a drink, women will offer each other a drink, but poison that shit before it’s served. Put another way, if Tupac and Biggie were women, there wouldn’t have been any diss tracks. Instead, they would have penned “RIP to my sister” tracks that were written while the respective guns were still warm.

Like music, comedy, journalism, politics,
and whatever it is that activists pretend to do these days, skilled, talented, and experienced parties are wedged out of the strip club scene because they pose a threat to the lazy, mediocre, and unskilled people who took it over once a tyrannical democracy took over. Mediocrity will never book talent, and talent doesn't need the money that comes with doing the schedule.

In all of the above examples and/or extremely biased and sweeping, overgeneralized arguments, there is one person to blame—the club owner who got lazy. As a rule of thumb, anything that is made easier by passing it off to someone who has more ambition and charisma than they do qualification or ability will eventually fail. This applies to live entertainment, cell-phone apps, presidential administrations, and anything else that requires time, investment, and risk.

If you own a club, own the fucking club—don’t perform at it, drink at it, or use it as practice space for your friends. If you own a comedy club, spend at least two hours a day on YouTube looking for bookable talent. If you own a live music club, spend at least two hours a day harassing Kate Brown on Twitter about venue capacity restrictions. If you own a strip club, spend the two hours a day it takes to vet the talent you’re featuring at your establishment. The point is, do whatever you have to do to keep your club open and running. But, for the love of all things sober, bored, and bad with money, don’t put your entertainment in charge of entertainment—it’s like putting an alcoholic in charge of managing the bar because they “know beer.”

Next month, we will be going over part two: the ability for a nightclub DJ to utterly destroy a strip club. Stay tuned.

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