

DISCARD

INDEPENDENT / TRANSPARENT / BALANCED / IN ISOLATION




**WAKE ME UP, FUCK
ME UP, AND FOR THE
LOVE OF GOD GET
ME A PROPER DRINK IN
A REAL BAR MADE
IN FRONT OF MY FACE
BY SOMEONE I DON'T
LIVE WITH.
AMEN.**





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WTF IS THIS?



INDEPENDENT. TRANSPARENT. BALANCED.

This issue of Discard was written and assembled in isolation. No fun pizza proofing parties, no catch ups over drinks, just text messages, awkward Zoom calls, and a lot of lock down anxiety.

We are - obviously - not professionals, so we've tried to stick to what we know best: drinks, bars and people smarter than us. No "lock-down guides", no insta drinks tutorials, no sourdough starters.

If you missed issue one - Discard is an independent, self-funded zine created by people working full time in hospitality.

We talk to people we look up to about things we don't normally see in trade publications in a balanced and transparent way and we hope you're as in to it as we are.

So - welcome to our second issue! Thanks for not hating the first one. Or maybe you did and that's cool too but unlucky, we're still here.

Drink the Kool-Aid, you'll like it.

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FAKE NEWS.



SPIRITED AWARDS 2020

The Tales of The Cocktail Spirited Award nominations are in for 2020 and Ryan Chetiyawardana continues to defy the odds with a nomination for his latest endeavor Silver Lyan, which was open for a grand total of six days of the nomination period. Top 10 within less than a week! Either America sucks or Ryan's just really, really good. Jury's out.

UNPRECEDENTED TIMES

As London cocktail bars continue to adapt their offering to accommodate home drinkers, a Shoreditch bar is rumored to be adding a coked up bartender, short aggressive doorman and a stale cigarette atomizer to their online store. A source reports that for an additional £10 they'll urinate on your toilet seat and vomit on your carpet. [REDACTED] was not available for comment.

RISHI SPEAKS OUT

This week Rishi Sunak revealed his bold new plan to jump start the hospitality industry and provide much needed aid to workers badly affected by the shut down. A spokesperson said "yeah honestly we'll be honest we didn't do it. We just don't give a shit about small businesses. We're dealing with Sports Direct and Wetherspoons right now. Our bad".

CLAP FOR OUR BARTENDERS

Boris Johnson is said to be considering plans to implement a mandatory 8pm applause every Saturday to show appreciation for our out-of-work bartenders. A No. 10 spokesperson said "they've been so brave; these people haven't been able to swing lights, rap along to Biggie, or take their body weight in shit cocaine for ages. They haven't shoved mezcal negronis down anyone's throats for three months now, it's time to show some support."



AMBASSADOR IGTV

The stats are in! A total of 15,000 brand ambassadors have taken to their Instagram accounts this past month to show the bar industry how to make drinks at home and we can confirm that absolutely no one gives a shit. Not a single person. One bartender commented “it’s like showing a carpenter how to cut wood, I just don’t get it”. Same, bartender. Same.

#EGGSALADROLL

Brown Forman UK have confirmed that they’ve adapted their advocacy program in light of the COVID-19 crisis. Their official #woodfordroll, #tennesseeroll and #NYroll hashtags will be replaced by #eggsaladroll, #homemadeveggiesausageroll and #bellyroll for the foreseeable.



2020 DRINKS TRENDS

A new trends report from Drinks International today looked in depth at the drinks we should be expecting to see more of in light of the home cocktail upswing. The new on-trend beverages include such delights as “That Beer I Found From That Party We Had One Time”, “I Dunno, I Think It’s Some Aniseed Thing From Cyprus”, and the ever popular “Jesus Alright If Malibu Is All That’s Left”. Julien DeFeral added “I predicted this in 2018 guys, I posted it in the LBA.”



1

JAKE O'BRIEN MURPHY

A **LITTLE** BIT
OF **EVERYTHING.**





A REGULAR DISCARD CONTRIBUTOR AND TOP THREE CONTESTANT FOR EVERYONE'S FAVOURITE NORTHERNER, JAKE HONED HIS CRAFT AT CALLOOH CALLAY AND THREE SHEETS BEFORE OPENING HIS OWN BAR IN LIVERPOOL - PRESENT COMPANY. HE RECENTLY MADE THE DECISION TO MOVE BACK TO LONDON IN PURSUIT OF HIS FIRST LOVE - BARTENDING - AND CAN BE FOUND IN A WHITE JACKET AT THE SAVOY'S AMERICAN BAR. ALTHOUGH RIGHT NOW HE'S PROBABLY AT HOME SPORTING HIS LOCKDOWN EMINEM BUZZ CUT, CHATTING TO HIS DOG.

I started working in a pub when I was 14, which probably explains why as an adult I look like I moisturise with sandpaper and diesel.

The pub was called The Quiet Man and I was the glass collector and from what I remember, I loved it. Outside of running betting slips to and from the bookmakers and skimming my small commission, I had very little work to do. I did learn how to do a full line clean before a pint ever even passed my lips, became pretty adept at intuiting the neon vocabulary of a fruit machine and can still to this day turn empty crisp packets into various elaborations on an origami zoo. **The Quiet Man is gone now. Replaced by a retirement home which looks a damn sight nicer than it did when I was in charge of the sweeping up. The majority of the residents are the same people who, at one time, called the pub their local. I've always thought that this was proof that the divine Author has a sense of humour. I didn't think I acquired any grand mystic truths about hospitality during my time as a glass collector but it's hard to overlook the fact that The Quiet Man set the dominoes in motion.**

I've worked in some capacity behind the bar ever since. I flirted with the idea of being a school teacher for a while. I studied Philosophy, Religion, Ethics and Theology at university for almost three terms.

All the while subsidising my scholastic life with tips, late nights and bad fan-pouring. I didn't set out to be a bartender but eventually, it seemed like a better deal than being harangued about Papal Infallibility and exactly why we let virgins dressed as Dumbledore dunk toddlers in a big gold sink to a soundtrack of pensioners humming. These questions proved too weighty for somebody so academically impaired. So I left the communion wafers and textbooks of higher education for a life of set-ups, breakdowns and everything in between. So what do I have to show for it? What have I learned in ten years of ducking the death-by-water-cooler small talk that surely comes as a symptom of having a 'real' job? Well in these unsure times and mainly due to the fact I've finished Tiger King and meditated sufficiently on my own Carole Baskin conspiracies, I've had my fill of time to think about it.

Like most people, I had to earn my stripes as a barback. I spent eighteen months in the foggy anonymity of the glass wash. Firing out hot dogs, stocking fridges, dead-lifting ice buckets, plunging glasses, mopping sick, dabbing wee and pretty much dispensing of all manner of the kaleidoscopic evacuations that a drunk human is capable of. I was responsible for keeping the ship afloat from below deck and to do so I was required to move as a whirlwind of orchestrated frenzy. Keeping the necessary plates

spinning was where I first came into contact with the mounting pressure of impending disaster a busy bar brings. **To this day I still revel in the frenetic pace of service. As a bar back I was part of the machinery that drove the team forward and it was probably as hard as I've ever worked. You should always thank the barback. They are the foundational structure of every great bar. It is tacit knowledge that they efficiently process and dispatch the multitudes of nonsense a shift volleys their way.**

They arrive first and they leave last. Even so, almost every barback I have ever worked with is willing to pitch in and drag the dispense bartender out of the crossfire of the Saturday night onslaught by jumping on and knocking out drinks. They are no doubt working harder than you, for less recognition and certainly less pay; hoiking around barrels in a cellar on a busy weekend while knowing you will no doubt be back again that very same evening requires a physicality that balancing a White Lady does not.

By the time I graduated to bartending, rye whiskey was in vogue and I would shoot it from between my thumb and pinkie finger which made me look about as cool and urbane as a Casio scientific calculator. I had acquired a collection of snapbacks and ironic chicken scratch tattoos which I wore as medals of honour in place of a personality. Dive Bars are carousels of hedonism



with sexually suggestive toilet graffiti and Jagerbombs. At their worst, they smell like a specifically antisocial strand of a yeast infection and there's a high risk of walking into the blunt end of a punch. Still, you can always get a cold beer and dance on a table with a retired dinner lady. At their best, they're frothy bastions of counter-culture, where pomposity and pretense melt away at the door. I wish someone had told me that.

As I progressed as a bartender I won a few cocktail competitions and made a name in the most inconsequential way possible, by being the variations on *disagreeable expletive* "who won that thing". **There is nothing more vulgar than someone as chronically mediocre as I was walking around with a Mighty Joe Young sized ego. That is to say, I was a bombastic arsehole with a bar blade. As I found out, you can know all of the phenols per part per million product jargon you want - it doesn't make you a very good bartender. The most pertinent bartending lesson is 'Don't Be a Dick'.** Thankfully, I've always had the good fortune of having talented colleagues. Working in a Dive Bar afforded me the opportunity to observe and establish the core tools that I use in hosting to this day. I just had to stop pontificating about different Espadin mezcals. Eventually, I was dragged to the realisation that to be interesting to your guest first you had to be

interested in your guest. Nobody comes to a bar, especially a dive, for a humanities lecture. They come to have a good time and I realised the better bartenders around me, the ones that people came back to see, were attentive to that fact and not, as I was, trying to get them to sip room temperature amaro. It's a clichè but it's an important lesson to learn; bartending is fractionally about drinks and predominantly about people.

High volume bars are tough. I took to Callooh Callay about as naturally as the Pope takes to dry humping. Making that many drinks, in that amount of time and not combusting takes a considered mental effort. To succeed in a high volume venue you have to take stock of your own shortcomings. You need to learn quickly because the engine doesn't stop for anyone. My shortcomings pointed to the fact I just wasn't very good. The mechanics of bartending are simple enough. It's moving liquid around until it's both cold and pink enough that people want to pay for it. Mastering the specifics is a matter of controlled repetition until the movement is so practiced it becomes habitual. Which I admit sounds about as sexy as Ronseal. The whole thing is one big rehearsal. Like anything else worth doing, getting better at bartending is a frantic paddle against the current until eventually the culmination of your forward momentum drives you through the challenges. There's

this prevailing sentiment that the bartender is engaged in some kind of alchemical art form. That's the hocus pocus mysticism of the mini-peg mixologist. Look, I'm not saying there's anything wrong with fixing a piece of Lego to the side of a coupette with wood glue, as long as the drink is tasty. Basically, all of the powdered sugar and flash paper in the world won't retroactively balance a bad drink for you. If you jam a Catherine Wheel onto an undercooked risotto, it's still a shit dinner with a cheap trick stapled to the plate. The same goes for the assumption you need to be in possession of technicolour taste buds. Because you drink a niche distillate that is used to run tractors in its country of origin doesn't mean that you have a refined palate. It means you've got nothing else interesting to talk about. Why would you want to be a mixologist? What does the word bartender not adequately convey? To me, a bartender means hard work, long hours, lime juice in cuts and an unerring dedication to other people. It is with an immense feeling of pride that I tell people what I do. A mixologist, on the other hand, is someone who plays in the dress-up box of their own inadequacy because they can't come to terms with telling their parents they dropped out of university. It's a great job if you let it be, you don't need to cheapen it with bells and whistles. Working in a high volume bar like Callooh

shone the floodlights on my various deficiencies as a bartender. Thankfully it also provided the apparatus with which I could fix them. It just took a lot of bad drinks, slow ticket times and very accommodating colleagues.

Remember when Chris Moore first served that Champagne Pina Colada and literally everyone was like "I could have done that."? Well, you didn't. But I agree, you certainly could have. Or when Marcis Dzelzanis did... Well, when Marcis did anything. I'm pretty sure that he could stand next to a jar of Bovril and by the sheer virtue of it being in close enough proximity to Marcis's immense talent we'd spend the summer drinking "Bovril + Pine". Making drinks and creating drinks are two very different skills. The assumption is that a firm knowledge of the classics will invariably lead you to the sacred tool kit of cocktail creation. Which is marginally true and acts as the prologue that leads into the primary narrative. Our senses of taste and smell that together make up our perception of flavour are registered in the most ancient parts of our brains. Flavour is a centrally personal experience. Teaching someone how to taste is like teaching someone how to listen or be ironic. From a barback, I was taught about drinks in a strictly theoretical way. By that catchall metric of parts. You'll know it all too well. Which works fine by broad strokes but it doesn't allow much space for personal development.

Working at Three Sheets put all of this under the microscope for me. I have a portion of my brain the size of a chicken nugget that is specialised in decoding the shades of sensory information and I was relying on second-hand information to be creative. That's like trying to paint over someone's shoulder. My drinks were as complicated as a WiFi password because I had never stretched my legs in that kind of personally informed creativity. The drinks at Three Sheets hinge on a very simple premise. Make it better. That's all it takes. One spark to start the engine and you're off. Flavour is an individual matter. I began to realise to get better I had to get involved, it didn't matter if I broke some rules or if it wasn't short or swimming in Maraschino. The equipment was rattling around

my skull, all I needed to do was ask questions, stop taking things as a given because "that is how it has always been done". In principle, that lesson sounds easy but it takes a lot of discipline to make something as simple as a "French 75". **Also, if you want to make drinks like Three Sheets, the formula is easy enough. A double measure of something clarified, topped with soda and garnished with a leaf. Then play LCD Soundsystem.**

Nearly ten years and two thousand words on the things I have learned as I've stumbled through bartending like a disorientated Chuckle Brother with a bucket on his foot and it all boils down to: Be nice to people, don't get a big head, ask questions and make tasty things.



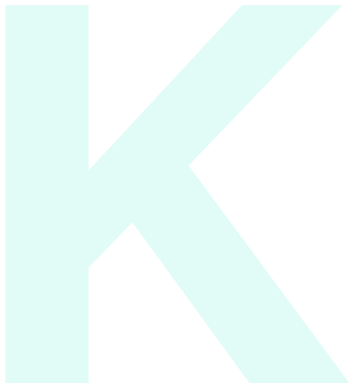
BY JAKE.

2

DISCARD INTERVIEW

KELSEY
RAMAGE





KELSEY WORKED AS A SOMM IN VANCOUVER BEFORE PACKING IT ALL UP FOR LONDON IN 2015. SHE MADE HER NAME AS A BARTENDER AT THE MULTI-AWARD WINNING DANDELYAN WHILST JUGGLING TRASH TIKI - A PROJECT THAT TOOK HER FAR AND WIDE PROMOTING THE ANTI-WASTE MOVEMENT WITH PARTNER IAIN GRIFFITHS. LAST YEAR KELSEY RETURNED HOME TO CANADA TO OPEN HER FIRST BAR - SUPERNOVA BALLROOM. AN INTRO FOR A BARTENDER WHO NEEDS EXACTLY NONE.

DISCARD: **Kelsey!** Has it always been your goal to own your own bar? Did you have a career plan in your mind, or did it happen organically?

K: It has always been a goal, since before I came to London actually. I was speaking with my Mom yesterday actually and she mentioned 'remember when you wanted to open that coffee shop?' (I did not remember). The bars I've wanted to open have changed and adapted over the years but I've always wanted to open something.

D: You've spoken previously about the challenges of opening a disco bar in Toronto's financial district - how did you adjust?

K: We didn't completely rebrand, but we just realised a few things about the area that people expect and to be honest, were things that we didn't think of at first.

Firstly - The after-work rush comes right at 5pm and people are HUNGRY. So we expanded our food menu, sunk a lot of time and effort into getting the food right, which means people stick around for a few more drinks. It was easily done and I was really stoked on the new food menu. We got Silo's Blair Hammond to come out from London (he's from Toronto originally) to do the new menu for us, very happy we did so!

Next - It was time to flip the cocktail menu anyway, so we did

this simultaneously with the food menu, both of which breathed new life into the space and the staff (although it was an intense week for everyone ha!) and garnered us a little media attention as well. We did the cocktail menu Dandelyan style, staff members all worked on a different aspect of the drink and it really brought the team together and gave us all a bit more energy to bring to each shift.

From there, it was just a matter of getting a few of the tables moved around and booking DJs on the weekends. The financial district is a weird place on Saturdays, and Supernova is a massive space so it's really necessary to have programming on the weekends to make sure the energy is right.

D: We know diversity and representation is important to you, how did you put this into practise when hiring your team?

K: We have a pretty small team. The two bartenders I hired for the opening just happened to be perfect timing for us - they're younger, more junior bartenders and both women, which was awesome. There are a lot of female bartenders here in Toronto, but when I put an ad up looking for more staff I definitely saw that women are underrepresented. I made a very conscious effort in the beginning not to hire men, as we had a lot of applicants come through with a good deal of experience. I specifically wanted to

hire women and LGBTQ folk as a majority so hiring Madi and Lauren was a conscious (and easy!) decision. Fortunately, I have not had to hire anyone I didn't already know, timing has just worked out and in December we had Graham join the team as well. There are for sure not enough POC represented in cocktail bars here, I haven't begun to tackle why that is, but it's for sure an issue and hopefully something that, at the end of the closures, we can be a part of changing.

D: A lot of what you do is FUN, which is oft neglected, do you think this is an important part of what you do?

K: OMG YES - I'm so sick of quiet boring cocktail bars. When I go out for drinks I want music, energy, atmosphere and the right people - something delicious to drink is a bonus! I think when I'm coming up with the concept for a bar, it's musically driven first and everything else seems to fall into place around that. At Supernova we place a lot of time and training not on technique (although that's part of it) but on how to keep energy up, how to explain things in a way that makes people feel comfortable and welcome, and also how service changes when we've got DJs in and are throwing a big party. Man, I can't wait to throw another rager LOL.

D: What challenges has COVID-19

presented for you at Supernova Ballroom? How are businesses surviving in Canada?

K: All good, to be honest I am pretty concerned right now. I think the financial district is going to be one of the hardest hit areas as many businesses in that area are banks, Google offices, etc - businesses whose employees can work from home, which is something we're going to see continue after quarantine has been lifted. We're going to see a seismic shift in what hospitality looks like after this, and while we have a big capacity (250) which helps when reopening, standards dictate that we can only fill to 50% - there's just not going to be enough people around to fill that. The Canadian government has been pretty good - bailouts in the form of interest-free debt to small business and we've been lucky enough not to be kicked out of our space by our landlords. As I'm writing this though, I've heard that three iconic music venues (one had been open 83 years, another for 30) and one cocktail bar in Toronto are not reopening. I'm trying to stay positive but also, realistically it's not really looking great right now.

D: How do you and Iain work as a team - do you approach things similarly, or do you bring different things to the table, or a bit of both?

K: LOL - sometimes we'll be texting each other about a drink and come up with the same ingredients at the same time, but I think that's because

we work with similar flavour profiles for our drinks. Operationally we're polar opposites, I think I probably am more calculated and pay attention to financials and details, where he is brand driven, hyper creative. There's overlap both ways but usually when one of us drops the ball somewhere, the other can pick up the slack. We work really well together. Sam Ross actually made a hilarious comparison when speaking about business partnerships - you never want all your partners to be arguing about whether to put sherry, vermouth or white wine in a drink - someone needs to be looking at the books, someone needs to be motivating staff etc. etc. So now whenever we are coming at an issue and arguing about something trivial we call it a sherry vs vermouth situation and one of us just walks away to work on something else.

D: You've travelled a lot with Trash Tiki and with your various projects! Wh cities/countries/markets have impressed or surprised you the most?

K: I was actually crazy impressed with Sydney, Australia. Obviously with the attention that Melbourne gets internationally I figured it would be the biggest city for drinks but I was impressed with the creativity, use of local ingredients and hospitality in so many of the bars in Sydney - lots of new stuff opening as well so I think it was an exciting time for the city when we were there.

I also really love Guadalajara, there

were loads of new little bars opening up last time I was there and the food and hospitality is obviously amazing. Jesus Hernandez (jr) of Altos Tequila & Abraham Delgado's new bar Matilde Mi Amor just opened too so am excited to go back after this and check it out. God I hope they're OK and make it through.

D: What are you most looking forward to doing, once we can all get back to work?

K: I just want to throw a fucking party, I know this sounds super irresponsible right now but I think we all just need a big fat fucking rainbow glitter disco, man. Lots of hugs and high fives and Champagne popping fucking everywhere.

D: What advice would you give to a young bartender starting out, and to someone who wants to open their own place?

Young Bartender - put in the time, do your work, no one else is going to do it for you. Find a mentor! Best possible thing I could have done is seek out and surround myself with people that inspire me that I can learn from. But, this needs to be paired with your own research, learning and knowing

that you're never 'done' with all that shit. Opening a Bar - I think everyone knows it's hard work haha, long hours, etc. etc. it's also hella stressful - it might fail, I constantly worry about money LOL. Work and life have just become one in the same. I wouldn't have it any other way though. I fucking love my work, I love my staff and the community that Supernova has shown me exists here in Toronto. Also, surround yourself with people - staff, partners etc that are as motivated as you are, feeding off people's energy will get you through the rough days for sure. I couldn't have done it without the staff and folks I surrounded myself with.

D: What does success look like to you?

K: Happiness, financial freedom, and a sense of community that your platform brings together.

D: Dessert Island Drink?

K: Three Dots and a Dash...

D: Three things on your rider?

K: Man, I'm not that cool... Miller High Life and a prep space and I'm good.



BY KELSEY.

3



RYAN CHETIYAWARDANA NEW IDEAS



R

ALSO KNOWN AS MR LYAN, RYAN CHETIYAWARDANA IS RENOWNED FOR EXCELLING AT - WELL - BASICALLY EVERYTHING. CAPTAIN AT DANDELYAN AND WHITE LYAN (RIP), LYANESS, SUPER LYAN, CUB AND SILVER LYAN, RYAN HAS TWO PUBLISHED BOOKS, MR LYAN STUDIO, BOTTLED COCKTAILS, A MASTERCLASS TUTORIAL, A LOAD OF CRYSTAL PLATES AND A CAT CALLED BATMAN. THE CHERRY ON TOP? HE HAPPENS TO BE A REALLY NICE GUY.

I remember being at art college and a peer turning around and saying “well, it’s all been done before anyway – there’s nothing new”. I remember being in conflict with the statement – I get the same pang when I hear bartenders say that we should learn from chefs as they’re more advanced than the bartending world, or that it’ll always be more important as “people need to eat, they don’t need to drink”. Or when people rank and compare personal issues. Often I feel a visceral retraction from these statements – and not just because I enjoy playing devil’s advocate, but because I fundamentally disagree with them.

What is it to create something new, and in fact, is it still possible? I’ll dispense with the tautology that every event is new – each nuanced detail of a complete picture dictates that any event – however small – is never repeated. That seems juvenile when talking about a creative world. I believe not only is there plenty of scope to create something new, it is something we need as creatures – and as industries. But I mainly want to challenge the fact that creating something new is something that belongs to “creatives” who go into isolated rooms and turn a blank canvas into Guernica. It is something you need to build structures around – and systems for – to enable everyone to be creative.

There's a growing propensity across industry, society and politics to fetishise the past and believe in the good ol' days. Not only is this an ostrich-like reaction to change that will only leave you behind, it is not reflective of what we need as a species. We get bored of monotony, and it's the reason we develop office pests, pranksters and destructive habits – every human needs diversity and stimulus that's not saccharine and on repeat. But we also see through falsity very quickly, and again with a tautology, it's not new if it's not authentic and honest. Nostalgia was originally identified as a psychological defect – a sanitised yearning for a false history and faux forgotten happier time. Of course it can be used to create common ground and reference shared perspective – especially in our world; the sense of smell, our primary tool in consumable stuffs, is the most powerful driver for memory association.

Risk, self-awareness, empathy, confidence, sensitivity all play roles in innovation and the choice to create something new. But frustration, boredom, fear, necessity all have spurned their own shunts; war has led to many of humankind's most bold innovations. But most don't channel each of these tools, or don't take the time to become aware of our personal prejudices. I used to talk about fear and failure (instead of fear of failure)

being important learning tools, but they are part of a suite of things we can use to create new perspectives when we take the opportunity to take stock of our own shortcomings.

So where does this leave things? Well just as putting a wig on your cat does not make a new (yet hilarious) creature, making your Negroni with mezcal doesn't create a "new classic" – but neither should it stop the path of new creations. Using nature's genetic creative tools (addition, deletion, substitution, etc) does give you variety, but we should be engaging much more cognitively not just throwing shit at the wall.

The part I wished people copied from Dandelyan and Lyaness was the creative process. We didn't have fancy equipment, we didn't have a crazy set of ingredients no one else could get – we just put in a framework to aim to do something different. The choice to not navel gaze, and the choice to empower the team and use their personal and shared perspectives gave us a whole new suite of ideas to look at, and each was different to what Iain, Alex, James and I – or whoever – would have come up with ourselves. It gave us scope to create something new as we chose to take that path, and because we used ideas not from within the common, repeated sphere. It's a methodology I am immensely proud of.

So newness isn't a fallacy. And neither is it mythical and unattainable, nor something to dismiss, undermine and bury – it is something that is fundamental to not only our industry, but us as creatures. Putting in structure to explore it more fully, by taking stock of your hangups personally and as a business, and by empowering your staff to have a

voice, this will all lead to a wave of newness. It will help your business, and your staff retention, but it will also help us give stability to our industry by forcing us not to keep looking back from a world that's changed. It will stop us from believing the hype and creating things for our guests' needs, not for an insular audience in amongst our slice of our peer group.



BY RYAN.

4

A-K HADA

THE IMPORTANCE OF MENTORS





AN ATLANTA NATIVE AND FORMER DANCER, A-K HONED HER CRAFT AT PDT, BEGINNING AS A HOST AND ENDING HER SIX YEAR STINT AS THEIR HEAD BARTENDER. LAST YEAR SHE MADE THE MOVE TO DAVE ARNOLD AND DON LEE'S EXISTING CONDITIONS AS THEIR GENERAL MANAGER, A ROLE SHE SHARES WITH KARIN STANLEY. A-K REPRESENTED NYC IN THE DIAGEO WORLD CLASS FINALS IN 2017 AND LIVES IN BROOKLYN WITH HER PARTNER AND THEIR DOG DAPHNE.

I am what you might call a millennial bartender. My first cocktail bar job was at PDT, where Jim Meehan hired me. I started on January 1st 2014 - a few years after it had won every award known to mankind, after a league of tenured mixologists had passed through its ranks, and its power of influence had long since been established.

My first spirit tasting ever was with Hans Reisetbauer himself and his entire portfolio. My second was with Ron Cooper and all of his green bottles. I know, in a word, SPOILT. I've come up in the industry in a flashy time of cocktail apps and social media, of bar shows, awards and best of lists. Who'd have thought 10 years ago that we would be bitching about Stanley Tucci's shaken Negroni when 10 years ago bars had to pull teeth to get a guest to drink a French 75.

I started writing this piece on the day that Pegu Club announced it would not reopen following the COVID-19 quarantine. It was such a sobering loss for our industry. My feed that day was flooded with heartbroken dedications and commemorative pictures. Jim eulogized that Pegu Club's opening team was the most competitive, talented group of bartenders that he'd ever worked with under one roof at the same time, likening it's leaders to Michael Jordan era Chicago Bulls. How exhilarating it

must have been to sit at that bar or to stand behind it even. I can imagine the spark of newness in the air as you walk into the room, to know that you are witnessing the game change in real time. The phrase, “end of an era” is tossed around here and there, but with this closure in this time that we are all living, that saying feels much more tangible.

When I first started at PDT, I had no idea there was a bar called Pegu Club or anything of its significance. I had made a gut decision after spending about a year and a half working at a restaurant in Soho that the food and beverage scene seemed a viable option to try to make a career out of. I didn’t know anything about booze or cocktails. I was pretty much a blank slate and felt completely thrown into the deep end. Jim showed me the books to read, the bars to visit, let me in on his tastings, talked me through the politics of his meetings. He never really fed me the answers, but always showed me where to look.

In my readings, a certain framework of modern cocktail history (can you call it history if its like thirty years old?) in New York seemed pretty clear. Dale Degroff made his name at the Rainbow Room, where he worked with and mentored Audrey Saunders, who I read was so enthralled by a seminar he gave that she offered to work for free in exchange for training. She then

went on to open Pegu Club where she hired and trained a company of bartenders hoping to revive the golden age of cocktails. Years later, they would in turn open their own bars and most of them we now regard as our industry giants. There seemed to be a pretty evident chain between mentor, mentee, and new cocktail bar. Fast forward 10 or 15 years and you see what we have now, a world awash with cocktail bars and mixology lounges.

I was thrilled to learn all this of course, because it was unbeknownst to me at the time of my interview that I would be working at one of these heritage bars with the bartender grandchild of King Cocktail himself. I had never before given much thought to the origins of a bar or restaurant and felt privileged to be working at one with such a significant story. Jim had been holding daily photoshoots at the bar before shifts for a then new PDT cocktail app, so everyday I brought a notebook to write down every ingredient I didn’t know, every spec, every bartender and historian. I remember thinking, this is what it’s going to take to be successful in this business, memorising all of this “stuff” so when a guest asks I don’t look like an idiot. Jim was a diligent and hard teacher.

About six months in, I was at work and going through a really rough experience in my personal life. He

asked light heartedly how I was, and it all came gushing out. He immediately sat down and talked with me about it like a friend for a couple hours. I was completely embarrassed that he had put both our work aside for my tears, but I remember one thing he said to me distinctly.

He said that he felt like it was no coincidence that he became more successful in his professional life when he became happier in his personal life. So as my boss and mentor, it mattered to him that I was happy. I was so touched by his kindness and that sentiment. It made me respect him that much more. Jim had taught me so much, but as I reflect on it now I see that I really embraced him as my mentor when I started considering him as my friend.

Mentorship gets thrown around these days with a lot of other buzzwords, hospitality, sustainability, education, etc. We hear them, we talk about them, but I don't think we often enough stop to really take in their true meaning. Does the biggest backbar and the best technique mean the most hospitable? What about an expensively designed menu and a groovy playlist? The most comfortable bar stools? What does it mean to take care of a stranger? It's wonderful that we are having more conversations about wasting less. We should absolutely be throwing less shit

away. But what does it really mean to be sustainable in an industry that consumes? Education and mentorship surely go hand in hand with a lot of overlap. But the distinction to me is that education pertains to learning and mentorship involves growth. To teach something is to pass down knowledge, teacher to pupil. But the relationship between a mentor and mentee is much more personal. How was it that almost all of Audrey's graduates went on to succeed and lead themselves? The key to success is not as I had thought early on, to learn the most. The key is perhaps to care the most. My take away is that a mentor doesn't just teach, they inspire.

Our industry would in no way be the same now without Audrey and her team, a case for mentorship if there ever was one. The key words to focus on there are, her team. When we speak about mentorship, often we only focus on the role of the mentor but not the equally important role of the mentee. Mentorship is not a top down system, but rather in my opinion a symbiotic relationship. As I spoke earlier of my relationship with Jim, he was certainly there for me as a teacher and leader, but I also whole heartedly stepped up. He spoke of the ferocity of his coworkers at Pegu. The closest thing I can relate to this would be working with the Cocktail Apprentices at Tales of The Cocktail. A lot of my friends

have given me various levels of grief over the years for taking two weeks out of summer to volunteer hard labor instead of enjoying myself in Nola and getting paid work. But the reason I go back year after year (except this year, fuck you Coronavirus!) is for the energy of sixty strangers coming together in one room, each one more eager than the next, ready to absorb and problem solve, lead and follow. There's a high of accomplishment and ambition that you don't always feel in your bar at home in your daily routines. It's refreshing to say the least to be surrounded by people all wanting to take the system they've learned, put it to use, and find ways to make it better. Mentorship obviously doesn't happen in just two weeks, but the relationships that we form there have certainly led to it. What the CAPs and the Pegu opening team had in common, is that they had something to prove. Half the battle is as they say showing up. Somewhere down the line as the diaspora of our industry has spread and knowledge is so readily available, I feel we've forgotten that a relationship is give and take. As mentees we can't be waiting with our hands open for wisdom to be dropped in our palms. If we only define mentorship as education then we are cutting our industry's future off at its knees. Two global pandemics have already started to do that for us, so let's step up and cling to those mentors we can call

friends.

We have to accept now that our industry is finding itself in somewhat of a similar position as Pegu Club when it first opened, a rebirth. Months into a global shutdown, weeks after a long overdue eruption for systemic equality, and after loads of speculation, the fact is that we don't know what our professional futures hold other than a lot of change. We have been forced to either take a hard look in the mirror or be condemned to our willful ignorance. It's very evident with most media as we scroll through our Instagram feeds (because let's face it, that's about 90% of what occupies our time now) that at the start of quarantine, the brands and establishments that ruled our industry for the last however many years were still sticking to what was seemingly most important, the best Quarantini spec, drink trends of 2020, Stanley Tucci's damn Negroni. After the most recent Black Lives Matter protests, the same brands have pivoted to statements of solidarity, yet to be seen if they come to fruition. So once all of the talk and conjecture has fallen away and we are forced to really evolve, what we're left with is the underlying reality that our industry is above all a human one. What does mentorship look like once we strip away all the factoids and education that we once confused it with? Additionally,

who are those mentors that we prop up and mentees that we foster and do they reflect the expansive future that we want to see? What I've most dearly gained and continue to gain from Jim and all the others I consider my mentors was a sense of integrity, a sense of self. They've empowered me just as much as they've looked me in the face and told me that I'm better than that. We won't know what bars will look like in six months, but what we can hold on to is the knowledge that to be the best bartender we can be, we should start by trying to be the best person we can be. We need this kind of mentorship now more than ever before.

It feels like a lifetime ago, but this year I was asked to be a judge for some Spirited Awards with Tales of The Cocktail. If there was any doubt for the necessity of awards

during the first global pandemic, after the most recent upheaval they seem laughably futile. However as I reflect back, the category I had the most difficulty with was Best Bar Mentor. The list was stacked with dozens of people I look up to, that have made huge impacts on their communities and whose accomplishments speak for themselves. I have to admit to being sentimental, thinking of all the awards how significant this one is, and how at a loss I was trying to narrow it down. **I found myself asking what kind criteria should I be looking for? Is it the number of mentees that determines the best? The success of their protégées? Dedication to activism? But if the true meaning of the title is as I consider it, hugely personal, then how do you judge the best mentor? How do you judge a best friend?**



BY A-K.

5

SLY AUGUSTIN

RE-OPENING
TRAILER
HAPPINESS



S

EVERYONE'S FAVOURITE WEST LONDONER, SLY WAS A REGULAR AT TRAILER HAPPINESS BEFORE HE TOOK IT OVER IN 2012, WHICH IS A LIFETIME IN BAR YEARS. A RUM AND TIKI ADVOCATE AND FORMER PROMOTER AND DJ, SLY RUNS A TIGHT, BUT NOTORIOUSLY FUN SHIP AND CAN USUALLY BE FOUND WAXING LYRICAL ON HIS FAVOURITE SPIRIT, HOLDING COURT IN NOTTING HILL, OR INTRODUCING YOU TO EVERYONE AND EVERYBODY BECAUSE, IF YOU DIDN'T KNOW, EVERYONE KNOWS SLY.

My life is a nice little shrine to chaos. My mind is never able to sit with a single thought quite long enough as I constantly struggle to maintain focus - I'm too easily distracted, and my attention is almost always divided, I always have 100 things to do, and I'll attempt to do 50 of them simultaneously.

Before lockdown I was constantly traveling, collaborating, celebrating, and often failing at the most basic levels of self-care. There is never enough time in the day and like many who work in hospitality, I'm always a little tired.

This stark reality meant that when I was approached to write a piece for Discard in the midst of a COVID-19 re-opening and minor refurb of Trailer Happiness, my initial response was "yes, absolutely I will do that".

"What is dead may never die..."

This Game of Thrones reference often pops into my head when I think about my journey into hospitality. I took over Trailer Happiness in late June of 2012 (a couple of weeks after it had officially closed forever) alongside Richard Hunt and Paul McFadyen, in what now feels like the hospitality equivalent of an arranged marriage. The doors were officially re-opened on the fourth of July (spooky) on what we named Trailer's Independence Day.

I didn't really know what to expect

when I bought Trailer, but it's fair to say I entered the bar owner game at the deep end, with Trailer finding itself underwater (both literally and figuratively) more than once. I would liken Trailer Happiness being my first bar to training for a marathon by actually running a marathon. Luckily, I had much of the hospitality industry cheering me on (and handing me bottles) from the side lines. Despite the early struggles, I am forever grateful for the support and guidance provided to me by so many wonderful human beings.

It is an incredible feeling to own your favourite bar, but it's not enough for a bar to be great only during service. For all the fun, laughter, and amazing nights, those first six months can best be described as sunny with a strong chance of shit showers. In order to convey the self-destructive nature of those early days I'll need you to imagine Trailer as a Cookie Monster who is also made out of cookies. Trailer Happiness 2.0 unofficially died in January of 2013.

It's a testament to this great bar that it was able to maintain altitude with a single spluttering engine long enough for me to start patching up the fuel leaks. Since then Trailer has gone on to reach new heights (see what I did there) picking up an assortment of shiny things and nice words. At no point though did I allow these

successes to create a false sense of comfort - once you have worked in hospitality long enough, you'll know that "WTF!!" never strays too far from your door.

"Hello Mr Crisis, I've been expecting you".

It's said there is nothing more certain in life than death and taxes. For a bar you can add debt and crisis.

Being an independent bar owner with bad credit (the national average is bad so it's a good indication of how fucked we are) is difficult, but over time you begin to consider 'crisis' as just another unavoidable variable. You start to allocate a percentage of GP to manage imminent, unavoidable bullshit. Whether it's a car driving into the side of your building, a power surge that blows up all the tills, fridges, and lights (on New Year's Eve), or an accidentally placed order for 200 litres of lime juice - you are always braced for impact.

When COVID-19 showed up however, it was different. This felt like the first true crisis I'd faced as a bar owner. Human life, livelihoods, and my business all at once were in danger, and much like the puzzle of the chicken, the fox, and the corn (God I'm old), there seemed to be no obvious way to keep all three safe at the same time. Boris dithered, bar owners were encouraged to fall on their swords, and by the time the Prime

Minister finally decided to officially close the hospitality sector most of us had already made that decision for ourselves.

What really came as a surprise to me was the realisation of just how fragile and financially exposed our industry is as a whole, as we either collectively placed our virtual GoFundme hats on the floor and petitioned for coin or resigned ourselves to our fates and went out of business. I found myself asking how it was that I had allowed my business to be so vulnerable, so one dimensional? I promised that if I was given the chance I would learn and re-build. Better and stronger.

The COVID-19 Pivot

The first weeks of COVID-19 lockdown brought a strange calmness. It was the first time I'd stopped moving since I'd climbed into the hospitality hamster wheel in 2012. It was the first time I'd had a chance to really sit down and take a serious look at what I was doing with the business. I sat in an empty basement bar looking up towards the front door and eventually noticed how dirty the stairs were. A decision to clean them that day lead to a three-month no-budget refurb of Trailer with the aid of a couple hundred YouTube videos and the absolute heroes who helped me pull up old carpet and cut wood in straight lines. All of a sudden, the four to six weeks it takes stuff to arrive

from China wasn't an issue, and truth be told I found I enjoyed interior design almost as much as I enjoy rum.

At the same time, I was selling merchandise from my house and making regular trips to the post office, sending packages all over the globe. As well as allowing me to pay my team during those first few months, it also allowed me to maintain a connection to the bar's community. Indeed, it allowed me to grow it. Another strangely positive side-effect of the pandemic.

The tiny refurb was a useful distraction that allowed me to work safely away from everyone, and also made me see the bar being closed as a positive. When else would I get to do this work? Working on the bar reminded me of my complete lack of focus as I'd walk from the bathrooms to the kitchen to grab something and end up working on the back bar. This haphazard approach would almost always create more work in the long run. As much as I was learning about the mechanics of the building, I was also learning a lot about myself and the issues with my workflow.

The refresh was "completed" about ten seconds before we opened the doors on the fourth of July and the feedback has made the extended time I spent around toilet basins and ten year old carpet feel totally worthwhile. I now know every

single inch of Trailer Happiness in a way I didn't before, and for the first time in eight years I feel more of an owner than a custodian. I think it's fair to say that every bar owner has gotten to know what their bars are made of during this lockdown. I've been in awe of and fully inspired by some of the genius moves made by bars across the globe since this pandemic hit; we have all had to adapt and re-invent to some degree and regardless of success or failure, we are all irrevocably changed. It's been a long shitty road but being forced to understand the strengths and weaknesses of your business may ultimately prove to be a blessing.

The Future of Trailer Happiness

Before the lockdown I had met my landlord once back in 2012 with Paul and Richard. I didn't speak to him much that day, but I have a vivid memory of his eyes glossing over as he listened to excited plans for the bar. It was as if he was struggling to understand peasant dialect. I've only dealt with his management company since, but the COVID-19 lockdown forced me to track him down and

hand deliver a letter to his offices, which are also on Portobello Road (he owns a lot of Portobello). He responded that same day, and while he was not about to forgo his due rent, he has been reasonable, and conversations have opened up potential opportunities that I would never have conceived; i've bought back a little piece of our outside space during market days and the "Ledge Bar" we built on the top of the stairs for takeaway drinks has regularly outperformed the basement.

The bar is currently looking sexy as fuck, if I do say so myself. It may remain a staple of Notting Hill for another twenty years or it may fail in the first year post-COVID-19. We do this together. The idea of failure no longer scares me. Bring it on, I was built for this.

And to be clear, Trailer Happiness never re-opened.

Trailer Happiness died on the 18th March 2020.

On the fourth of July 2020 I opened Trailer Happiness.

What is dead may never die.

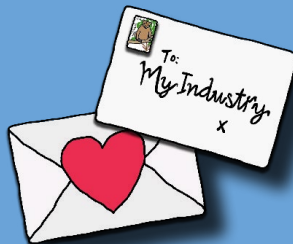


BY SLY.

6

**PAIGE
AUBORT**

**A LOVE
LETTER TO
MY INDUSTRY**



P

SYDNEY BARTENDER PAIGE BEGAN HER HOSPITALITY CAREER AS A WAITRESS. FAST FORWARD A DECADE AND SHE'S WORKED IN SOME OF THE CITY'S BEST BARS AS BOTH A BARTENDER AND A MANAGER, MOST RECENTLY AT THE WORLD FAMOUS BULLETIN PLACE. IN 2015 PAIGE LAUNCHED COLEMAN'S ACADEMY - AN EVENTS AN EDUCATION PLATFORM CREATED FOR WOMEN IN HOSPITALITY. HER PLANS FOR WORLD DOMINATION HAVE BEEN PUT ON PAUSE BUT MAKE NO MISTAKE - IT'S HAPPENING.

It's been a decade long love.

Longer really, but let's not show our age.

When we first met, people talked shit about you, my parents didn't approve, friends laughed between themselves as they clasped hands and intertwined their fingers with nine to five day jobs and overwhelming student debt. But you lit something inside of me. You saw me for me. You saw the scattered flight pattern of a bird trying to navigate the world outside her nest. You were the wind that carried me through the years. You were bright and enticing. You were flirtatious and seductive. You were laughter and cups running over. You were relationships and connection, you were the opportunity to heal in others what we saw in ourselves. Fruitful and generous. A costume to be donned. A stage. You were the best parts of me, being pulled outwardly, like a magician with an endless score of ribbon tugged from a black hat. Hand over hand you brought forward generosity, service, performance, warmth.

But here I stand, 12 years dedicated entirely to you and with what feels like so little to show for it. I always said I wasn't the marrying kind but I chose you and in an instant you became vapour. Not a single wedding band in sight to prove that our love was real. Now those kids who sniggered may not be debt free but they have a piece of paper to show for it and isn't that more

than I'll ever have?

How do I quantify the ways you transformed me? How do you tally the skills I acquired through my love for you? How do I turn this skill set into a form of currency the rest of the world values? Is there a place for a lover like me? One with no fancy certificate but a decade of experience in knowing people, growing people, loving people, serving people?

It scares me how fallible we were without even knowing it. Charging forth gallantly, emitting an Edison globe glow, showcasing a bright, warm landscape of flavours and textures, experiences and adventures. Was I just your Pied Piper? A poster girl with Stockholm syndrome? Encouraging the next generation of bartenders to discard their societal expectations and natural body clock? I would never flatter myself but I can't help but feel partly responsible for standing on the shores of our industry and shouting "come on in, the waters warm".

The week before you disappeared entirely, I watched as you began to crumble, slowly at first, then more quickly, panic stricken, spending more time holding tight to a facade that said we were ok, instead of preparing for the inevitable. You must have been terrified. I grappled at the edges, trying to hold on desperately to what I could. Trying to find a life raft to cling to. But my financial security, independence,

self worth, it all slipped through my hand like a wine glass at 2am after a few too many. And then a butterfly flapped its wings in New Mexico and overnight our world shut down. Our streets deserted, our venues desolate. No last shift to pay homage to the blood, sweat and tears that we had poured into our homes with our families. You couldn't even give me a final goodbye. I never strayed. I was faithful to you for 10 years. Sure I would daydream of different lovers, of a different life but I stayed true. Committed. And in my hour of need where are you? I gave you everything and you ghosted me.

Overnight you disappeared and here I stand, swearing that you were real. That what we had was real. That I have grown and learnt after all this time. That what I have to offer is worth something. That I am worth something.

I know I'm angry but surely you are too. You have every right to be. Resentment aside, I can see why you must feel betrayed. We were in the trenches together you and I, helping to sew together the city's people. Looking back at the impact you had on me, on us, on our town, I can't help but wonder... were you the fabric, the thread or the stitch that pulled us all together? How did it feel to never be taken completely seriously? To be discarded? To be so undervalued?

The love was real but when has love ever been enough? How much

of 'us' was an active decision? At what point did we choose each other and at what point did I just start putting one foot in front of the other? Overwhelmed by so much going on that it felt easier to robotically go left foot right foot, one job after the other, shit pay, too many hours? Because let's be honest with ourselves, starting over again is scary, the fear of the unknown on the other side, risking it all seemed foolish. Braver people have stayed.

Baby, it was real, we know this, but will we know when to call it? How many hangovers? How many anxiety attacks? How many people trying to make me go home with them when I want to stay there with you? How many times do I need to walk into a room and you stop talking? How much more gossip? How many opportunities can you be presented with, opportunities to do the right thing, only to dissolve into dark once again? How many times before I just realise that maybe the good doesn't outweigh the bad anymore? And maybe baby, maybe you're just no good for me.

But relationships take work and I would be a fool to pretend that you didn't meet me halfway. You flew me to countries, introduced me to people I would never have the chance to meet otherwise, gave me a seat at the table. You helped me find my voice. I forged relationships with people that

I unequivocally know will last a lifetime. Your friends became my friends and should we split, I'm keeping them. You soothed me when I exasperated how there was just no way I could ever work in an office. You cajoled me when the idea of boarding a train at 7am and 6pm felt like a death sentence. The walls of normalcy and complacency made me feel so terrifyingly claustrophobic and you were there patiently waiting, arms outstretched. Offered in a maze of ever changing rosters, night shift work, summer days spent spooled out on the balcony. You were there in the sun, kissing my cheeks on a deserted beach on a Thursday morning. In my favourite cafes being comfortably quiet, grocery stores easily maneuvered, post office queues shortened, a lack of competition vying for the bank tellers attention on a Tuesday mid afternoon.

I realise now, after all these years, I've been my own worst enemy- too tongue tied to speak the truth I was so desperate to name. I think I know now, babe, what I want- I really think I'm ready to take our relationship to the next level. I want the real romance of the simple life; the butt naked authenticity that comes with the comfortability of time- stability, forever sprinkled with adventure, you know? The kind that gets you up in the morning, driven by passion, even after a 3am close. I want my passion reflected in

my bank balance- the fruits of my labour providing me with the security I deserve. I don't want to spend the rest of my days overlooking, ignoring the elephant in the room- I want you to step up in the ways I need you to. I want clear and concise boundaries, and I want to hold you accountable for your actions, I want integrity. I don't think I'm asking too much, so correct me if I'm wrong, it's always been my nature to see the

best and brightest parts of you. So here I am, laying it down- if you can find it within to promise me these things, or that at the very least you'll try, every day I will wake up choosing to love you. Warts and all.

Because the road less travelled could be safe and secure but I refuse to think that our life can't be both of those things and more. It's going to be different this time baby, I swear.




BY PAIGE.

7

LYNDON HIGGINSON

AN
ODE TO THE
NORTH





TIKI FANATIC AND PIZZA AFICIANADO, LYNDON STARTED BARTENDING AT THE PERFECTLY RIPE AGE OF 30. FAST FORWARD 14 YEARS AND HE'S GOT 13 BARS UNDER HIS BELT INCLUDING THE MUCH CELEBRATED AND AWARD WINNING CRAZY PEDRO'S, CANE & GRAIN AND LIARS CLUB WITHOUT WHICH NO TRIP TO MANCHESTER IS COMPLETE. A PROUD NORTHERNER, LYNDON IS PASSIONATE ABOUT HIS HOMETOWN AND YOU'LL LIKELY NEVER FIND HIM SITTING ON THE FENCE, WAITING THIS ONE OUT, OR WATCHING FROM THE SIDELINES. NEVER ONE TO REST ON HIS LAURELS, LYNDON'S 14TH BAR IS BEING BUILT AS WE SPEAK WHICH EQUATES TO ONE BAR FOR EACH OF HIS YEARS SPENT BARTENDING. NUTS.

was asked to rant. Well, this is gonna be easy...Everywhere is fucking shut and the Spirited Awards have just come out.

Congratulations to all of the same people and the same bars that get nominated every single year. Yawn. It's just becoming more and more ridiculous. I'm pretty sure that most of us could easily name the top ten with reasonable accuracy every single year. I don't see the point. Plus, the categories are stupid - surely high volume isn't about how loud your place is? It can't be, right? But I've been to those places and they aren't exactly ten deep every night with people dancing on tables. I've been to bars that are so busy that I clapped the bartenders at 8pm every Thursday for how hard they were working. These bars will never be nominated at Tales. That's probably a good thing though. I'm pretty sure there's a bar nominated this year that's only just opened, so there's not a chance in hell that anyone could have been there to "judge" it. **These awards are more and more about who's on Facebook most often, rather than who's actually dead fucking busy or what bar is actually the best. They're so annoying. Yeah I'm annoyed we barely get nominated up North. I get it though, I really do. People get stuck in London. It's dead shit to get around. It takes like an hour to get from one award winning bar to another, that probably aren't even ten miles from each other.** So it must take

something like four days to get to Manchester right? Nope. It's just over two hours. Anyway, bollocks to all these awards. Remember when CLASS revealed who had won a day before the awards? That was funny.

Coronavirus is wank.

I'm hoping there's some good to come out of all this. It's not gonna be the twenty thousand videos that loads of bartenders keep putting up of themselves making drinks or them getting pissed in front of their laptops with other people getting drunk in front of their laptops. I find that really fucking weird. Although I am really old.

Maybe this is the future? If it is, fuck that.

So what's gonna happen when we can reopen? Are the general public going to just stay at home anyway? They can all make good

drinks now remember as there's a million fucking videos posted online for them. Have they gotten used to all of this? If they have, I've got a feeling we'll be entering a new age where we're open but we're pretty much only serving bartenders on their nights off. I like the sound of that to be honest although it's not exactly sustainable.

Nah, I think we're gonna come through all of this ok. We're sadly going to lose a few places which is really shit, and some people too which is absolutely heartbreaking. But the industry will survive and people are going to wash their hands a lot more and not talk 10cm away from your face and not awkwardly hug you when you see them. I'll take that.

I really do hope everyone is ok and everyone comes through the other side relatively unscathed.

Rant over.



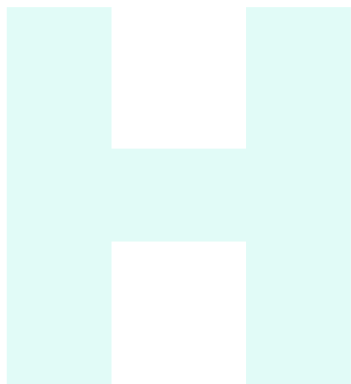
BY LYNDON.

8

HANNAH LANFEAR

LEARNING IN
THE TIME OF
CORONAVIRUS





A COMMITTED CAT PERSON, HANNAH IS ONE OF THE KEY SPIRITS EDUCATORS AT THE WSET IN LONDON AND THE FOUNDER OF THE MIXING CLASS, A COMPANY DEDICATED TO EDUCATION WITHIN THE DRINKS INDUSTRY WITH A FOCUS ON FOSTERING DIVERSITY AND SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE HIRING PRACTICES. CLOCKING IN AT 21 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE COCKTAIL & SPIRITS INDUSTRY, HER JOURNEY HAS TAKEN HER FROM A TEENAGER PULLING PINTS IN A HARBOUR-SIDE TAVERN IN CORNWALL, TO MAKING FANCY DRINKS FOR THE COGNOSCENTI IN SOME OF THE WORLD'S BEST BARS.

For many moons we've banged the drum for anyone in earshot that a bartender is more than a mere drinks maker.

Your trusty drinksmith will find you a delicious drink to suit your palate, split your check twelfty ways, attentively tend to the whims of drunken clientele, clear the bathroom of carelessly discarded paper towels, help you book a restaurant table, wash out manky bins late at night and we'll do it all with speed, and charm, and good humour. Making drinks is but a teeny, tiny part of it. Despite all these myriad skills the wanna-be bartender must attain the barrier to entry is low: all you need is a cracking grin, a can-do attitude and a willingness to learn, and you too could be the next Monica Berg, the next Ryan Chetiyawardana.

Maybe I read it or maybe someone told me, I completely forget, but I once heard the difference between a cook and a chef as being not how they worked, but what they knew. Because a cook may use the same processes to get to the end result, but a chef can tell you why a goose gorges itself on grain to fatten its liver before it makes its migration. It's that care for the detail that divides them.

Bartending is a trade that seems to attract the curious. Yes, we're a motley crew of international descent - gnarly night workers with a dangerously social bent, but within each of us a passion

for learning, and it's that learning that means this by-rote job is so addictive. Like great chefs the constant pursuit to understand our ingredients completely leads our learning to places you'd never expect and before you know it you're lost in exploring the volatilities of different alcohols, or arguing the finer points of yeast selection for making rum. What a decadence, what rich food for our brains. It's the romance that makes spooning the sick of a cityman from a bathroom basin with your bare hand just about tolerable.

The most knowledgeable people I ever met are those who learn voraciously and without ego. Who are absent of concern that they'll appear weak if they don't know something; and who wield knowledge lightly, like a feather, sharing what they've learned gently. On the other hand that acquisition of knowledge can make a person a monster, arrogant and dismissive of our guests' requests. As the old adage goes the more you learn the more you realise you don't know. As a spirits educator that not only teaches but learns every day I'm reminded of it often.

It could be that in the present climate it's a lot to ask for us all to hit the books and keep learning. Right now the world is filled with hundreds of thousands of hospitality workers who are anxious about rent, food, the future, and bar owners wondering if they can

even open the doors again. And though it's terrifying to look ahead and wonder if COVID-19 could tear down the professionalism in our industry as Prohibition did in the 1920s we have to hope we'll come back stronger, and to the future I hope that bartending will never lose its beautiful brain. Once people can leave their homes again that we have to ask the difficult question of why does a person go out for a cocktail at all? Why do we spend such sums on a moment's luxury? Whatever the answer is we need to bring it in spades to eek people out for a cocktail away from the safety of their homes.

There's been a laudable swing in the focus of our industry towards the importance of hospitality, a movement away from bartenders behaving like grouchy pissflaps and rediscovering the importance of being humble, warm, and kind. The charge has been led most overtly by Dandelyan who employed bartenders expressly to be nice to people. What a tonic, what a refreshing change from the perpetually furious (and often absurdly high) bartender of the early century, gurning their way through yet another ticket and yelling at guests for unwittingly trying to order a drink in dispense well.

Niceness coupled with the gentle wielding of knowledge are a heady combination, and for me it's literally the only reason I'd want to drink a

twelve quid drink. If you can select a spirit especially for me and maybe even hand-pluck a tasty morsel of wisdom about it for me then I will be forever your regular guest. Heck that's probably going to be my new favourite drink.

Yes we need portfolios of fantastic priced premium spirits to keep the lights on in our inner city bars, but I'd LOVE to see more bartender-autonomy in selecting products to make drinks with because they have a passion for the spirits themselves, and for me that begins with a well-rounded, brand agnostic knowledge of distillates and their production (insert subtle WSET big-up here). Knowing how to find the perfect whisky to fit the guest's Bobby Burns, how to lightly give the tiniest titbit of info to enchant them. We find our guest's next favourite cocktail and we make it their own, and in doing so we make a gift of our curiosity. Possibly that sounds pretentious as fuck but here we are.

As a young bartender I learned all I could. I was enthralled by early cocktail books, and would take obscure books into work and we'd recreate that snapshot of history in liquid form. It kept the lights on for me, kept me in love with my work but as I moved up the ranks I can't

say that I always used my learning to help bring others up. I was a talented bartender that loved to make drinks and thrill people with cocktails and then suddenly I was put into a management role and it wasn't clear to me then as it is to me now that there is an obligation to nurture young bartenders rather than expect them to self-study. And if there's one thing I am longing to change about our trade post-COVID it's that we teach bartenders how to move up the ranks, teaching them the skills to lead a team, to manage a stock, but most importantly how to pass on what they learn with love, and a lightness of touch. The spirits industry puts SO much investment into teaching the bartender to be the gatekeeper of their spirits stories but then they steal them away to be brand ambassadors, which yes, it's a teaching position, but the on-trade is missing out by not training great bartenders to become great bar managers and keeping that knowledge and passion within the bar for just a little longer.

To all you people who made it right to the end of my sermon give yourself a pat on the head. Just to say I cannot WAIT to smash a Junglebird with you all, real soon.



BY HANNAH.

9

DAVE WROE

BEER: A LOVE STORY





DAVE STARTED HIS HOSPITALITY CAREER IN THE LATE 90'S AT THE ICONIC HART'S RESTAURANT, WHICH HAS SINCE SHUT DOWN. HE WENT ON TO SPEND MANY YEARS BEHIND THE BARS OF THE LOFT, SALTWATER, AND POPOLO, WHICH HAVE ALL SINCE SHUT DOWN, AND THE LEGENDARY BRASS MONKEY, WHICH HE MAINTAINS SHOULD BE SHUT DOWN. POST-LOCKDOWN YOU'LL FIND HIM AND HIS IMPRESSIVE BEARD WAXING LYRICAL ABOUT ALL THINGS MALTY AND HOPPY AT JUNKYARD, WHERE THE OWNERS AREN'T OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE FUTURE.

Having been stuck at home now for 60 odd days (I had just taken two weeks of holiday time when all this kicked off, so I was already gagging to get back to work), I've kind of forgotten what socialising is like.

Yes, I've been invited to some of those Zoom chats, and "bar crawls" but it's just not really the same as sitting in a bar having a drink with your chums. On a plus point, I've not had to sit through an open mic night for weeks, so I'm thankful for life's little mercies.

So, dear heart, seeing as how I've gotten bored of GTA Online, I've decided to wax lyrical about possibly my fave thing on God's Flat Earth: Beer. Beer must be one of the most important things in my life. It's how I earn my crust, it's what me and all my nerdy friends talk about, and it's what I look forward to at the end of every working day. Within reason. One day on, two days off.

No matter where I go for a drink, beer is something that's always there. I appreciate a good cocktail as much as the next person (Grasshopper, if you're offering), but I can maybe drink two before I get bored. But if you've got some tinnies in the fridge then I'm gonna be staying for a while. Even if the selection is lacking, there will be something I can find - more often than not though, the fridges will be an Aladdin's Cave of tasty treats.

My eye is always initially drawn to the Double IPAs, a great big joose [sic] bomb, one where I can be bukkaked with hops, to let me know that it's time to relax. But life's too short to limit to just one style! There's always room for a Scotch Ale, or a Wee Heavy if we're going to call it by its real name, full of caramel sweetness, sometimes a nice peatiness coming through, this is a true Bartender's Beer. Buxton and Cromarty did a Cranachan Scotch Ale a few years ago and I'll be damned if it wasn't the greatest beer I've ever had in my life. Talking of beer styles, I've never met an Imperial Stout I didn't love. The more akin to pudding the better.

Away from the bars, a local Bottle Shop is a truly magical place. The smaller the better, in my opinion, full of fridges keeping the beers chilled and fresh, I could happily spend a King's Ransom on rare bottlings, and a more informed, passionate bunch behind the counter you will rarely find. Even the supermarkets have gotten on board, and some truly great UK breweries are now available as part of your big shop. Still, I'd advise you to give these a slightly wide berth and use your local bottle shop as often as possible, as they'll be missed if they go the way of the butchers and greengrocers.

The greatest thing to do with good beer is to share. A bottle share is a thing of joy, and for those of you who've never been to a bottle

share you're missing out! Either at someone's house, or at your fave bar, just pick a theme and invite like-minded people. It's like a Tupperware party for beards. Most Brewdogs hold them regularly, and it always descends into chaos - well, as much chaos as a load of people with high cholesterol and a 10pm curfew can manage.

With shares being well and truly off the table for the time being, another fantastic thing to do with all those bottles is to store them! Lambics, Geuze, Quads, Trappists are all beautiful fresh, but something magical happens to certain beers when they are cellared. A bottle of Orval is a beautiful thing when 'new' (it's always six months old by the time you get it), but around the three year mark the yeasts have eaten most of the sugars, leaving you with a beer that can stand up to the most moderately priced Champagnes. If you are going to store beer, make sure you buy two. Drink one fresh, so you have an idea of what has happened in the bottle.

Beer isn't all rainbows and light, mind. Maybe at some point in the future I'll write about the breweries that have ties to religious genocide, or the rampant racism at a globally respected brewery. We'll see if this one makes it past the editors before we take a shot at that hornet's nest, mind. Most importantly, for

me, beer is about the people. I work with one of my best friends of the last 18 years on an almost daily basis (that lazy fucker won't work weekends, because apparently that's a thing), and the majority of our team have been here four or more years.

Every day I get to go in to sell and talk about a product that I am passionate about, to a group of like-minded individuals. The regulars have all transcended into parts of our social circles, and I have had these people drop stuff off at my house, and I at theirs

(respecting social distancing, of course) during these troubled times. We've people who pop in to see us seven days a week, shoot the breeze, maybe have a drink, maybe not. And we all hang out together on days off.

Lastly, I met my partner as she was a regular at ours, herself working in beer, on the real ale/pub side of things. So, in a nutshell, I suppose that beer is happiness to me.

Apart from sour beer. Fuck that noise.



BY DAVE.

10

HANNAH SHARMAN COX + SIOBHAN PAYNE

OPEN TO
CHANGE



AS CO-CREATORS AND OWNERS OF THE GLOBALLY ENVIED LONDON COCKTAIL WEEK, HANNAH AND SIOBHAN HAVE WORKED WITH THE GREAT AND GOOD OF THE UK BAR INDUSTRY... AND EVERYONE IN BETWEEN. NOW IN ITS ELEVENTH YEAR, LCW IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE LONDON HOSPITALITY CALENDAR FOR BARTENDERS AND CONSUMERS ALIKE. GIRL GANG ADVOCATES, HANNAH AND SIOBHAN CAN USUALLY BE FOUND SUPPING MARTINIS IN W1, ALWAYS WEARING BLACK

Well now – isn't this weird? It's probably not quite where we all thought we'd be when we were posting motivational quotes welcoming in the new decade; the year of 20:20 vision – the fresh start and the Best Year EVA!

But here we are. All of us. Grappling to deal with the monumental changes that are grimacing at us from every dark corner - be those actual or imagined.

But - this is an inspirational and aspirational little zine, and so while the change that's forced itself into our lives is swinging precariously between unsettling and downright overwhelming - we wanted to give change a chance to tell its

story... and remind us all (including ourselves) that change doesn't have to be scary.

Now just as a caveat - we actually don't like day-to-day change much. We like the same things, in the same places, with the same people. We've worried at times if this makes us small minded or (gasp) boring... and each time we come back to the same answer - DON'T CARE! Martinis are arguably the most classic cocktail of all time - classic = best and so why not have the best!? Champagne goes in the same bracket. West London also. And black clothes. And hanging out predominantly just with each other. Yep - That's it. That'll do. Why change the habits of an (adult) lifetime.

In fact, so averse are we to change, that year after year after year - for a decade - we've run a festival that no one else in their right mind would think was a good idea or have the patience to bother with. But here we are, ten years later. Change-averse. Still showing up. In black clothes.

But change just will not be quietened down so easily.

Sometimes it pops up when you least expect it. In 2010, we thought we had a brilliant deal working with the most iconic department store in the world. We were bringing thousands and thousands of people into a store that had zero reputation for its F&B and we were offering those people a drinks experience they'd never had while shopping for

clothes. We took their weekly drinks take and multiplied it by ten on the first Monday of the first London Cocktail Week. KAPOW. Dynamite business plan. Perfect partnership. And then after two glorious years it was gone. Off the table. No longer an option. And it felt....disastrous... Back to the drawing board and with full transparency - the change that was looming felt beyond daunting. But change sometimes just needs a bit of breathing space. A bit of quiet time and a blank piece of paper in front of it. And so we made phone calls and wrote nice polite emails and moved to Seven Dials in Covent Garden. We found a new partnership and made the festival bigger and better (and even harder to manage than it already was). Without the shove in the back from our ol' pal change - we'd probably just work for Selfridges now.

Then there's the change that you actively seek. The change you welcome into the fold and ask it politely how it's doing today and would it like another drink? And that change took us from three happy years at Seven Dials to Old Spitalfields Market - and the biggest bravest decision we've ever made. That change came from a dream-like vision of a whole village of cocktails and while it was just as daunting as before, it was so necessary for the growth of the business and to take our little festival to the next level. We dreamt of making people really take notice of what our bar scene was capable

of creating when the parameters were different than everything that had come before. Sure we could have stayed put in Seven Dials, maybe we could have improved what we had, stretched into some other streets nearby - but playing safe when you know change is on your side, when the feeling in your entrails says "yep, you got this" - well playing safe then is just silly. Be brave. Take the risk.

Is now the time to actively take the risk? Probably not. Our lower intestines are not feeling terribly optimistic amidst this global crisis - however, for many (ourselves included), the gods of change are forcing our hand...

For us - 2020 will bring an enormous shift for London Cocktail Week. Change we actually wish we didn't feel so utterly compelled to make (firstly because as previously mentioned - we are fairly change-averse but mainly because we ALL wish we weren't dealing with this utter shit and were instead drinking martinis in a nice dark bar in West London right?).

It will see a shift back to the early days before hubs and villages and townhouses and takeovers. For us, we need to change our plan to make sure we're focussing every ounce of our efforts to getting London bars back on their feet. Urgently. Filling them with guests who will be no doubt delighted to be out - but also maybe a little bit wary.

We have the capability of showing

'normal' people how our friends have adapted their businesses, altered their operations and are ready and waiting to welcome them back into their venues. We have the opportunity to speak to thousands and thousands of people and like a pushy dance-mum - proudly show off the changes that have been made to ensure we endure this nonsense.

These are gut instinct changes that we know we need to actively make and that are in some ways invigorating and exciting (whilst also being absolutely neither of those words and instead - totally terrifying).

We've had to completely go back to the drawing board, because the majority of what we do is no longer going to be able to gain the financial support we need to continue. We've had to cancel our mini festivals, furlough our

wonderful team and strip back our website content so we can stay in business and put on the 11th London Cocktail Week that we hope will make a difference. We're determined to find hope in the memory of all those other times that change forced itself upon us, with a positive outcome.

So, for those facing change right now that feels overwhelming or insurmountable - make baby steps.

Write lists. Write lists of things you can immediately tick off. Be open. Don't rush into a reaction. Ask questions. Ask for help. Ask often. Take stock. Dig deep and be prepared to start over.

Whether change being forced upon you by current events, or whether you're just being given the mental space to explore it... embrace the opportunity and please stay positive (and alert).



**BY HANNAH +
SIOBHAN.**

11

**GARETH
EVANS**

**BETTER
LATE
THAN NEVER**





PROFESSIONAL VODKA HAWKER, CREATOR OF THE MINI-PEG AND OCCASIONAL WRITER, GARETH EVANS PREVIOUSLY WORKED AS THE BARS MANAGER FOR ALL 19 OF JASON ATHERTON'S BARS. HE FAMOUSLY CREATED THE 'DILL OR NO DILL', 'ROBIN HOOD, QUINCE OF THIEVES' AND 'GREENGAGE MUTANT GINGER MYRTLE' EARNING HIMSELF A REPUTATION FOR THE QUICKEST TONGUE IN THE WEST. GARETH IS DOGGY DADDY TO JUNO - A TITLE THAT HE HATES, SO MAKE SURE TO REMIND HIM OF IT OFTEN.

I think I pissed Dooley off. Again. Discard was born – as a lot of mine and Dooley's ideas are – out of ranting at each other about topics we both had different opinions on, and that we felt other people weren't talking about enough.

We've known each other nearly a decade now, and during that time I think I have seriously annoyed her on a weekly basis at least, which is doubly impressive when you consider we lived on different continents for a large part of that time. We often argue, but it's not mean, we both feel strongly about a lot of things, and what I really like about her is that she is principled enough to stand tall on her opinions, fight her corner, and then, after all the reasoned discussion has borne no fruit, tell me to go fuck myself and ignore me for a couple days. Then we start talking again, rinse and repeat. It's a good system, and it works for us.

So yeah, I pissed her off again. This time by not submitting my article in time – the article I insisted on writing, I might add. But on this occasion, it felt different. The problem was no longer the usual chronic laziness and Olympic level procrastination; I just didn't have it in me. My mind was blank, like a...I dunno...empty...clever simile or something. See? I got nothing. Whatever the equivalent of writer's block is for brand ambassadors who self-fund a zine so they can push their averagely written musings on people, I had that.

Thing is, I really like writing. I have occasionally come up with funny things, or penned a moderately clever retort, I can string a sentence together at or above GCSE level when pressed, and I have even entertained lofty fantasies (as I'm sure many of us have) of writing a Very Important Book about something I'm super knowledgeable about, which people in my field will see on each other's bookshelves and nod sagely to each other about. "ah I see you have the new Gareth Evans book! He really does have a different, controversial, radical, and brave take on that topic he's super knowledgeable about, we really are better people for having read it. What a fucking legend" or something like that. I just need to find the subject to write about, and y'know, learn about it and stuff. Baby steps.

I had started out with what felt like a really good topic – I was going to muse about whether the London bar scene had come to rely on service charge to the extent that the modern bar business model is unsustainable – the idea being that the Covid-19 crisis and the lack of Governmental support for tronc payments (and the resulting GoFundMe pages) highlighted that bars and restaurants rely on handouts from customers to top up their salaries to pay their staff the living wage they can't (or won't) stump up themselves. I'd argue back and forth, quote fancy bar managers and owners – I was going to write

the absolute SHIT out of it. Muy picante, no? So controversial, and brave. Oh how people would talk! I'd have likes and shares coming out my bum, people would invite me to speak at bar shows and cool events, I'd probably get a Pulitzer. Or whatever the equivalent is. A plate for Top 4 High Volume Cocktail Writing, Western Europe or something. Whatever it is, I was gonna get it.

Problem was, I'd stopped caring. Not about Discard, I think it's probably the thing I'm most proud of in whatever career I could claim thus far, and whatever people might think of it, I feel good about the fact that we sat down, and instead of continuing to bitch and moan about how others were doing something, we put our money – not a brands, our money – where our mouths...is/were/are, and created our own version. It's not perfect, but it's ours. I also hadn't stopped caring about my job, or my friends, or my wife, or my dog, or anything else in my very nice life. No, I had simply stopped caring about...the other stuff.

My mum died suddenly a few days before we released the first issue. Classic Big C stuff. I learned about her illness when I was working in the US, I flew home as soon as I could, rushed to see her, then somehow ten short days later my family and I sat next to her bed as she just stopped breathing and slipped away. We were lucky enough to say goodbyes and

I know I'm hardly the first person to lose a parent, but still, it's not an experience I would wish on anyone. I'm not looking for sympathy, in fact I actively dislike that part of it - telling people was horrible because then I had to figure out what the correct thing to say was to the extremely well-meaning person in front of me, cocking their heads to the side and doing "concerned face" as we awkwardly went through the motions - we were lucky we got to say goodbye, it was very peaceful, it was actually a relief in the end etc. See? I did it up there already. People dying is pretty shit overall to be honest, and I hope I never get better at reacting to it, but overall I didn't want anything from people, and therein lies the problem - since that day I've just been on autopilot in many ways.

Over the last few months a few things have dawned on me. Firstly, I'm extremely lucky. I have an incredible wife I love very much, and who seems, improbably, to like me. I have a very good job I love doing and that has taken me places and introduced me to people I have no business being associated with. I have a group of amazing friends, a flat we love, a dog who drives me up the wall but whom I spend about an hour every day taking photos of, I have enough money to live comfortably, I am able-bodied, middle-class, I've never had to deal with bigotry, oppression, racism, sexism, poverty, or, well anything really. I grew up in a nice house,

with two parents who would have been happily celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary in a month, and a younger sister who I think might be the best example of an excellent human being there is. I am the very definition of white privilege.

Secondly, "these uncertain times" have shown me how many genuinely good people are out there, willing to help, go out of their way, or simply check in on your wellbeing because they are just good people and that's what good people do. People are out of work, losing homes, businesses, livelihoods, and even their lives, and yet every day I see people pivoting entire businesses, volunteering at great personal risk, and putting people before the person. We've all had to learn a few things during lockdown, whether that's how to make sourdough starter, grow tomatoes on a balcony, or deal with the loss of a parent, I think we're all going to come out changed, and hopefully with a renewed sense of priorities. I know I will. Saying that, the things I would do right now for a Dishoom breakfast and a martini at Three Sheets are not worth thinking about.

Lastly - and at the risk of sounding like a Hallmark card - we're only here for a limited time, and what we do and create should fucking MEAN something. I realised I didn't have writer's block. I'm not really a writer, but even if I was, it wasn't that, it was the lack of interest in producing a half-arsed piece of

lazy, poorly researched writing, done only to curry favour and grab attention at the expense of other people. My procrastination this time had finally done me some good, my subconscious had forced me to come to terms with the fact that what I was writing was just kinda shit. Well no more. I don't want to write hatchet job clickbaity bullshit. I don't want to piss off bars and bar owners for the sake of it, and more than anything, I don't want to produce anything that I'm not proud of.

There are so many people I admire out there that I want to hear from and learn about, and me taking up an article every issue is not the way forward. That's the exact reason Dooley and I worked together on the London Sessions, and now Discard, because despite how much we cry foul when the Spirited Award nominees are announced, or roll our eyes at a new "humbled and honoured" facebook post, we both truly love the bar industry, and overall, we have a shared love of cool people telling cool stories about cool shit. However it's happened, we've managed to somehow give ourselves a platform where we can reach people, really actually reach people, and that should be what we always have in mind whenever

we are looking for contributors, and while I might love the sound of my own voice, mine is not an interesting story. No one gives a fuck about my thoughts on mow mescal is shit (even though it kinda is), or my upbringing on Rosefield Street on the mean streets of Royal Leamington Spa (yes really).

So from now on I promise to only write if it's something I am impassioned and informed about. Something that I really feel matters to me and isn't just my ego making up the numbers. I won't use this platform to take up one of our limited spaces, push my own ideas, or write shit just for the sake of it because I, like you, want to hear from those cool people telling cool stories, and there's plenty of them out there.

To paraphrase the Thinking Drinkers, I promise to write less, but write better. Maybe that way I can focus on doing things that mean something, and who knows, maybe I'll start writing that Very Important Book. Probably not, but at least I can look back and be happy.

So here's to my new found lockdown positivity, my renewed love of the bar industry, to doing good things, and most importantly, to no longer missing Dooley's deadlines.

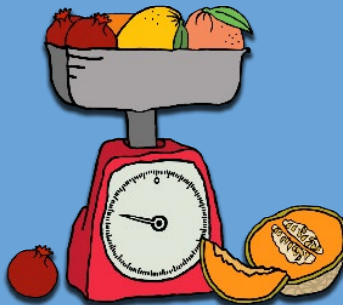


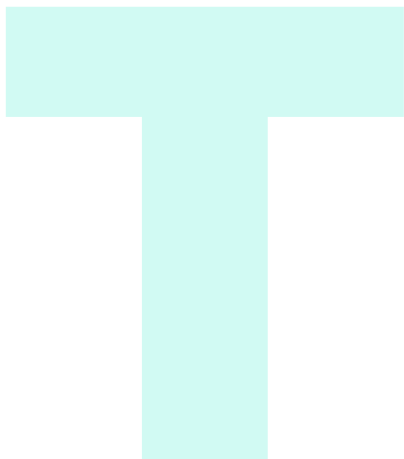
BY GARETH.

12

TOMAS ESTES + REBEKKAH DOOLEY

ABOUT LOVE





AS THE OFFICIAL MEXICAN AMBASSADOR FOR TEQUILA TO EUROPE, TOMAS TAKES HIS COMMITMENT TO AGAVE PRETTY SERIOUSLY. HE'S OPENED 18 BARS IN SIX COUNTRIES OVER THE COURSE OF 40 YEARS AND LAUNCHED OCHO TEQUILA 12 YEARS AGO. A DAD TO FOUR BOYS AND A PUPPY CALLED PEACHES, TOMAS IS KNOWN FOR HIS INHERENT WISDOM AND HIS WILLINGNESS TO SHARE IT.

The following is a collaborative work, developed over the phone and via email between London and Ashland, Oregon. We have taken our time with this – the recording of thoughts and ideas. Tomas begins the story.

TOMAS: I like the idea of using Discard and all that it stands for to me to talk about one of my Heroes. I have seen/heard in our industry, our culture, our community, our family -within hospitality- the word 'legend' used over and over again. The word has gone flat and flabby in its overuse. Words can have that fate.

Now take the word 'Hero'. There is a word that has been spared from the vernacular. Heroes rise above the banal, above the trite and hackneyed easy/automatic catch terms of our popular culture. My heroes are Mohammed Ali, Malcolm X, John Lennon, Don Javier Delgado Corona.

What is it that heroes stand for? Where in does this term, this title gather its power? Is it that beyond inspiring us we feel they can save us? What is it then that Don Javier represents for me? The answer is simply and sublimely.... love. In Don Javier's own words this means giving with nothing expected in return.

This idea, this definition of love is so refreshing so revitalizing, so different as to be somehow revolutionary. It is most likely that each of us knows

this, understands this form yet how many of us actually express, use love in this way? What would happen if each of us practiced love in the way that Don Javier saw it, used it? Is it hyperbole to imagine that this could....save us, all of us?

It's been more than thirty years that I have been becoming a disciple of Don Javier and what he stands for. I have written various things about Don Javier in the past. Some of these writings have been assembled here in this paean, this homage, this offering to the man and what he stood for. Nothing is expected in return.

From The Tequila Ambassador, 2012, TOMAS: Tequila 'pilgrims' come from literally all over the world to visit Don Javier at La Capilla. It is their tequila Mecca. In the Drinks International magazine poll of "The World's 50 Best Bars" for 2012 La Capilla actually came 20th. This says something important – in a way it is a tribute to tequila in general since this is the essential tequila bar. Perhaps more importantly, it is a tribute to Don Javier because the bar and he are one and the same.

One particularly memorable time I was in La Capilla, in November of 2010, I was told something that I had never heard before in my 20 years of going there. José Luis Partida, a real regular and the one who first took me to the bar in 1990 when he found me in the streets of tequila looking for 'my truth', told me that strange things often happen in the

bar. I asked him what he meant. I'd been drinking all day and while my spoken Spanish flowed easily, my comprehension needed checking. What did he mean, "strange things"?

He tells me that there are spirits in La Capilla, not just the distilled kind but souls of people from the past that come into and inhabit the space and the bar. Bar stools move, glasses fall off the table by the bar and do not break. In the kitchen there are cases of beer that have been seen with smoke coming from them as though they were on fire but no flames.

José Luis has told Don Javier about what he has seen and Don Javier says no problem, it's only the spirits: the souls of persons gone who visit us. He admits to having seen the refrigerator and the drinking water container move on their own. He said this happened always in the night and there have been usually three or four persons present who witnessed it. I have since long sensed a 'holiness', an extra special power to Don Javier, and now I believe it even more.

Is it not said we make our own reality, especially after having been in La Capilla all day enjoying the ambience – and, of course, after the tequila?

Tomas Estes: The secret of life is?
Don Javier: Is love that asks nothing and is interested in the well-being of the other – love that asks for nothing.

TE: Anything else for the people who'll read this book?

DJ: Well, without knowing them, I esteem them all for being your friends, your friends are my friends. Even though I don't know them physically at this moment, I know them spiritually because they're friends of yours. In my humble way I greet everyone, all the world and if one day they come here and I'm still living, I am at their service whoever they may be. I have open doors for whoever may come.

TE: Open doors, open heart, both ways: in and out.

DJ: Yes.

TE: I'm going to put into the interview that you're a Magi, a wiseman.

DJ: Ha, ha, I don't deserve it but I am grateful with all of my heart. I don't deserve the bond that you bring.

TE: I don't know if you remember the time that Gaz Regan came here. He was happy and very funny but he also told you he had cancer and you said, no more. How did you know?

DJ: It's that you have to ask God for the answers.

TE: Would you say that all in the universe is there for us, all that we might need if we but allow it?

DJ: Yes, God can and will dignify us with many things.

TE: Are you happy?

DJ: All my life. God has never

left me with want. God is always accompanying you, you'll never be left alone. What ever you might want, ask for it.

TE: What do you want for your future?

DJ: The tranquility that I have right now. I don't wish for anything more at this point because it's my time to turn in my 'lassos'.

TE: I asked you once – very late at night in here – what was the essence of life and you said respect and applied that also as a manner of doing business. You also said that respect and love, spiritual love go hand and hand.

DJ: If you want to conserve your relationships, your friendships you need respect and that is a kind of spiritual love, not love with interest. With a person you esteem and respect and they respond in the same way we can find that this is the basis on which to live in harmony with a content and happy life. This is pure love, I think that way but who knows?

BY REBEKKAH - This is a story about two men and the impact they've had on the people around them – an account of a relationship to which I have only been party to twice, but will always remember.

In 2018 I took my first trip to Mexico. I know, what took me so long?! It was paradise. I flew in to Guadalajara, and drove with Tomas to Tequila. I've been back twice since, and my boyfriend says he's

never seen me so happy as when I'm there. It's sunny and the streets are bright, and even when it rains (which it does!) The streets are still bright. There are some parts of that trip that are blurry, but there's one day I will remember for the rest of my life.

I had been dreaming about going to La Capilla since I saw a photo of the Batanga in Tomas's book. I'd heard about it from Jake Burger and Julio Bermejo and read about it in books and magazines and I loved how it countered every idea we have about cocktail bars needing to be luxurious and aspirational with marble bar tops and custom made booths and staff in jackets. Admittedly... it would be nice if the toilet flushed a bit better, but you don't go there to wee.

La Capilla is made from stone and wood. It has cracks in the floor and an old water trough for horses to drink from. I didn't see that happen, but it seems to be popular with the local dogs.

In 2018 Don Javier was 93 and working in La Capilla once a week. Our days didn't correspond, and I didn't mind that I wouldn't see him because I understood his need to be at home. Tomas and I drank batangas - me more than him - I smoked, and we ordered tortillas from a local cantina. The plastic chairs were broken and wonky but comfortable. The TV was playing Mexican pop music and we looked out on to the bright street. It was everything I'd imagined it to be and

so much more. I loved it, still do.

On one of our walks Tomas brought me in to a hair salon to see an old friend of his. They spoke in Spanish together and afterwards Tom told me that she'd asked him to visit Don Javier at home. He was sad, she said, because a friend of his had died. She said many of his friends had died. We stopped at a fruit stall and bought mangoes, papayas, melons and pomegranate, and we went to Don Javier's home.

When we entered, Don Javier was praying with some rosary beads. He had beside him a bible. His eyes were closed. His sister greeted us and we sat down on a soft sofa, next to a small Chihuahua who enjoyed the attention I gave her. So cute. There was a fan that cooled us, and we were silent and still, listening to the quiet Spanish prayer from across the room. When Don Javier opened his eyes they were watery and light and he looked at Tomas with a smile. He was not surprised to see us.

Tomas went to Don Javier and they touched foreheads with closed eyes and they stayed that way for what felt like minutes but must have been 30 seconds more or less. I heard the word 'hermano' which I knew meant 'brother' and although the language was alien to me, I understood that their bond was strong and in that moment - impenetrable. 'Don Javier is a spiritual man, a leader' Tomas said to me when we left.

A year later Tomas and I went back to Tequila with some friends - old

and new. We visited La Capilla and Don Javier's nephew walked us to his house where he lived with his uncle - the same house, and the six of us piled in. Don Javier was still smiling. He looked as though he hadn't moved, still in a bright white shirt with a hanky in the pocket and light, watery eyes. His sister was there, and the chihuahua still yapping. So cute. Tom told me afterwards that he found the experience peaceful. Two hermanos, clear as day.

We talked about it months later, in writing this piece. We spoke to our friends who were there too.

'I tried to write down what it was, but it's impossible. To say it in a sober way, we saw two friends saying hello and goodbye to each other with the the knowledge that it could be their last time, with a smile and recognition for each other's memories. It was special.' - **Chris, Oscar and Thomas.**

'When we walked into the house not only were we opening and warmly

welcomed, I remember feeling we had stepped into the inner sanctum. It was solemn and loving at the same moment. I recall the emotion and energy in the room was so thick it was hard to breathe.' - **Jacqueline.**

'I experienced the meeting of two old friends as if there had been a sort of "psychological transfer"

that made me live it personally. An exchange of love, an exchange of "lived life", mutual respect, esteem, affection. I never thought of being transported in a single moment.

I lived that moment in silence, listening, closing my eyes for a moment to savor it to the fullest.' - **Francesco.**

Don Javier ran La Capilla for over 60 years. He served some families for four generations. Tomas says "It's about love, and all that entails. We are benefactors of this love, the family that gathers at La Capilla." He said the same thing to me about Café Pacifico - that it wasn't about Tequila or Fajitas or Mariachi - just love and family - the rest will follow.



**BY TOMAS +
REBEKKAH.**





ask Abi

ABI IS OUR RESIDENT (KINDA) ANONYMOUS AGONY AUNT. SUBMIT QUESTIONS THROUGH OUR WEBSITE AND HELP US HELP YOU.

WELCOME TO A.A.



“What do you think about making a martini and putting it into the freezer to save for later? I remember there was so much backlash about that a few months back, but I love batching martinis with a little dilution as well. What do you think?” - Sue M.

ABI: Hiya Sue! Obviously this is all down to personal choice (I’m guessing someone has done some science on it, but science schmience for me atm) I’m pretty much running a high volume dispense martini bar from my kitchen the now and all dem bags of party ice are not great for the environment, not to mention having to smash them to smithereens like some kind of unsolicited corner shop artisanal ice program..EVERY SINGLE TIME. Gonna end up with a lock down asbo from smashing them off the floor. Plus I really wanted to see if I had the brass neck to write the word viscosity in a publication where serious people write about drinks and I did it! Hunner per cent that batch just now hen!

“How do you tell certain public personalities that what they’re doing on social media isn’t engaging and interesting; it’s sad and cloying?”

- Rose B.

ABI: Hmm, well I think you have managed the first step by writing into a global publication to make a few of folk feel a little uneasy, unless the people in question are just a big massive sociopath. I would say delete them from all your social channels, that way their vacuous existence will no longer be chipping away at your last nerve. It could just be a case of a personality clash...and if you can’t see them, hopefully they won’t dae your box in! It kinda reminds me of when my maw used to moan about big brother back in the day...id be like it’s 4am and you’re watching them sleep... just change the channel hen, it’s not even the real show. Aaaanyway, then maybe just everyone be as nice as they can to each other...let’s face it I’m sure we all get right on each other’s tits from time to time, and in this day and age the less media anxiety we are slinging about and perpetuating the better... insert shrug emoji.

“I get about 10 ambassadors coming into my bar every week trying to sell me their shite new gin on the offer of ‘free training’ and an ‘in-house comp where the winning drink goes on the menu for the year’. How can I politely tell them to fuck off?” - Joey M.

ABI: Well be polite, everyone is just trying to get by in this crazy ol’ thing called life. The begin a complex gauntlet of challenges, something like Legend of Zelda or Home alone. First start by cutting of their power source...caffeine...start charging reps for any tea or coffee thy have when they come in for meetings, there must be limit to expensing a coffee in every bar you hit. Maybe then things like only scheduling meeting when they are more convenient to you, most reps will come in during the day whilst you’re getting pummelled for lunch service or making the 274758 gallons of pornstar batch for a Friday night in Edinburgh...so try making meetings at 1am on a Saturday night after cash up or 9am on a Sunday morning before brunch service (stipulating sobriety is key here, or you are going to massively fall on your own sword). Only the strongest will survive. Then if you get this far and you have just gone with fuck off...classics are classics for a reason Joey! That riff on a clarified ramos, mankini twist aged in a boot of a survivor of the battle of culloden, graced with bitters made by the ancient hooves of the kelpies on Loch Lomond is gonna look mighty fine on your menu for a full year. Good luck ma pal, Godspeed!

“I went on a first date but she ordered a mezcal Negroni. What should I do?” - William McB.

ABI: I’m not the kinda gal to be in the position to judge anyone’s bev of choice, and to be honest you should count yourself lucky to have the lucid lass in front of you pal. Well my first piece of advice would be don’t be a patronising douche and let the lassie drink what she likes... However if you can’t envision yersels walking down the aisle, hand in hand synchronising smokey, burnt rubber tyre flavour burps (you maniac) then jump to the 24 shop and grab a cheeky cherry lambo and live, laugh, love yourself to the next swipe left.

“How many people need to be watching an Instagram live video before it’s acceptable to leave without feeling guilty?” - Liam D.

ABI: Why are you there in the first place, tbf that banner is hefty inconveniently placed so let’s start a petition or something, that’s what we do now innit! To be honest I think the person on the other end is having a much worse time than you . Wondering if they have been talking for 24 seconds or 4.57 days, are they visibly sweating and bright red, how many of the chins they have since garnered from a life and lockdown of excess, wondering if they have turned off their hair straighteners, and when insta will move that banner to stop idiots wondering in by mistake. Nae offence, but the last thing on their mind will be your existential crisis of looking mildly impolite on stumbling into their own personal hell.

Thanks Hen!





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