

IRVINE BOWLING ALLEYS REOPEN • CITY OF HOPE RECEIVES \$50 MILLION DONATION • ORANGE COUNTY VACCINATION UPDATES

IRVINE WEEKLY

APRIL 16, 2021 • VOL. 3, NO. 11

ELEVATED FARE

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IRVINE WEEKLY CLASSIFIEDS

APRIL 16, 2021 NO. 11

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EMPLOYMENT

Structures CAD Design (Irvine, CA). Perform conceptual design dvlpmt, detailed design, & product release of various Body parts such as front fir, Rear fir, Damper housg. Dvlp Aluminum extruded parts such as Front bumper, Door beam. Must possess a Bachelor's degree or foreign equivt in Mechnd Engrng, or a closely reldt field & 5 yrs of prgrssvly resp exp designing sheet metal parts. Exp must incl the followg skills/tools/technologies: GSD & Part Design; Creating Layout Definition; Exp w/ sheet metal structures systems or closures ind manufactrg processes; Undrstndg of GD&T stndrds & Functnl Tolerancing & Annotation (FTA); Drawg & modellg practices & methodologies w/ Catia & Enovia. Email res to Rivan Automotive, LLC, Attn: Mobility, Job Ref #: SCD21, hrmobility@rivan.com

Senior Software Engineer (Irvine, CA). Must possess a Bachelor's degree or foreign equivt in Comp Sci, Electronic Engrng or a closely reldt field & 5 yrs of prgrssvly resp exp ind stfwr dvlpmt. Exp must incl the followg skills/tools/technologies: object-oriented design; data structures; algorithms, & complexity analysis; dvlpg, sharg, & enhancg best practices for the full SDLC incl codg stndrds, code revws, srce control mgmt, bid processes, testg, & operatns; AWS Serverless Architecture; Cognito, Cloudfront, Route53, Lambda, API Gateway; Java, Python, JavaScript. Email res to Rivan Automotive, LLC, Attn: Mobility, Job Ref #: SSE21, hrmobility@rivan.com

Accounting & Financial Manager: Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration Req., \$48,173/yr, F/T, Resume to Yohan Lee, Law Offices of Yohan Lee, 5681 Beach Blvd Ste 200, Buena Park, CA 90621

IT Systems Engineer Senior to work in Santa Ana, CA. Apply www.saic.com, Science Applications International Corporation. Job code #211859. EOE.

Thales Avionics, Inc. seeks **Principal Systems Project Engineer** in Irvine, CA to define scope ensuring product compliance with customer requirements. Requires domestic travel on

an as needed basis. Apply at https://www.jobpostingtoday.com/ Ref# 49788.

BMS Controls Integration Engineer (Irvine, CA). Decompose reqmts & dvlpg verificatn & validatn tests & plans. Must possess a Master's degree or foreign equivt in Mechnd Engrng or a closely reldt field & 2 yrs of exp as an engineer in the auto prdct dvlpmt envnmt. Exp must incl: wrkg w/ BMS systems dvlpmt, integratn, testg/verificatn & HIL sys dvlpmt / HV Systems Test rig dvlpmt; wrkg w/ powertrain master controller (VCU) systems dvlpmt, integratn, testg/verificatn & HIL systems dvlpmt, creatg Model Based Design for powertrain controls dvlpmt & validatn; wrkg w/ hi voltage battery systems, & other safety critical powertrain systems incl torque mgmt, energy mgmt & HV charging; wrkg w/ design accordg to ISO26262 w/ focus on functional safety; utiliz CAN, calibration & HIL dvlpmt/simulatn tools & envnmt; wrkg w/ Systemic analysis & dvlpmt of DVP&R for the components / systems. Domestic trvl reqd approx 20% of the time. Destinatin & freqncy impossible to predict. Email res to Rivan Automotive, LLC, Attn: Mobility, Job Ref #: BMSCE21, hrmobility@rivan.com

Software Engineer: Phunware, Inc. in Irvine, CA. Apply to HR at tnolazco@phunware.com

NVH CAE Engineer (Irvine, CA). Build and update body-in-white (BIW) & trimmed body CAE models. Must possess a Bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engrng, Auto Engrng, or a closely reldt field & 6 mos of exp applyng noise & vibration concepts on auto sub-systems. Exp must incl the followg skills/tools/technologies: workg on pre-processg, simulatn & post processg stfwr's Hypermesh, Nastran & Hyperview (or equiv); workg on NVH testing stfwr LMS Test Lab (or equiv); strong understandg of auto body structures & systems & experience w/ modelg & dvlpg modelg methods for NVH analysis. Email res to Rivan Automotive, LLC, Attn: Mobility, Job Ref #: NCE20, hrmobility@rivan.com

Sr. Design Release Engineer (Irvine, CA). Resp for component release for Exterior trim & ornamentation content throughout program lifecycle, incl: concept design, supplier engagement, BOM mgmt, systems reqmnts, simulatn analysis, prototyng blds, validatn testg, & product support. Supervise 2 CAD designers & 2 DRE's. Int'l & domestic trvl reqd 30% of the time. Must possess a Master's degree or foreign equivt in Mechnd Engrng, Auto Systems Engrng or a closely reldt field & 2 yrs of (or Bachelor's degree or foreign equivt in Mechnd Engrng, Automotive Systems Engineering or a closely related field and 5 years of progressively responsible) experience as an Engineer in the automotive industry. Experience must incl the followg skills/tools/technologies: CAD design for Exterior trim & ornamntatn content; Engineerg design utiliz Enovia PLM & Catia; component productn dvlpmt & release for exterior trim & ornamntatn content, specifying the reqmts for parts & assmblly validatn & testg & support thru PPAP processes. Email res to Rivan Automotive, LLC, Attn: Mobility, Job Ref #: SDRE21, hrmobility@rivan.com

IT Systems Engineer Senior to work in Santa Ana, CA. Apply www.saic.com, Science Applications International Corporation. Job code #211859. EOE.

CAD Design and Methods Engineer (Irvine, CA). Manage dvlpmt, documentatn, & socializatn of CAD best practices. Must possess a masters degree or foreign equivt in an engrng discipline & 2 yrs of exp in CAD engrng in the auto industry. Exp must incl the followg skills/tools/technologies: CAD surfaces & solids; GD&T; tolerance & stack-up analysis; Enovia PLM, Catia V6 or an equiv 3D collaborate solutn simulatn; & component releases for body engrng components. Email res to Rivan Automotive, LLC, Attn: Mobility, Job Ref #: CADDME21, hrmobility@rivan.com

Instrument Panel DRE (Irvine, CA). Design & dvlpg instrumnt panel components for Rivan vehicles from concept thru productn. Must possess

a Bachelor's degree or foreign equivt in Mechanical Engrng or a closely reldt field & 5 yrs of progressive resp exp in auto interior dvlpmt. Exp must incl the followg skills/tools/technologies: design, dvlpmt & release of auto interior components & systems; D-FMEA; 2D/3D CAD in Catia; DVP&R; GD&T; intrpretatn & analysis of Moldflow CAE results & structural/Modal CAE results. Domestic trvl reqd 20% of the time. Int'l trvl reqd 1-2 times a yr. Email res to Rivan Automotive, LLC, Attn: Mobility, Job Ref #: IPDRE20, hrmobility@rivan.com

Lead Structural Durability Engineer (Irvine, CA). Perform durability analysis of vehicle structures using finite element tools such as ANSA, Abaqus, & Hyperview/META. Must possess a Bachelor's degree or foreign equivt in Mechanical Engrng or a closely reldt field & 5 yrs of exp as an Engineer in the auto industry. Exp must incl the followg skills/tools/technologies: NASTRAN; ABAQUS; LS DYNA; ANSA; SAE/ECE stndrds; performg vehicle body structures' durability assessmnts for stiffness, strength & fatigue. Supervise 1 Sr. Durability Engineer & 4 CAE Durability Engineers. Domestic trvl reqd 10% of the time. Email res to Rivan Automotive, LLC, Attn: Mobility, Job Ref #: LSDE21, hrmobility@rivan.com

Mechanical Engineer (Irvine, CA). Design & dvlpg a wide variety of electrical based, consumer products that can integrate w/ the vehicle using Catia V6. Must possess a Bachelor's degree or foreign equivt in Mechanical Engrng or a closely reldt field & 5 yrs of prgrssvly responsible exp w/ auto design engrng. Exp must incl the followg skills/tools/technologies: Product Lifecycle Mgmt using Enovia; CAD design using Catia V5/V6 for solid & surface modelg; Exp w/ pkgaging components, designing sheet-metal bracket & injectn moulded parts for electrcd products; Creatg drawngs & a high degree of competence w/ GD&T; Experience using JAMA, JIRA, & Confluence. Email res to Rivan Automotive, LLC, Attn: Mobility, Job Ref #: ME21, hrmobility@rivan.com

Lennar Foundation Cancer Center
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COVER: PHOTO COURTESY OF LITTLE SISTER

After announcing plans to build a \$1 billion Cancer Care Center at the FivePoint Gateway in Irvine last year, City of Hope has received a \$50 million gift from the Lennar Foundation that will become a catalyst in helping the organization strengthen its Orange County roots in world-class health care.

In fact, the Lennar Foundation's generous multi-million dollar gift is the largest philanthropic contribution to City of Hope Orange County to date. The funds will go toward the construction of the new Irvine-based Lennar Foundation Cancer Center at City of Hope Orange County.

Stuart Miller, executive chairman, Lennar Corporation said this is only the beginning of a long-standing relationship with City of Hope, and said he was honored to be supporting the arrival of experience and expertise in health care and cancer research into Orange County.

"At Lennar, we are committed to building communities, and we are pleased to support City of Hope to help build the future of cancer care," Miller said. "Together, we are building a state-of-the-art center for advanced cancer care and research that will make a difference in the lives of so many by turning science into practice and hope into reality."

Located at the FivePoint Gateway, the commercial district of the Great Park Neighborhoods in Irvine, the City of Hope's new state-of-the-art cancer center will feature world-renown treatment programs that include chemotherapy to immunotherapy, while providing much-needed access to cancer care to people living in Orange County.

In 2020, City of Hope was able to acquire a 190,000-square-foot, four-story building for \$108 million from Five Point Venture that will become City of Hope's first cancer care facility in Orange County.

Slated to open in 2022, construction for the Lennar Foundation's Cancer Center has already started. The historic partnership marked the beginning of what FivePoint and City of Hope envisioned as a regional hub for an Irvine-based, innovative "wellness campus" that will feature blue-chip physician groups, wellness specialists and related research.

"There has never been a moment in history more important than now to act boldly to make wellness and health

GIFTING HOPE

HOW LENNAR IS INVESTING IN THE FUTURE OF IRVINE-BASED HEALTH CARE.

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER



care the foundation of every sustainable community of the future. This partnership with our trusted partner, City of Hope, is truly a game-changer," said Emile Haddad, FivePoint chairman and CEO. "One day, we will look back at this moment and remember those who took a leap of faith to help ensure the future health and well-being of others through innovation. I believe FivePoint and City of Hope are taking a vital step to be part of this story."

The FivePoint Gateway is part of the company's lineup of regional corporate campuses that include sprawling square footage for retail, commercial office space and entertainment venues, with access to transportation around major metropolitan areas, specifically San Francisco and New Hall Ranch, in Valencia, California.

Robert Stone, president and CEO, City of Hope said this gift is a "monumental start" to showcasing the future achievements of health care in Orange County and beyond.

"This is the start – and it is a monumental start – to show the nation that our work in Orange County will catalyze incredible achievements in health care. Visionary donors and volunteers have been foundational to City of Hope's 108-year history and we are deeply grateful to the Lennar

Foundation for their extraordinary contributions and longstanding support," Stone said. "With this gift, we will achieve the nexus of unsurpassed medical expertise, future-focused communities, groundbreaking technology and innovation, all for the single purpose of saving lives. This partnership supports a system of care delivery that provides state-of-the-art treatments, the latest scientific and medical discoveries, and unprec-

edented access that will serve as a model across the country."

The FivePoint Gateway features 1 million square feet of office space and is located next to the Irvine Transportation Center with access to the Great Park and Great Park Neighborhoods.

Located on Alton Parkway, the City of Hope began construction on the cancer care center, which includes the acute cancer care hospital. This health care model will serve as a legacy moving forward for City of Hope and FivePoint as plans to introduce this model into other California communities is already underway.

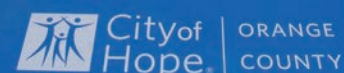
Annette M. Walker, president, City of Hope Orange County spoke about the importance of this partnership and what it means to provide access to such an important portion of Orange County, who had no choice but to travel out of the county for cancer treatment.

"This generous gift of hope is a historic moment for City of Hope. Thank you to Lennar Foundation, which is united in our vision and understands the urgency of our work, helping us ensure that our promise to Orange County will be fulfilled," Walker said. "We are building a place of hope and healing that will serve residents of Orange County and beyond for generations to come."

Once complete, the cancer center will function as a research facility for Phase 1-3 clinical trials, which are known as the first control groups to receive new drug treatments, and help set the foundation for the research and successful treatment of certain diseases.



Physician in Chief Ed Kim, Patient Nicole Petersen Murr, Annette Walker, Marshall Ames, Patient Simon Bray



PUBLIC OFFICIALS ADDRESS CONFUSION SURROUNDING STATE'S REOPENING PROTOCOL

WITH VACCINATIONS UNDERWAY, THE ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS CAME UNDER FIRE AFTER HUNDREDS DEMANDED THE COUNTY NOT ADOPT DIGITAL VACCINATION RECORDS.

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER

During the Board of Supervisors meeting on Tuesday, April 13, Dr. Clayton Chau, Director of the Orange County Health Agency, addressed items that he called "controversial issues" regarding the vaccination of children under 16, and the concept of digital vaccination passports in Orange County.

Chau said the concept of vaccination passports found in the Othena app are only meant for record-keeping purposes. However, the topic of vaccination passports generated more than 200 speaker requests from the public.

"As a health entity, we are required by law to give people proof that we provide a service to them. The health care service, in this case, is the vaccination," Chau explained to the Board of Supervisors.

Chau added that the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Centers for Disease Control have issued statements that the white immunization cards are being forged, emphasizing that the method of record-keeping is unsafe.

Chau referenced more public confusion regarding "vaccination passports" after individuals reported seeing a QR code within the Othena app.

"You probably have heard that the CDC and FBI have issued statements that the white CDC immunization record cards have been forged and there's a lot of people who are selling it, and so they recommend that they not be used as proof of vaccination at this point," Chau added. "We're working on issuing a digital vaccination administration record, but they have to request it."

Yet, regardless of Chau's explanation behind the newly adopted digital vaccination records, hundreds of people spoke out against the technology during the meeting, some asking for Chau's resignation.

Now in the orange tier, the state will soon abolish the color-coded tiers for reopening in accordance with the state's Blueprint for a Safer Economy.

In a press conference on Tuesday, April 6, California Gov. Gavin Newsom announced the state will be "moving beyond" the state's Blueprint for a Safer Economy on June 15. With this announcement, the governor made it clear that the June 15 date would signify the full reopening of the economy in California.

"We will be moving beyond the blueprint, and we will be getting rid of the colored tiers. We will be moving past the dimmer switch. We'll be getting rid of the blueprint as you know it," Newsom said. "That's on June 15, if we continue the good work."

Irvine Mayor Farrah Khan, who established Orange County's first COVID-19 Task Force, is working to help vaccinate all individuals in Orange County by July 4 as part of Operation Independence, which is a partnership between the county, Orange County Fire Authority and the Orange County Health Agency.

"The governor's announcement to reopen by June 15 is based on 2 factors: availability of vaccines for everyone and low hospitalizations," Khan wrote in a text to Irvine Weekly. "The county's goal will remain to get the majority of folks vaccinated by July 4. The state's reopening doesn't mean we will have vaccinated the majority of people, we still have to continue doing that based on vaccine availability."

Newsom credited a massive vaccination rollout in California, now with more than 20 million vaccinations administered.

With the anticipated return to in-person education, the Orange County Department of Education has addressed concerns regarding the concept of mandatory COVID-19 vaccination for students and staff.

In Irvine, the Irvine Unified School District has been on a hybrid model since September 2020. In January, the University of California system announced it would return all classes back to campus in Fall 2021.

In his update Tuesday, Newsom added that he wanted to see schools open for in-person education



City of Irvine
Memorial Care
Vaccination
Clinic

at all levels in California.

"I want kids back in person – I want kids back in schools, safely, with in-person instruction," he said. "On June 15, we anticipate there will be no barrier to getting all of our kids safely back, not just K-12, community colleges, including institutions of higher learning."

In a statement issued on Thursday, April 7, the OCDE announced that "immunizations for COVID-19 are not mandated in California," and schools in Orange County will not require proof of COVID-19 vaccination from staff or students when schools return to in-person education five days per week.

As the eligibility for the COVID-19 vaccine expands to those 16 and older, many students will not have access to the vaccine. While OCDE cannot make vaccines a requirement, an updated statement on the OCDE newsroom page indicates the county will uphold health protocols such as face masks and social distancing:

"To accelerate a return to in-person learning five days a week, and to contribute to the economic recovery, OCDE is working with the Orange County Health Care Agency in support of its efforts to offer voluntary vaccinations to eligible candidates."

While the state's monitoring system for COVID-19 might be eliminated, face masks are here to stay, according to Newsom, who added that he is open to arguments against masks, but until the data backs claims that masks are ineffective, the state's mask mandate will stay in place.

Newsom added that he was "disappointed" when he saw "thousands of strangers packed into a stadium," referencing the Texas Rangers hosting a capacity crowd of more than 30,000 people on opening day in Arlington, Texas, which does not have a mask mandate.

As of April 13, the Orange County Health Agency reported an accumulative total of 252,538 COVID-19 cases, with 4,849 COVID-19 related deaths since the pandemic began last March.

On a positive note, Orange County marked three consecutive days with less than 100 positive COVID-19 cases – 75 on April 7, 95 on April 8, and 87 on April 1.

In terms of vaccinations, as of Monday, April 4, the Orange County Health Agency had fully vaccinated 598,838 individuals. Statewide, the California Department of Health reports more than 7.4 million people are now fully vaccinated in California.



PHOTO COURTESY OF IRVINE LANES

OPENING THE LANES

AFTER A YEAR OF CLOSURE, IRVINE IS BOWLING STRIKES AGAIN AT IRVINE LANES.

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER

For family entertainment centers and bowling alleys, like Boomers! and Irvine Lanes in Irvine, moving into the less restrictive orange and yellow tiers of the state's Blueprint for a Safer Economy means lifting many of the state-mandated restrictions that have kept their operations shut down for more than a year.

However, while many businesses – like bars, restaurants and gyms – have

found ways to keep business moving, Beck Sigmond, marketing director for Irvine Lanes, said the pandemic created a hard stop for bowling alleys last March.

Even after making modifications to reopen in summer, Sigmond said the state's guidelines continued to hamper the ability for places like Irvine Lanes to reopen.

On Monday, April 12, bowling returned

to Irvine Lanes. While capacity will be limited at first, Sigmond said she has been looking forward to this day longer than she would like to admit.

"It's been very difficult because we fell into the colored tier system, as different even from restaurants – even when indoor restaurants could actually open or do patio service, we couldn't really do anything," Sigmond said. "We were family entertainment centers, and bowling centers were on that list that couldn't open."

In an interview with *Irvine Weekly*, Sigmond, who has worked with Irvine Lanes for more than a decade, said after initially closing in March of last year, she hoped the closures would only last for a few months, only to be shut down by regulations within the state's Blueprint for a Safer Economy.

"We closed March 14 last year, and then we actually retrofitted everything

to reopen July 1," Sigmond explained. "We brought back all the full-time employees and most of our part-timers, we got plexiglass, we did all the safety modifications that they required, and on July 1 we opened at 10:00 a.m. That was the day Gov. Newsom went on and basically shut everything down. By December it looked really bleak, like, 'When's this going to end?'"

While the last year of shutdowns has undoubtedly eliminated a business model for Irvine Lanes, it has also displaced league bowlers like Irvine resident and bowling coach Rob Barring. Barring said prior to the pandemic he was bowling twice a week exclusively at Irvine Lanes.

Barring added that while he understands the need to keep everyone safe, as a lifelong bowler, he said he does not understand the thought process behind keeping bowling alleys closed for more

CULTURE

than a year, while professional sporting events are allowing fans inside indoor arenas.

"For bowlers, who have their own equipment, their own gear, there doesn't have to be a lot of contact – I think it could have continued in some capacity," Barring said. "Most states already have bowling centers open except for California."

Barring, who has been bowling at Irvine Lanes since 1998, said many local bowlers are planning to attend the USBC Open Championships in Las Vegas this May. Barring, who will be representing Irvine, said he along with other local bowlers have lost valuable practice time.

"I haven't had a chance to practice – we haven't had the facilities to practice. If you don't use it, you lose it, just like anything else," Barring said. "I think bowling centers could have made adjustments to even removing the house equipment, which would have done a couple things – it would have revitalized the bowling market, as far as buying equipment."

Regardless of restrictions, Barring, who also coaches the Junior Bowling League at Irvine Lanes, said the effects of the last year have been most impactful on the children and scholastic bowlers seeking scholarships for bowling.

"The fact that they let fans back into sporting arenas before opening bowling alleys – is just ridiculous," he said. "I think bowling alleys were grouped into a category where they didn't belong."

As Irvine Lanes reopens its doors, Barring said he looks forward to spending time with friends while bowling, like he has for so many years.

"For some people, that bowling circle is 'your circle' – that's where your friends are – and to take that away from some people it will affect them greatly," he said. "It's been too long."

However, while Sigmond is grateful for the ability to reopen, she said another hurdle is finding personnel willing to staff the bowling alley. Adding that the amount of time bowling alleys have been shut down, she fears the job pool is shallow.

Prior to the pandemic, Sigmond said Irvine Lanes had about 50 employees, most of which were students at UC Irvine. However, now with campuses currently closed and students utilizing remote learning, Sigmond is already feeling a need to fill the void.

"Our biggest struggle right now, and Boomers! is kind of in the same boat, is finding employees," she said. "A lot of our employees, at this point, have found a new job, moved to other states or moved out of the area – a lot of our employees are from UCI, and with them remote learning – some have decided not to work at all."

Now in the Orange Tier, the state's Blueprint for a Safer Economy gives bowling alleys in Orange County, like Irvine Lanes, the ability to reopen for indoor and outdoor activities at 25% capacity.

But in order to clarify statements made by California Gov. Gavin Newsom, regarding the elimination of the state's Blueprint on June 15, Sigmond said she has spoken with the city to ensure Irvine Lanes is operating correctly.

"We contacted the city after his speech, because one of the first questions that came back was, 'What do we do after Yellow,'" she said. "We'll follow whatever the city says. We're so excited to be open, any sort of mandate that they put onto us to be open and continue to be open, we're going to do as best we can and stay in business."

With a capacity of 1,200 people inside the 40-lane bowling alley, with an additional 4,000 square foot conference center and banquet facility on the second floor, Irvine Lanes is a massive facility.

Yet, even with reopening protocol, Sigmond says the first weeks will be limited in capacity.

For now, Sigmond suggests Friday, Saturday or Sunday, are ideal for casual bowlers looking for some lane time, adding that Irvine Lanes Kids Play Free Program will be starting on May 17.

"If you register online, anyone 15 and younger can get two free games, per day," Sigmond explained. "The only thing you'd need to pay for is renting shoes."





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- Jim and Carol Hoffman

YUNG BLEU IS READY TO FLOOD THE CHARTS

BY RYAN LEUTZ



PHOTO BY MAURICE TYRONE HOLLOWAY

Yung Bleu, 26, is known for being an extremely versatile and successful R&B crooner. He started his music career in Mobile, Alabama, as a rapper in the mixtape scene, which is a stark contrast to his style of music today.

"Most people describe [my sound] as R&B. I would describe it as 'pain music' because I go back and forth between singing and rapping a lot," Bleu told the Rockstar Experience Podcast. "But for me, I can step outside of that and go anywhere I want with it. I'm just diverse really. I can slide in and out of any

genre I want to."

Bleu's versatility has paid off for him in dividends with multiple gold records and a nomination in XXL's Freshman List. He also scored himself a Drake feature on his hit song "You're Mines Still," which has proved to be one of the biggest breaks of Bleu's career.

"I knew it was gonna pop off when I did the original song. I just ain't know when," Bleu told us. "Drake hopping on it just sped it up. You know what I'm saying? I knew it was a good song."

The song has been one of Bleu's biggest, earning him a gold certification, and the story behind the record is just as impressive.

"I did 'You're Mines Still' in 15 minutes," Bleu professed.

"And you freestyled it?" we asked.

"Yeah, I just heard the beat and walked in the studio. I dropped that whole project within 4 days because I just woke up one day and was like 'I wanna drop a concept project.' I had just dropped the album but I was like 'man I just wanna keep the music coming,'" Bleu said.

And that he has. Yung Bleu has released two projects in the past year – Bleu Vandross 2 and Love Scars: The 5 Stages of Emotion – and it seems like there is more music on the way now that he's figured out his label situation. Bleu recently took to social media and claimed that leaving a major label and going independent was "one of the best decisions of his career." Bleu recently left his long-time major label to publish his music independently through a distribution company, Empire Distribution. When asked about the specifics of his label situation, Bleu explained his reasoning.

"It just worked out for me man, it's just my personal decision," he said. "When I went independent I just made way more money and had more freedom to do what I wanna do. I just started prospering way more. Once I came to Empire, they gave me the tools to do what I knew needed to be done, without questioning. Shit just started goin' crazy. I had only dropped like two projects since I been off a major label and 'Love Scars' was one of them. I just randomly texted the [Empire Distribution] CEO and said 'I want to drop a project Friday. Two weeks. Get ready.' And I couldn't have done that with a major label."

Now that Bleu is working with added flexibility and prosperity through his Empire Distribution move, he's ready to drop his next project. Bleu has promised that it will be released this year and will contain more heavyweight features.

"I don't know when it's comin', I just know I don't really wanna say any of the features because they're not cleared yet. I know they gonna be cleared but it's gonna be a lot of huge people on there," Bleu said.

"So for sure this year right?" asked Bryan Escalante, the Rockstar Experience's producer.

"Yeah, for sure, yeah," Bleu assured.

Until then, dive into Yung Bleu's extensive catalog and check out his latest hit record, "Thieves in Atlanta" ft. Coi Leray.

You can check out the full Rockstar Experience Podcast interview on Spotify, Apple Podcasts and iHeart Radio.

ENTERTAINMENT

BORN TO BATROC

GEORGES ST-PIERRE IS PLANNING TO BE A FULL-TIME ACTOR FOLLOWING HIS STORIED CAREER INSIDE THE OCTAGON, AND FIRST UP IS HIS RETURN TO THE MARVEL CINEMATIC UNIVERSE.

BY JIMI DEVINE

On the heels of the biggest fight in MMA history failing to materialize, Georges St-Pierre sat down with *Irvine Weekly* to chat about his transition into full-time acting following his recent return to the Marvel Cinematic Universe, reprising his role as Batroc the Leaper in *The Falcon and the Winter Soldier* on Disney+.

St-Pierre was born to play Batroc, a dangerous Frenchman. Over the years, before his leap to the big screen, St-Pierre proved time and again that he was one of the most exciting fighters on the planet; he worked his way through the greatest welterweights of all time to take that title for himself. Eventually, he added to his hall-of-fame career by exiting retirement to defeat Michael Bisping, winning the middleweight title in the process. At the time, he was only the fourth person to ever accomplish such a feat.

His wildly positive energy made him that much more likable through the title defenses, and when he did get involved in pre-fight banter it had so much more zip coming from an anti-bullying advocate than from the people talking shit all the time in hopes of selling their fights.

So, when you see St-Pierre selected to play a hand-to-hand combat-heavy B-list Marvel villain that's been scrapping with Captain America since the 1960s, it adds some excitement. We've seen some of the most dangerous 170-pound men on the planet stand across from him and fail. It makes it feel more believable when you see George St-Pierre (GSP) get shots in against a title character compared to some random henchman.

Not only is St-Pierre considered one of the greatest mixed martial artists of all time, but he's also arguably America's most famous Canadian athlete without a hockey stick. He has three times

as many Instagram followers as Steve Nash, who is the only other guy in the discussion.

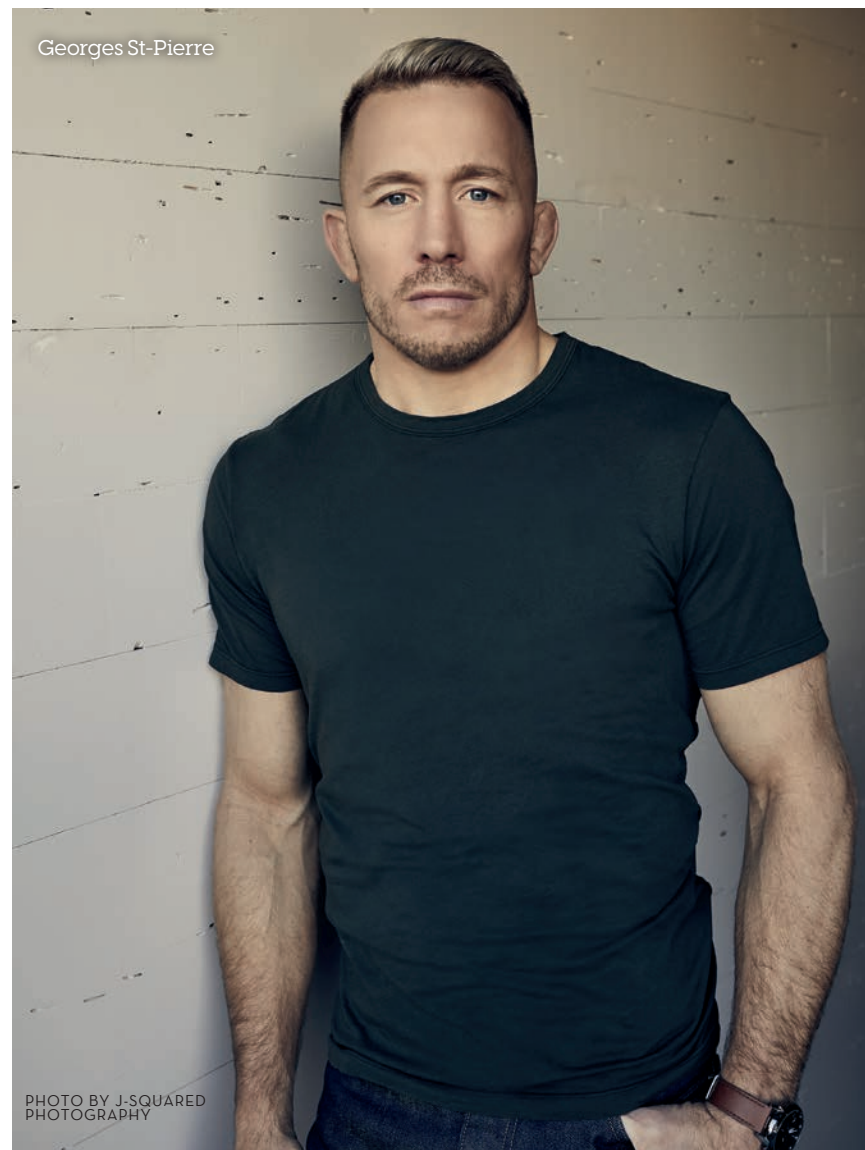
We started the interview by congratulating him on being the pride of Quebec (that doesn't play hockey).

"I do play! But I suck!" St-Pierre told *Irvine Weekly* through the laughs. Despite being an amateur gymnast over the last decade, and since incorporating the practice into his training regime in the second half of his career, St-Pierre joked he had no balance on ice and zero hockey intelligence.

We moved on to what is filling his time these days. We didn't want to say retired, because he obviously has plenty on his plate, but we asked how he would describe daily life. He said mainly it's just really busy. But you can hear the conviction in his voice as he attempts to perfect a new craft with the same level of focus that got him multiple UFC titles across two weight classes.

"I'm having a lot of auditions, and I'm working a lot on different skills that require a lot of my time," St-Pierre expanded. "My English classes, acting camera classes, theater classes, audition classes. So, I'm very busy now trying to learn new things. And it's a lot of fun. It's like a new challenge in my life."

GSP emphasized that even with all these new challenges, he still trains regularly. Rory MacDonald (a former Bellator Champion and Canada's second most dangerous welterweight of all time after St-Pierre, who is also half of a lot of people's greatest fight of all time alongside Robbie Lawler and the current favorite heading into the million-dollar Professional Fight League Tournament) says that GSP could still hang with the best of them. "I think if he wanted to, and he had that passion, he definitely could," MacDonald told *The Schmo* recently. "He's probably better



now than he was when he retired. He just keeps training and keeps getting better."

Prior to hearing MacDonald's glowing praise, we asked GSP if he was still sparring. Simulated combat with the young killers of Montreal and points beyond is no joke and provides perspective on just how hard he's going at the moment. If not for COVID closing the gyms, he said he'd certainly be in there mixing it up with the young lions.

"Yeah, not now because the gyms are closed, but yeah for sure. I always train, and I'm training at the elite level because I help guys prepare for their fights," he said. "So now I'll be able to go back to the gym and train. I love the science of fighting."

We asked St-Pierre how much easier it is to balance the acting side with training compared to when he was an active champion defending his belt. The first time he portrayed Batroc was in the training camp leading up to his fight

with a pre-USADA Johnny Hendricks. At that moment, Hendricks was one of the most spectacular knockout artists in the UFC with three knockout-of-the-night bonuses during a six-fight win streak that led up to the St-Pierre fight.

"Yeah, exactly. Just different stress," St-Pierre replied. "Because when you fight you have only one shot. If you zig when you should zag, you can get knocked out. It could be very bad for you."

Acting isn't as bad, "because they say 'Cut! Let's do it again' but there is much less pressure," he added.

Every time he walked to the Octagon, GSP was terrified and uncomfortable, but thankfully he had a mean poker face. It's always surprising to hear him reference this in interviews over the years since his walkouts were in the top 20% for energy levels throughout his career. Even with the differences in the kind of pressure he faces when it comes time to shoot a take, there are certainly similarities in preparation. Both require

ENTERTAINMENT

him to rehearse for the various outcomes he sees in his head.

"But when you get on set it's not exactly the same as you imagine it. The setup is always different. Very often the reactions of the other actor are playing differently," St-Pierre explained. "So, to be successful, a successful fighter and a successful actor, I believe you need to be, like Bruce Lee said, 'Be like water my friend.' The best actors and fighters, I think they're the ones that can adapt the best."

Playing off his Bruce Lee reference, we asked what it was like to be such a major representative for traditional martial arts in this new platform where he plans to take the bull by the horns. St-Pierre credited Hollywood's attempts to cast more authentically over the years with his chance to provide a platform to martial arts. It came down to the perfect timing of The MCU needing a ninja with a Quebecois accent that could pass as French to the less cultured ear.

"I'm just very blessed and lucky that I came in the right timing. I've been told that in Hollywood now there's this new trend that if they're looking for someone to play an Italian guy, they're going to often choose an Italian person. Same thing when they look for someone to play an Irish guy they, look for someone with an Irish background," St-Pierre said.

Clearly, it was a lot of fun to be able to put a different level of commitment into the character this time around. The first time it was just for fun, now it's a lot more important to him as he moves on to post-fight life.

"And I'm aware now that the career of an athlete has a limit, you know?" he shared. "We all have a window, and you can say I can play basketball, play football, play baseball, but you don't play fight. And you don't want to hang there too long in a sport like fighting because it could be very dangerous."

Disney contacted him to reprise his role in the MCU just as he aimed to change the orientation of his career to focus more on acting. "I was thrilled," he said of the timing. "I felt very lucky that the stars were all aligned. And now I'm focusing on acting full-time. It's been two years now that I follow classes. I improved my game, my acting game."

He emphasized he still has a lot to learn now that he has a lot more screen time. He expects fans to love what they see. When we asked how much the money factored into him not fighting

more in the second half of the 2010s, he said it wasn't too much of a factor. He knew the PPV money would be there. His first fight with PPV points was worth more than his whole career combined up to that point.

Contrary to the financial aspects, the state of the game before the UFC brought in the United States Anti-Doping Agency to run its drug-testing program certainly played a factor in his activity levels, he added, pointing again to the "you don't play fighting" metaphor.

"Especially for that reason, because the outcome of a fight to them, severe impact of the athlete's life, and the well-being," he said. "And that's one of the major reasons I've always believed that our sport should be clean, more than any other sport. Because the outcome could influence so much more in the life and the health of the athlete."

After helping lead the conversation around testing in the years prior to the UFC's eventual deal with USADA, St-Pierre is thrilled to see where the conversation is now. He understood the risk the organization took in wider scrutiny of the substances fighters were putting in their bodies.

"But I'm glad that they took the step forward. They did it, knowing that a lot of their future, a lot of their stars will fall, and they did," St-Pierre said. "But now I think it's better for the UFC brand. Because to the mainstream world, it's a cleaner sport, so it makes a better image for them than it was before. Though it cost them a lot of money."

We asked St-Pierre how close we really got to the Khabib Nurmagomedov fight. It was widely expected to be the biggest UFC fight of all time if it happened.

"It takes three entities to make a fight. It takes one fighter, the second fighter and it takes the promotion. My contract is exclusive to the UFC," St-Pierre said. "If I ever come back it needs to be in the UFC. And after I retired, we tried to make a fight with Khabib. He was interested, but the UFC clearly told us that they had other plans for Khabib. So that's why it never materialized."

Did he ever get to the point where weight was discussed? Each man was the greatest in their respective weight classes of 155 and 170. He said it never got that far, though a few years back, he would have made the attempt to cut to 155, but the older you get the harder it is.

With the fight falling through, there is a certain sense of additional freedom on his journey. "But we're not really free,



Georges St-Pierre

PHOTO BY RICHARD HO

we all work for someone," he said. "We always pay our taxes, you know? We never see 100%. We're always victims of the causality of things that we need to do. We all have responsibilities."

That said, he admits the last time he had this much freedom he was broke. "I did a lot of sacrificing. Now my life is much easier," he admitted. "Now I feel like the point that I am in my life, I'm more in control of things. And with the experience, I can improve without putting myself too much out of my comfort zone. There is a lot more freedom and much, much less stress. That's what I like about my new life."

On a final comedic note, back in 2013, St-Pierre got a lot of flak for saying he saw something in the sky he couldn't

explain on the *Joe Rogan Experience*. We asked if he ever expected the guy from Blink 182 would help prove him right? He laughed, noting everyone in the car that night was not a trained observer, but the pilots and officials seen coming out of the Pentagon speaking on the subject are.

"These [pilots] are trained observers. Their credentials are very strong," St-Pierre noted. "I don't know --we don't know-- what it is. We don't know if it's maybe some secret weapon that the army is testing or alien or other dimensional humans from the future, we don't know. I mean we can only speculate. But that there are UFOs, since it's clear that there are things that cannot be explained."

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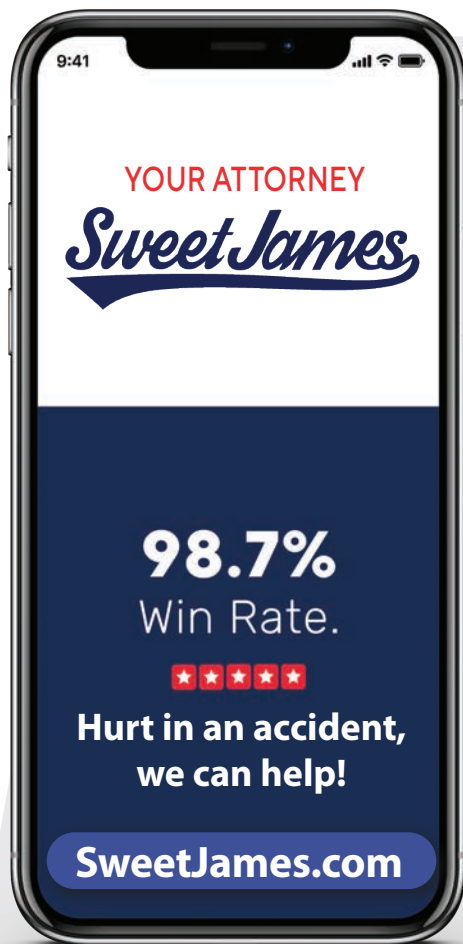
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REMEMBERING JOHN GHOUKASSIAN

THE LOCAL RESTAURANTEUR COMBINED GOURMET CUISINE, ART AND MUSIC AT SEVERAL RESTAURANTS ON TWO CONTINENTS.

BY LIZ GOLDNER



John Ghoukassian – October 21, 1936 to March 15, 2021 – was one of Irvine's and Orange County's most beloved restaurateurs. As the founder/owner of Bistango in Irvine and Bayside in Newport Beach, he combined his love of fine food and wine with his admiration for art, filling his restaurants with paintings and sculpture, from impressionism to modern and contemporary art styles.

Born in Isfahan, Iran of Armenian parents, he was proud that his ancestors moved from Armenia to Isfahan, as the city – the capital of Iran during the 16th century – was known for its classic Persian/Islamic architecture.

Ghoukassian, the middle child of two brothers, both of them deceased, was named after his grandfather, Johnny Khan, Khan being an honorific title in Iran.

He grew up with his cultured parents, Ghazar (Lazar) Ghoukassian and Mary Peters, and with his maternal grandmother, an excellent cook who was admired for her exceptional baking, jam and marmalades.

At age 18, he went to England and then to Germany for his studies, which included engineering. He traveled throughout Europe during summer vacations, visiting cafes and bistros where paintings by local artists, some of them Impressionists, were exhibited. He especially enjoyed Italy where he immersed himself in the art there. "It was during those formative years in Europe as a young man that he found and developed his sense of culture," his wife Diana explains.

She adds, "While I knew John and his family from childhood, as his younger brother, Varuj, and I played together, I met John again when he returned to Tehran from Germany at age 29. His father had just purchased a building and was wondering what to do with it."

While Ghoukassian had no business experience, he decided to engage his own luxury-loving persona, while challenging himself to do something special with his father's building. He recruited his architect friend Michael Carapetian to design the building as a restaurant, and named it Chattanooga. Soon after, he opened a restaurant that he called Art Gallery Restaurant Lautrec, and then one named Mirabelle. Along with serving contemporary European and Iranian cuisine at these venues, he satiated customers' visual appetites by displaying European Impressionist works on the walls.

Diana adds, "As he worked alongside his architect friend, he realized that he was interested in design and in all things artistic." Over the successive decades, he assisted in designing several more restaurants in Iran and in Southern California.

John and Diana were married on April 30, 1971, and would have celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary this month.

Ghoukassian moved to the United States in 1983, opening Bistango in Beverly Hills the following year. He decorated the restaurant with world-class art, while evoking the ambiance of the European cafes he enjoyed during his early adulthood. In 1989, he closed the L.A. restaurant and soon after opened Bistango, also designed by Carapetian, in the elegant Atrium Building in Irvine. He opened Bayside restaurant in Newport Beach in 1999 and Kimeria (closed in 2013), also in Irvine, a few years later.

While fine restaurants throughout the Southland display original art, Ghoukassian's venues are unique, combining features of art galleries with world-class dining. Bistango and Bayside are so well-known for their revolving art shows that major collectors regularly attend their openings. The restaurants are also known for live jazz concerts.

The Ghoukassians have two children, Marc and Karyn, who grew up in Cannes, France, and then moved to Irvine in 1989. They are co-owners of Bistango and Bayside, "as John always shared everything with Marc and Karyn and made them partners in every business he had," Diana said.

John Ghoukassian is survived by his wife, Diana, his children Marc and Karyn and by three nieces.

LITTLE SISTER'S ELEVATED VIETNAMESE CUISINE TAKES FIRST STEPS AT THE IRVINE SPECTRUM

AFTER A YEAR OF DELAYS, THE IRVINE SPECTRUM FINALLY WELCOMES LITTLE SISTER. SPECIALIZING IN ELEVATED SOUTHEAST ASIAN FARE WITH EUROPEAN INFLUENCES, CHEF AND OWNER TIN VUONG HAS BROUGHT HIS SAN GABRIEL VALLEY INFLUENCED STYLE TO ORANGE COUNTY.

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER



Abi-Najm has spent several weeks working alongside Vuong, ensuring everything is up to standard. However, he said the last year has been difficult, considering the opening at the Spectrum was considerably delayed.

"We were supposed to open this time last year. Obviously, with everything going on in the world we hit some setbacks, but we actually have Chef Tin here," Abi-Najm said. "We're doing some new dishes here, that haven't been seen before at any other Little Sister – playing around with some stuff – taking our already elevated concepts, and trying to take it up a few notches for Irvine."

Speaking on the elevated fare, Abi-Najm explained that adjustments to the menu are still being made. For example, while the Irvine location does not yet carry Little Sister's popular Balinese Fried Meatballs, Escargot Poppers have been added to the menu, something that guests can only find at Little Sister's Irvine location.

"Chef Tin is a madman. He's been here every day changing platings, just making sure it's perfect. Making sure everything is A-Z, is up to his standards," Abi-Najm explained. "I think being in an area so close to Little Saigon we really got to show people, and back ourselves up, as to why you should dine here, instead of driving up the freeway."

For those unfamiliar with Chef Vuong's approach to food, Abi-Najm attributes his tenacity to an unconventional cooking style, which he describes as "anti-conformist" when it comes to cooking.

"It's no secret the hospitality industry took a hit, harder than any other industry this last year. We're so happy to welcome everyone in with open arms – we're all masked up and working with protocol – but it's starting to feel normal again," Abi-Najm said. "We are getting 50% capacity, so we have a semi-full restaurant which feels nice. It hasn't felt that good in a while."



PHOTOS COURTESY OF LITTLE SISTER



Little Sister, a trendy, chef-driven chain specializing in Southeast Asian cuisine with European attributes, has now opened a second location at the Irvine Spectrum. With just two locations in California, Little Sister is the brainchild of chef and owner Tin Vuong, a well-known San Gabriel Valley native and restaurateur.

For those looking for elevated fare, with a casual vibe, Little Sister at the Irvine Spectrum should be on every post-pandemic outing list.

While these are Little Sister's first steps in Orange County, Vuong is no stranger to the culinary scene. Vuong said he is excited to be able to finally open doors in Irvine, after overcoming a year of challenges caused

by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Little Sister has always been at the heart of everything we do and being able to open the newest (and largest) location yet is especially poignant after the tough year all of us have had," Vuong said. "We can't wait to see what the future brings us here in Orange County."

With two different kitchens serving hot and cold selections, Little Sister serves dishes in a family tapas style. Offerings include the "bo tai chanh" salad served with lime-marinated raw beef, rau ram, basil, mint, onions and fried shallots. The cold kitchen also produces rice paper rolls like the Autumn Roll, which is made with sweet potato, jicama, egg, herbs, Chinese sausage, candied shrimp and coco peanut sauce.

Yet, the focal point of Little Sister's menu is found inside the hot kitchen, according to Roy Abi-Najm, general manager of Little Sister at the Irvine Spectrum.

"It's all family tapas style," he said. "Our star is obviously our hot kitchen, where you're going to see all sorts of Southeast Asian influenced mainly Vietnamese food," Abi-Najm said. "A couple knockout dishes – salt and pepper lobster, some traditional stuff that you see at every Vietnamese restaurant that we do best – the Shaky Shaky Beef – a sauteed beef tenderloin served with watercress salad and rice, it's beautiful."

Other notable menu items that should not be overlooked include lemongrass chicken wings and the SGV Banh Mi.



POTENCY AND PURITY: DRIPP IS CHANGING THE CANNABIS GAME

Dripp is California's finest extract company.

Potency and purity. This is the motto of Dripp, where the raw essence of cannabis is preserved during a precise extraction process that yields some of the most robust terpene profiles you'll ever taste. The Dripp team has enhanced and streamlined the standard extraction process, resulting in a vaping experience that highlights potency, profile and consistency in a way that hasn't been done before.

"Dripp is California's finest extract company," explains Daniel Gastelum, CEO of Dripp Extracts. "Throughout every step of our meticulous process we ensure that the essence of the cannabis plant is properly preserved. We utilize the highest quality raw material, the most cutting edge technological advancements, and proprietary methods to craft perfection."

The two p's at the end of Dripp aren't simply for enhanced verbal aesthetic, but rather, they are meant to represent their biggest goals as a company: Potency and Purity.

Dripp's purpose in the cannabis industry is to help it progress in a manner that both sets them apart from others in a manner most appealing to consumers and allows them to set vital precedents and trends that help the industry ultimately move in a more positive direction. With their purpose and their consumers in mind, perfection is the only acceptable standard of development and progression in the Dripp product lifecycle. To the team at Dripp, true perfection is when they have the same sat-

isfaction from the connoisseur as they do from the first-time smoker and vice-versa.

Why embark on this goal? Because it's worth it.

"To take flower a step further and enable the numerous cannabinoid components to be expressed in a way that truly captures their astounding qualities," answers Gastelum. "We've spent countless hours determining which approach honors this incredible plant appropriately. From the nostalgic aromas, the awe inspiring aesthetics, to the miraculous effects, it has been our mission to accurately capture those aspects."

All Dripp products are manufactured using a refined and incredibly precise series of extraction procedures that allow them to draw and derive the most from their premi-



um-quality raw materials. After an initial quality control inspection of their finished bulk products, they are then transferred to their dedicated distribution assembly team, where the products are packaged and filled with utmost attention to detail and are then subjected to a strenuous round of quality control procedures to ensure a product that exceeds all expectations they may have.

"What sets us apart is our attention to detail, knowledge of the intricacy of cannabinoid profiles, and the relentless pursuit of providing the ultimate representation



of purity," explains Gastelum. "We sought out to create products that are unmatched in quality and have achieved that goal. We have been a part of the culture for nearly our entire lives and respect what it stands for. In order to truly honor that respect, we've focused all of our efforts to create extracts that exude the sensational traits cannabis has to offer."

For multiple decades, Dripp's network of experienced and dedicated farmers have been producing some of the highest quality, all natural premium cannabis grown on California's legendary soil. Dripp's extensive network of suppliers stretches from San Diego to Humboldt and their cannabis sourcing team makes frequent visits to all the farms they have relationships with to ensure top quality product from seed to sale.

Dripp vape products are the perfect blend of live resin and distillate delivering a delicious flavored and potent product to the consumer. Dripp believes that true quality is achieved through an elevated, purified extraction process, where time is taken to get the perfect product, every time.

"Considering that we are true connoisseurs, we've seen nearly every rendition of what the industry has to offer," says Gastelum. "Many of those products fell short of capturing the aromatic components, purity, potency and robust terpene profiles. We feel that our interpretation of concentrates honors cannabis ideally and are confident you'll share the same sentiment."

Dripp can be found in the following shops: West Coast Cannabis, Downtown Patient Group, The Vault Cathedral City, The Micro Buddery, From The Earth Santa Ana, and Hueneme Patient Collective. With more to come.

To learn more, check them out on Instagram @drrippextracts

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