

The Suburban

magazine

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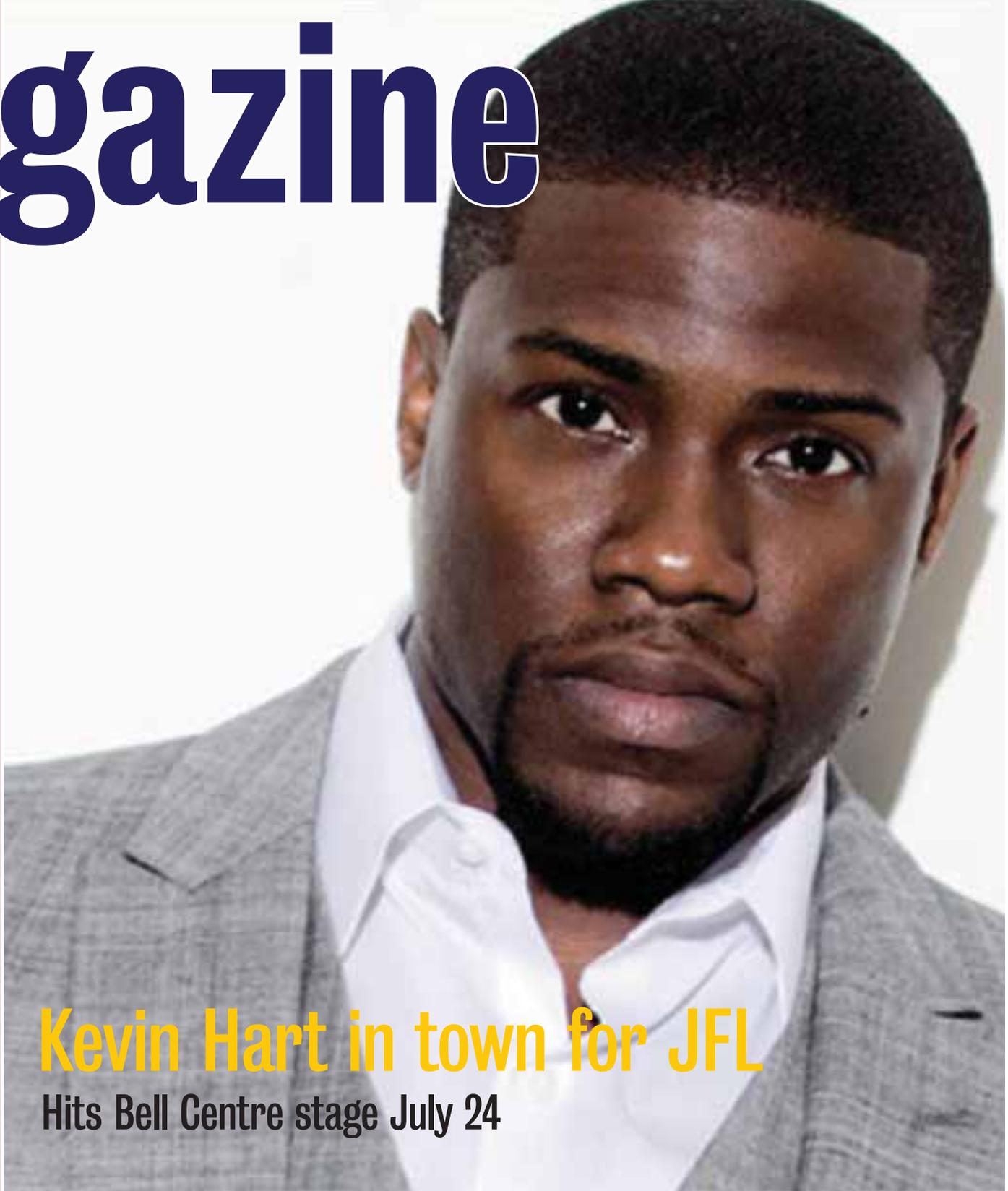
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Las Vegas Part II

Bodies and Titanic exhibitions and a meal to remember at TAO

By Mike Cohen
The Suburban

LAS VEGAS – When people think about visiting Las Vegas (www.lasvegas-tourism.com), visions of casinos and gambling usually dance in one's head. But what else is there interesting to do?

We strongly recommend you take the time to visit two spectacular visits at the Luxor in Las Vegas: Bodies and the Titanic.

Experienced by more than 15 million people worldwide, Bodies...The Exhibition offers an intimate and informative view into the human body. Using an innovative preservation process, the Exhibition allows visitors to see the human body's inner beauty in educational and awe-inspiring ways. The Exhibition features over 200 actual human bodies and specimens meticulously dissected and respectfully displayed, offering an unprecedented and wholly unique view into the amazing body.

The Exhibition takes visitors through galleries providing an up-close look inside the skeletal, muscular, reproductive, respiratory, circulatory and other systems of the human body. Many of the whole body specimens are dissected in

vivid athletic poses, allowing the visitor to relate to everyday activities. In addition, authentic human specimens illustrate the damage caused to organs by over-eating and lack of exercise. A healthy lung is featured next to a black lung ravaged by smoking in a vivid comparison more powerful than any textbook image. The Exhibition will change the way people see themselves. It is designed to enlighten, empower, fascinate and inspire.

The human body specimens in the exhibition are preserved through a revolutionary technique called polymer preservation. In this process, human tissue is permanently preserved using liquid silicone rubber that is treated and hardened. The end result is a rubberized specimen, preserved to the cellular level, showcasing the complexity of the body's many bones, muscles, nerves, blood vessels and organs. The full-body specimens can take more than a year to prepare.

There is also a more sensitive section of the exhibition showing fetal development. Guests can see different stages of a baby's development, from eight weeks old to eight months, as well as fetuses with various birth defects, such as conjoined twins. This exhibit is located in its own private area, so those who feel uncomfort-

able viewing it can skip to the next section.

It is both startling and informative to see so many body parts and inner organs out in the open when they are usually tucked safely away under your skin. One wouldn't expect such an intricate part of the nervous system, like the spinal cord, to resemble a clump of seaweed. The tongue, meanwhile, looks a bit like a small, thick cut of steak (Would you like that medium-rare or well-done?).

One of the more startling sights in the exhibit is the display of a smoker's lung in the respiratory section. Visitors can see and compare a healthy lung to a blackened smoker's lung. There is also a brain on display here from a person who suffered a stroke -- ironically it looks a bit like the inside of an ashtray. After reading some scary, mind-opening facts (like a single pack of cigarettes takes three hours and 40 minutes off your life), you may think twice about puffing. For the guests' convenience, there is a cigarette disposal bin nearby.

This is a definite lesson in authentic learning and we would strongly advise parents to bring their children of a proper age. They will be able to go back to school and tell their teachers and classmates

what they saw.

Meanwhile, if you loved the 1997 movie "Titanic," then the Titanic exhibit at the Luxor will blow you away. Featuring more than 300 artifacts, as well as breathtaking replicas from the famous ship, the Titanic exhibit truly brings history to life. The exhibit features 20 never-before-seen artifacts including gaming chips, passenger papers and even decorative sections from Titanic's famous Grand Staircase. In addition, there are many personal pieces within the exhibit. Our party was completely blown away by the fact they could mount such a large exhibition indoors. For anyone who has seen the movie, this is a "must," visit. If you have not seen the film, this will prompt you to do so.

One of the most heartfelt elements of the exhibit is the personal stories of the passengers. During the tour, the exhibit's staff shares personal tales from the passengers. Some stories have a tragic, yet romantic ending. For instance, some wives chose to stay behind with their husbands instead of climbing onto the lifeboats.

At the beginning of the exhibit, patrons receive a boarding pass of an actual passenger on Titanic. On the back of each boarding pass is the age and the itinerary of that person. At the end of the tour, patrons find out if he or she survived the Titanic by finding the name on the wall memorial. The exhibit also includes passenger quotes. One of the most poignant sayings came from Jack Thayer, a first-class passenger: "There was no moon and I never seen the stars shine brighter," he said. "It was the kind of night that made one feel glad to be alive."

In addition to the passengers' stories, other fascinating details include their belongings. From a diamond and sapphire ring to a platinum pendant with diamonds, some of the most beautiful pieces recovered from the Titanic are sparkling jewelry. The jewels were conserved -- not restored -- and many of the dazzling gems managed to keep their original luster.

Aside from jewelry, plenty of the Titanic passengers brought their own china and silverware. Each cup, plate, pitcher and bowl has its own interesting, distinct look. One of the exhibit's unique pieces discovered is the au gratin plates set, stacked neatly in rows. The au gratin dishes were found lined up inside of a wooden crate that had deteriorated over time -- an image that is recreated in the exhibition. Other artifacts include ship tools, postcards, currency, a pipe, a spittoon and playing cards.





While the tiny pieces leave behind a lasting impression, The Big Piece -- a huge piece of the ship's hull -- definitely stands out. This piece is currently the largest Titanic artifact ever retrieved. It weighs an astounding 15 tons and measures more than 26 feet long. Bringing it inside was a 48-hour process, involving cranes and a special team of people. It's considered the crown jewel of the collection and something one must see to believe.

In addition to the artifacts, the exhibit also features amazing replicas from the Titanic. One of these includes the staircase replica. Most remember the staircase scene from the movie starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Kate Winslet. This is where first-class passengers met, mingled and admired each other's outfits. The intricately-detailed staircase replica includes iron, bronze and even the stained glass dome. Visitors have the option of having their picture taken and purchasing it at the end of the tour.

Other noteworthy replicas include the promenade deck (which features the sounds of waves crashing and a starry sky) as well as an iceberg, which guests are more than welcome to touch. Since the

iceberg was specifically created for the exhibit, it contains its own cooling system to prevent it from melting.

Make sure to stop and take a look at the third-class and the finely decorated first-class sleeping quarters. Adorned with burgundy colors, elegant décor and mahogany accents, the first-class suite was considered more luxurious than any hotel room on land in its time.

From young to old, visitors of all ages will enjoy this exhibit. There is also gift shop for those who want to take a piece of Titanic home with them. Visitors can purchase everything from T-shirts, stuffed animals, captain hats for kids, cups, key chains and much more. Hours of operation for both exhibits are daily from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. at a cost of \$32 per person. The last admission is sold at 9 p.m.

Dining out at TAO

Having previously experienced TAO Restaurant in New York City, our party had only one dining spot in mind for Las Vegas and that was the 40,000 square foot, \$20 million design-driven dining and entertainment complex TAO at The Venetian-Resort-Hotel Casino (www.tao-lasvegas.com). TAO opened in New York

City in 2000 and has retained its status as a hot spot, attracting celebrities and sports figures and catapulting the restaurant and lounge to iconic status. TAO Las Vegas, which debuted in 2005, is a multi-faceted and multi-story "Asian City" housing a restaurant, banquet facilities, ultra-lounge, nightclub and a seasonal beach.

The restaurant features a twenty-foot Buddha that "floats" peacefully above an infinity pool complete with Japanese Koi. It is a frequent hot spot for A-list celebrities and culinary connoisseurs

Corporate Executive Chef Ralph Scamardella showcases a menu incorporating culinary components from China, Japan and Thailand, along with a full sushi bar and perfectly paired cocktails to complement the authentic Asian cuisine. Signature dishes include offerings from sea, sky and land, including Chilean Sea Bass Satay with Wok Roasted Asparagus, a preparation of Peking Duck that consistently receives accolades and Kobe Beef Shabu Shabu along with a full sushi bar. TAO Beach offers an abbreviated version of TAO Asian Bistro's dinner menu throughout the day, as well as a brunch menu that boasts specialties like Sesame Berry Pancakes with tempura banana and mandarin butter, Fortune.

Service starts when the server delivers two china bowls, one empty, and the other filled with chilled edamame. The edamame is tossed with mustard oil, thinly sliced shallots, and black sesame seeds.

Our group considered this to be beyond exceptional, sampling a good portion of items on the menu. We recommend the following: Roasted Shishito Peppers with Yuzu; Edamame; Satay of Chilean Sea Bass, with Edamame Hijiki Salad (shitake mushroom plus seaweed); Spicy Tuna Tartare on Crispy Rice; Chinese Five Spice Short Ribs (beef); Salmon Sashimi, with Avocado and Crispy Onions and Sweet and Spicy Sesame Sauce; Shrimp Tempura; Spicy Tuna; Avocado and Soy Paper Roll; Yellowtail Sashimi, with Jalapeno and Ponzu Sauce; Crispy Snapper in the Sand; Vegetable Fried

Brown Rice; Spicy Hoi Yin Eggplant; a Giant Fortune Cookie (white and dark chocolate mousse); and Yuzu Sugar Dusted Doughnuts with a trio of dipping sauces. As for alcohol, consider the TAO-tini, Orchid and Sake flight. Our waiter Yorke convinced us to try the restaurant's three most popular sakes: DY-50; Drunken Snapper; and Demon Slayer. A big shout out to Assistant General Manager Name Eli Micaiah and his extraordinary team.

At TAO Beach, they offer a range of frozen cocktails, like the signature Par-Tee with Tito's, iced tea and frozen lemonade, in addition to updated classics like the Citrus Blossom Mimosa with Ketel One Citroen, sparkling yuzu sake and lemongrass.

Guests are transported from the City of Sin to the Pacific Rim with TAO's lush velvets and silks, waterfalls and century-old woods and stones. A Monk Bar is decorated with a wall of almost 300 hand carved monks and candles. TAO Beach's outdoor oasis features luxury cabanas, daybeds and a 30-foot bar within its 18,000 square foot space.

Since its opening, TAO Asian Bistro and Nightclub has garnered worldwide acclaim as the hottest restaurant, lounge and nightclub in Las Vegas. TAO Beach's debut in April 2007 increased capacity to over 60,000 square feet of space to host both indoor and outdoor events. The venue consists of seven full service bars, four fully equipped DJ booths, and multiple areas that can be utilized both separately and collectively for corporate parties, product launches, weddings, birthday celebrations, and bachelorette/bachelor parties, CD Release Parties, holiday receptions, movie premieres and more.

For reservations call 702- 388-8588 for special events email sales@taogroup.com. The restaurant, which is wheelchair accessible, is open Sunday through Thursday from 5 p.m. to midnight and Fridays and Saturdays from 5 p.m. to 1 a.m.

— With files from Ilana Spector

