

# DISCARD

THE 'THANK FUCK BARS ARE OPEN' ISSUE



LITERALLY I'LL  
DRINK ANYTHING  
A BARTENDER  
PUTS IN FRONT OF  
ME AT THIS  
POINT.



**FOR TOMAS**

who died in the Spring.  
When the cherry blossoms  
bloom each year,  
we will think of him







@DISCARDTHEZINE  
DISCARDTHEZINE.COM

# WTF IS THIS?



## INDEPENDENT. TRANSPARENT. BALANCED.

This issue took a while to get out because **EVERYTHING IS FUCKING WEIRD AT THE MOMENT**. We'd like to take this opportunity to apologise to our sponsors, advertisers and the multi-national conglomerate that owns us but... Wait, we don't have any of those.

For those of you who don't know, **DISCARD** is an independent, self-funded zine created by people working in hospitality. That's us.

Here in England bars have just reopened and fuckkkk we've missed them! So this issue is kind of about that, but you might have noticed we don't really stick to themes so it's about a bunch of other stuff too.

As always - big thanks to our contributors, without whom this zine would be really boring. Welcome to issue five. Yep, still going strong.

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

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250 COPIES OF  
DISCARD.**

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# FAKE NEWS.



## CLUBBING IS BACK!

Following the successful trial of a 3000 strong club night in Liverpool, the government has green-lit further social events, starting with the much-missed post-shift “OK I’ll Come For A Quick One But Not Having A Big One Alright Fine Yeah Let’s All Head Back To Mine Should We Get A Bag In I’ll Grab A Couple Bottles Of Wine From The Corner Shop Oh God Is It 6am Already Fuck It I’ll To Straight To Work.”

## FHPDT IS OPEN

With enforced lockdown decimating the on-trade across the globe, one New York institution has re-branded to take advantage of the commercial opportunities and untapped customers that may arise as the U.S.A opens back up. Fucking Hell Please Do Tell is open from Monday. Booking and walk-ins are welcome, call 0800-PLEASE-COME-AND-VISIT-US now.

## 50 BEST BOTTLED COCKTAILS

William Read Media has announced their newest venture, a global countdown of the World’s 50 Best Bottled Cocktails, sponsored by a sparkling water brand because they’re the ones with the most money. We’re told the panel is super diverse but they’re still keeping it secret, obviously. Points will be deducted for wonky labels, inconsistent washlines and suspicious acids, which means we’re all fucked. Sorry guys.





## MISSING: BARTENDERS

The government has launched an enquiry as owners of UK bars struggle to find staff post-lockdown. Over 20% of the UK's fourth biggest work force have either left the country or retrained in other industries because of Brexit, furlough not covering service charge, long hours, poor conditions, and basically being totally fucked over forever. A UK hospitality spokesperson said in a statement "well, yeah duh", and added one of those suspicious squinting emojis.

## 2020 TRENDS

Consumer trend reports are in from 'the big three' who spend millions to give vital insights into the inner workings of the global industry from the year prior. Early indications are that... People stayed in more. Oh, and spritzes and mezcal and stuff. Sales are down and everyone's a bit depressed. I think we can all agree this was money well spent on some amazing research. See you next year!

## REPEAT AFTER ME

Pubs in the UK opened up again this month and have employed the use of consultancy firms to train staff on what to expect after more than a year of closures. One such company - Pintz4U - spoke to DISCARD about their services: "people have forgotten the basics of pub etiquette. We show them how to open a packet of crisps flat so everyone can share; the unimpeachable sovereignty of the pool table winner-stays-on rule; and crucially, to show them how to go 'WHEEEY' when someone drops a glass."





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# JAKE O'BRIEN MURPHY

## SOMETHING ABOUT MAI TAIS

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A TOP THREE CONTESTANT FOR EVERYONE'S FAVOURITE NORTHERNER, JAKE'S IMPRESSIVE CV LISTS CALLOOH CALLAY, THREE SHEETS, PRESENT COMPANY AND AMERICAN BAR AT THE SAVOY AS HIS FORMER EMPLOYERS. OUR ONLY REGULAR CONTRIBUTOR, JAKE LIVES IN EAST LONDON WITH HIS FIANCÉE FLORA AND THEIR DOG BABY MILHOUSE. CURRENTLY MORE WRITER THAN BARTENDER, JAKES CREATIVE ENDEAVOURS CAN BE FOUND AT [JAKEOBRIENMURPHY.COM](http://JAKEOBRIENMURPHY.COM) THANK US LATER.

**E**nding the free movement of people from Europe couldn't have come at a worse time for the hospitality industry.

Usually, I find statistics so impenetrably boring that when I see them my mind starts to turn in on itself like a sock in a washing machine, so to keep this short and mercifully free of stats and percentiles - migrants, especially from Europe, make up a disproportionate number of those employed in the hospitality sector. The brunt of job losses during the pandemic has, so far, fallen on non-UK workers, which has manifested into an unprecedented exodus. Workers returning to their countries isn't actually accounted for in the official unemployment figures. That's because we don't know just how many of the 1.3 million or so people who have left the country worked in hospitality. But the difficulties most businesses are having in recruitment now suggests it's a significant enough chunk. So, we've ended up in a bit of a bizarro immigration loop-de-loop, to the effect of "Bloody foreigners! Going over there! Leaving our jobs!".

**Normally, being the smug cardigan-wearing liberal that I am, I'd be lapping this particular schadenfreude up like hot soup. But delicious German-compound-**

**words and crunchy little croutons of “I told you so” aside, it’s a worry, mainly because those same hospitality workers that have left are now restricted from returning due to post-Brexit legislation. This means that Brexit has turned the UK into a permanently moored cruise-liner full of the politically illiterate and the socially disaffected - the only constant is that the fishermen are still salty (pun fully intended).** Considering all we’ve been through already in the past year the staffing crisis probably seems unremarkable by comparison, but it’s come at the critically worse time possible. Businesses are reeling from aneurysm inducing financial losses and are pinning their short-term hopes on the fanciful idea of a boom in “staycations”. Yet, at the very moment the phoenix was set to rise from the ashes, the capricious nature of fate shot it in the arse with a BB gun that fires irony for bullets. To add insult to injury the BB gun was probably made in Gdansk to strict EU trade standards. Without the ability to hire people the hope of maximising on any potential revenue is diminished and the financial repair of the entire industry drags on risking further job losses and venue closures.

The real scale of the problem won’t

even be fully felt until furlough ends in September [2021] and we see just how many people, from overseas or otherwise, return to service. **There’s a fair amount of professional and financial anxiety floating around at the moment, which is understandable. The most obvious reason is that after a year of self-reflection and lacto-fermented-zoom-quiz-gender-reveals the prospect of stepping back into kitchens only to be verbally disembowelled by a head chef with a substance abuse problem for £8.48 might seem regressive.** I want to make it clear that I am not out to demean or belittle anybody’s livelihood. Just the opposite.

**I left my pre-Covid job about halfway through the first lockdown under the short-sighted assumption that it was all almost over. Hercule Poirot I am not. In my defence, I can’t remember the spec to a Mai Tai and I’ve been nominated for awards, so my scant understanding of immunology should be easily forgiven.** For those with more foresight than yours truly, newly cleared schedules and the crutch of financial support provided much needed time away from day-to-day service. This gave people cause for pause, which is positive and not only because it rhymes - it

provided the latitude to question the underlying structures at play. I'm betting that this opportunity for widespread contemplation will have far-reaching ramifications.

**That is to say, the staffing crisis may be further aggravated by the unfavourable circumstances workers face, with many opting to re-train and seek work in protected industries. Unfavourable circumstances such as the contentious existence of zero-hour contracts, the duplicitous manipulation of service charge and the toxic culture of glorifying the overworked.**

**The furlough scheme has represented a real-time paradigm shift and has brought the central contradictions of the industry to light. Primarily, the fallacy that working ungodly hours for less than the living wage, while relying on tips, without job security represents an equitable system. It doesn't. Many have come to recognise that this enforced mentality of graft prays on otherwise well-meaning aspirations while pertaining to be of a higher order.**

This sees the very concept of workplace performance distorted with a kind of kamikaze, all or nothing, significance that imposes the underhanded narrative that

hard work takes precedence over everything else. I'm not saying hard work isn't crucial for career progression, if it was, I'd be busy polishing my jet-skis with gold bricks. **What I'm suggesting is that there's a skewed metric of aspiration and achievement that is embedded in the collective perception. The apparatus that cements this is often commonplace. Take, for example, the pervasive habit of calling the job an "art", loaded with exactly the kind of romantic doublespeak that financially undermines the profession. Gushing over the "art form" has no tangible benefits in a wage packet. This make-or-break attitude is malleable and easily exploited, only furthering the pernicious idea that those who don't succeed are singularly responsible for not working hard enough, while ignoring the elephant-sized institutional inequalities.**

What is more, any objection to these realities is often shot down with the self-perpetuating myth that "it was worse back in the day". **Well, I say, bollocks to back in the day. I've spent lockdown realising my self-worth and looking at pixelated photos of back in the day and it was crammed full of ugly glassware, Sony Ericsson Walkman phones and wankers.**

(Also, and most importantly, untenable working arrangements). The issue here is that most of us are forced to agree to undesirable terms because there's little other option or, as is often the case, we were young enough to drink Kool-Aid willingly. Take the mere existence of the term "competitive salary" as evidence for this. I've seen this more and more recently as I've searched for jobs. The term is a misnomer. The subtext of which is that it's widely accepted that employers can expect to extract the maximum potential out of staff for the minimum financial investment.

**I'm increasingly aware this whole bit is one evolutionary step removed from a Facebook rant. So I'll leave it at this. I find it interesting that in an industry that fetishises the bartender so self-indulgently, a person could win any number of awards, World Class or Bacardi Legacy, yet still not meet the minimum wage threshold**

**required for EU nationals to work in this country. That's got to be an issue right? A bartender in this country could be recognised as the best in the world at what they do and still wouldn't be entitled to guaranteed hours. The callous response to that is "if you don't like it? Leave it" and it's easy to see why so many people are.**

So, the staffing crisis threatens the perfect storm of challenges this summer. This poses a bit of an existential tug-of-war because I really do love this industry but I'm aware that it is deeply flawed. For the future, I hope that there's the mutual advancement of the business and the workers, where it isn't a pipe dream to expect the real living wage, paid rest breaks, equal pay for young workers, guaranteed hours contracts, an end to unpaid trial shifts, proactive sexual assault policy and the end to the glorification of overworking. But what do I know? I can't even make a Mai Tai.



**BY JAKE.**

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**EARLECIA  
RICHELLE  
GIBB**

**WHAT DRINKING  
ON THE JOB  
TAUGHT  
ME**





EARLECIA IS A BRAND BUILDER AND STRATEGIST CURRENTLY BASED OUT OF BROOKLYN, NYC. SHE HAS WORKED IN LESOTHO AND PARIS, STUDIED IN LONDON AND SPAIN, AND CURRENTLY TRAVELS THE USA IN HER ROLE AS NATIONAL BRAND AMBASSADOR FOR ST-GERMAIN. EARLECIA HAS WORKED WITH ESSENCE MAGAZINE, TEEN VOGUE AND GREY GOOSE, AND LAST YEAR WAS HONOURED IN THE CREATIVE CATEGORY OF 31 DAYS OF BLACK WOMEN IN FOOD. SHE ALSO HAS A SKINCARE ROUTINE THAT YOU SHOULD ALL KNOW ABOUT, SO CHECK IT OUT ON *INTO THE GLOSS*. TRUST US.

**B**eing on this side of the bar is a bizarre place to sit. But herein lies an attempt to share the parts unknown of becoming a brand ambassador, and the key ingredients to becoming an effective one.

As my email signature reads, I am the North American Ambassador for St-Germain elderflower liqueur, representing the brand nationally as an extension of the marketing department. My day-to-day role involves educating bartenders and the public about our spirit in the media, as well as out in the real world at bars, restaurants, and trade shows. I am also responsible for the strategic planning of programs, events, and campaigns aimed at increasing our visibility and awareness. **This all boils down to selling products. As an artist, it took me some time to accept that. But no matter what you add to your simple syrup, in the end it is simply sugar and water. You must understand how your roles functions and supports your organization's goal to truly be successful.** Marketing teams aim to move their beautiful spirits off the shelf and into your glass, which takes nothing away from the deep thinking, creativity, and brilliant artistry that goes into accomplishing that mission. An ambassador lives in an interlayered world in the spirits industry - with late nights and early mornings. The

most successful ambassadors are those who have journeyed through the world a bit already because you will have to use so many different skill-sets. One day, I am creating global education tools and training our ambassadors around the world, the next day I am at the bar sipping the most incredible cocktails and supporting brilliant craftsmen until three. And then I am on a major global campaign shoot styling cocktails with a call time of six.

**Before I discovered the brand ambassador world, I started my career in fashion and worked in many different areas. I moved to New York City from DC when I was seventeen because I wanted to be Carrie Bradshaw, the main character from Sex and the City, exactly to the tee. I literally thought someone was going to stop me on Fifth Avenue and give me a job at Vogue, so I moved to New York to pursue that. I started to find my voice within fashion, and I realised what I really wanted to do was tell stories. I had always been drawn to how artistic activism had been used throughout history. This fueled my passion to center people of colour as the creator of their own narratives and the visuals that communicate who we are in the world. Historically in America that has not been the case. I found magazines to be a place to bring that socio-political engaged content to life in a way**

**that was very approachable and beautiful at the same time.**

That was my focus for quite some time. I ended up moving to London to continue my education in fashion theory because I really wanted to create my own publishing house to tell these stories. So, I go to London and have that incredible experience. Then I came back to the States and it was very difficult to find a job at that time, so I started bartending to make money. I did not consider it as a creative outlet and certainly not a professional career path. But when a co-worker suggested I enter a cocktail competition, I realised that this was a place where I could tap into art activism again. That was really the “aha” moment for me, when I started to look at the beverage industry similarly to how I was looking at fashion. I could use artistic disciplines to experiment and tell stories about important issues through cocktails in an artful, pleasurable way that is also accessible. I was competing in Bacardi Legacy and met Colin Asare-Appiah, a Senior Portfolio Ambassador for Bacardi at the time. He was like ‘you should be doing what I’m doing and be a brand ambassador’. This was the first time I had heard of a brand ambassador; I had no concept of what this was. Colin was this otherworldly, larger than life being, and what I saw him doing was going into the best places and hanging out with the



coolest people. I thought 'well this seems like an awesome way to see the world and educate others on products you love, to meet people and even support creative expression.' I ended up applying for the Grey Goose Brand Ambassador position in New York City and I got the job.

The journey of brand ambassadorship is a beautiful one, yet rarely a straight line. These key three steps have helped me stay on course and find my way.

### 1. See the world and take people with you

**Travel is number one for me and my biggest source of creative inspiration. My father is an immigrant from Panama and my mother was a flight attendant for twenty-five years, so I grew up with a deep understanding of various worldviews. Seeing the world helped me appreciate the delicious nuances diverse cultures contribute to our existence. There is such value in being exposed to different architecture, textiles, food, flavours, smells and experiencing other cultures firsthand. Journeying through the world changes you and opens your perspectives on things.** If you cannot catch a flight, go to a museum, read books about other cultures outside of your own, or explore the neighbourhoods you never visit in your city. This helps

you build a rich artistic palette to draw from. And then bring people along for the ride. A part of being a great ambassador is the ability to transport people to the places you have seen and experienced. This profession can give you access to many rich experiences, yet they are not for you to just store in your memory bank. It is for you to share those beautiful imprints with those around you.

### 2. Master active listening

To truly connect to people and build community, you must learn how to listen. Having a pulse on what is happening in their world is key. I quickly discovered that just sitting at the bar was not going to be enough to stay tapped into the needs and preferences of bartenders once I stepped from behind the bar. I think it was the late Larry King that said, "if I'm going to learn, I must do it by listening." Active listening is more than hearing or observing what people are saying. It is about empathy, have the curiosity to investigate deeper than the surface level questions because you really care to understand. I believe once you have those insights, you then can create spaces and opportunities to engage with people in an impactful way.

### 3. Get the balance right

**While I work in the spirits industry, my life does not revolve around**

**alcohol. It has taken me some time, but I have reached a sweet place of harmony between who I am and what I do. To intentionally protect my space as an individual, who is also the face of a globally recognised brand, I started by identifying my core values and committed to keeping them front and center, no matter where my career journey took me. I prioritize self care rituals and make time for personal travel.** I have become the guru of a seventy-two-hour getaway. The insane hours, indulgent meals, intense travel schedule, and demands on both my mind and body require me to stay on top of self-care. I have known many brand ambassadors to burn out and the lifestyle really takes a toll on their personal life. I use my PTO [Paid Time Off, or paid holiday time], I log off on weekends, I get proper rest and immerse myself in nature or activities that do not center around my work life.

Recently, I have refocused my approach to social media as well.

For example, I have developed a posting system for Instagram, where a certain percentage is dedicated to cocktail happenings, my travels, beauty and then the branding knowledge I want to share with my community. It has been a healthy way for me to express all the parts of who I am, not a visual log of what work event I am at, or a cocktail recipe I create. I do not believe representing a brand means you have to be a walking, talking billboard 24/7 - it is just not realistic. It is important to know your core values, your personal brand identity and figure out what the right balance is with the brand you represent professionally - then set that expectation with your company and your audience.

Essentially, simple syrup of being an impactful brand ambassador is to remain open and curious to the world, be of service to others, and take care of yourself along the way.



**BY EARLECIA.**

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# DISCARD INTERVIEW: RICHARD THOMAS



# R

RICHARD THOMAS IS ROCK AND ROLL ROYALTY. ORIGINALLY FROM ABERYSTWYTH, WALES, HE OPENED THE LEGENDARY CROBAR ALMOST TWENTY YEARS AGO AND BOY, ARE WE GLAD HE DID. RICHARD HONED HIS BARTENDING AND MANAGEMENT SKILLS IN HIS HOMETOWN BEFORE STINTS IN MANCHESTER AND LONDON AT THE KENSINGTON ROOF GARDENS, THE BORDERLINE (RIP) AND THE GARAGE. RICHARD RECENTLY ANNOUNCED THAT HIS CROWDFUNDING EFFORTS RAISED £100K AND HE IS CURRENTLY LOOKING FOR A NEW SITE ON WHICH TO REVIVE THE CROBAR.

**This year should have marked The Crobar's twentieth birthday. A Soho staple since 2001 and brainchild of Richard Thomas, the rock and roll institution announced in September of last year that it would not be re-opening its doors. Since then, the ever-creative team have raised £100,000.00 in fundraising, offering prizes including Crobar coffee, Crobar whiskey and signed merch from Judas Priest, Dave Grohl, and HIM.**

Refusing to go quietly - or indeed to go at all - The Crobar documentary Music When the Lights go Out' released on YouTube in January helped garner further attention to Richard's cause, alongside a virtual jukebox and a virtual party room (open every Friday and Saturday, see The Crobar's Instagram for details). In their own words "we're not fucking leaving", and at the very least they're not leaving without a fight.

The Crobar hasn't had a 'heyday' specifically, because for nineteen years it reigned over Soho's rock and roll scene unobstructed, dishing out 180 bottles of Jager a week and the same in cases of Red Bull. Back in the noughties it was part of what Richard calls 'Soho's Golden Triangle.' With The Astoria, 12 Bar, Metro, Borderline, LA2, The Arts Club and Roxy all within walking

distance from each other, there was nothing like it anywhere else in Europe – a mecca for anyone interested in metal, punk, rock and everything in between.

**That all changed with the expansion of the Tottenham Court Road Underground Station, and the seemingly insatiable need for towering, glistening, anonymous office buildings in Central London, not forgetting the ever-growing number of Starbucks and Costa Coffees in the area. The Crobar was the last original rock and roll bar standing and although its time on Manette Street might be over, The Crobar is not.**

A Welsh Londoner, Richard was born in London and raised in Aberystwyth – a University town in Ceredigion, where he worked at his parents sweet shop from the age of ten. At sixteen, he offered to help out at his local pub on a busy night and was hired as a weekend bartender. He explains “I had no desire to spend my life working in a shop or an office. I enjoy people, I enjoy hospitality and having a good time. It made more sense to me, rather than working nine to five in a shitty office job and drinking in the pub after work, having five hours sleep and doing it all over again, why not just be a bartender?”

Eventually, Richard opened his own bar in Aberystwyth but decided

the town was too small for him and relocated to Manchester for a couple of years. “I tried to get a job at the Hacienda but didn’t manage to, I went there a few times. It was a mad, mad place. Sometimes I hear about it now and I think – are you sure it’s the same club it used to be? It was dirty, seedy, it was like The Astoria – you didn’t want to touch the walls because they were grimy, but it was just great.”

“I had no good reason to stay in Manchester so I moved down to London and worked at the Kensington Roof Gardens for a few months. It was very corporate and no fun at all. Then I worked in The Red Lion for a week – a nice little shit hole, and then someone told me about The Borderline.” Richard worked there for nine months before being made GM “thrown in at the deep end, a baptism of fire” where he stayed for eight years.

As anyone who remembers it can attest, The Borderline was a magical place. Loud, sweaty, sticky, and always packed. Richard calls it the most fun job he ever had “I loved it, I saw so many great bands – I probably saw around four thousand gigs. I remember a lunchtime Garth Brooks show for the press, and Rage Against The Machine’s first UK gig, just sixty people, what a show that was. Rocket [the Thursday club-night] was absolutely brilliant. At the back

you had the Hells Angels, the older crowd, the 80s rockers in their 30s and 40s and then the dance floor was packed with kids. There was so much energy. So much laughing. I remember trying to explain to a doorman one night, we had a full-on mosh pit and he didn't understand how it could be so violent on the dance floor but all hugging and no animosity after. It was a very angry generation, and that's how they got rid of all their negative energy. It's a healthy way to express yourself. There was the odd broken nose, but it was a healthy thing - to vent your anger on the dance floor."

I was there on those Thursdays, almost every Thursday, and I can confirm that it was the best alternative club-night in London at the time. But it didn't stop there.

**"The live music scene in Soho back then was amazing, that whole Tottenham Court Road corner was the hub of it - you had The Astoria and it radiated from there. So many little bars, cafes, restaurants and nightclubs. Clubbing was a thing in those days. Social media now has replaced so much of it. You didn't have a mobile until the late 90s, the internet didn't arrive until the mid to late 90s so if you wanted to see anybody or talk to your friends you had to go out. I think social media has robbed us of one of the most basic human needs - real connection."**

In 2000 The Borderline was bought by the same company that owns Slug and Lettuce - and it all changed. Under Richards' stewardship, it had been named "Time Out's Venue of The Year" which as Richard explains "was quite an achievement for us at the time, and this new company wanted me to destroy everything I'd worked so hard to achieve. It was one of London's main rock and roll venues, but they made it so hideous that I quit, I went to The Garage [a live music venue in Highbury] for two or three months. I just couldn't stay." Borderline closed permanently in 2019.

**What happened next, Richard calls serendipity: "I got a phone call from a guy called Denim Dennis who had the Acoustic Café on Manette Street and he said he'd had enough and wanted to give up the lease. I asked him not to talk to anybody else, to give me two days, and with two mates I scrapped together every penny I had. We begged, borrowed and stole to get that bar. I loved rock and roll, and it made sense to do something I loved with people I loved in an area where rock was king. The rest is history, a lot of hard work, stress and grief but an awful lot of fun. I wouldn't change it for the world."**

The Crobar opened in 2001 and was quickly cemented as a rock and roll destination bar. Richard

knew exactly what he wanted it to be. **“When I arrived in London it had this too-cool-for-school attitude. Doormen sneered at you, bartenders were too cool to serve you and I thought ‘this is not hospitality, this is not the purpose of our industry, you can’t make people pay to drink in your bar, and look down on them and give them a shit time, what’s wrong with you?’ I’m here to be nice to people. That’s my purpose, to give people an escape for a few hours from the brutality of life, have them relax and have a good time.”**

Although anarchistic by nature, The Crobar did have rules: “No fighting, no drugs, no spitting, no stealing, and no bothering women.” The last point is important to Richard, “My mum used to tell me she didn’t feel comfortable sitting in a pub waiting for my dad. She’d wait outside for half an hour rather than going in and having a drink on her own. A pub should be a safe haven for everybody, and if you’re a woman alone, you should be able to go in, have a gin and tonic or whatever – and you should feel safe. Men can be predatory, but not in The Crobar. If anyone came to me and said ‘that man’s bothering me’ then he was out. In the past five years we had a lot more young gay people visiting because the nature of gay socialising in Soho has changed a lot – young gay people no longer feel that they have to be

in exclusively gay bars in order to be safe or to have fun. People have said to me that they felt safe in The Crobar because if anyone gave them a hard time, they spoke to me and I said – you know – leave them alone. No arseholes.”

Asked about the celebrities who visited The Crobar (Justin Beiber, Metallica, Alice Cooper, Motörhead, Kid Rock) Richard is uncharacteristically coy. “The thing about it is that a lot of those guys - rocker pissheads - half the time they sat in my office and drank beer and we talked shit. There aren’t that many totally mad stories.” We keep prodding. “Well Lady Gaga used to visit, and Dave Grohl, and the Iron Maiden boys, but most of the stories I don’t feel I should share, I never wish to compromise anybody. What happens in the pub should stay in the pub. If the wife finds out it should never be from the landlord, that’s the landlords’ rule – discretion.”

More important to Richard than the celebrities are the staff and regulars. His bar manager Olivia stayed with him for ten years as did his doorman John. “John was a big lad so they always put him in trouble spots and he hated it. He came to me as cover for a few weeks, he rocked up and he didn’t know what to make of it until he realised that our people

were really friendly and he fit in. He was married, he had kids, he just wanted to come to work and go home and not worry about ending up in hospital. He didn't have to prove how macho he was; he just did his job. Most of my bartenders worked four or five years for me, everybody knew everybody, the customers weren't strangers, there was a family vibe on the rock scene at the time."

**Despite being pegged as a victim of the pandemic, The Crobar's closure is more complex than that. Feeling let down by his landlord, insurance company, and the government, Richard is angry at the way he and the hospitality industry has been treated over the past twelve months. "I am furious. I am absolutely bastarding furious. I would string the whole lot of them up with piano wire from the Westminster Bridge if I could." He cites the lack of an EU pandemic plan, insufficient business support, greedy landowners, idle MPs, and panicked insurance companies as the reasons for The Crobar's closure.**

Richard describes The Crobar as a zombie company, existing only to ensure furlough is paid to his staff, himself and his wife. The individual who owns 17 Manette St is worth over £400 million and has evicted the majority of his tenants. "Who

will take over those buildings?" Asks Richard "I'm hoping they will be forced to turn them into affordable accommodation. In the 90s a lot of bartenders lived in Soho. The accommodation wasn't great and you'd share with four other people but they were out every night. Soho was full of young people who were happy because they were living the dream. They buggered that up, the landlords got greedy. It's all well and good selling a penthouse apartment to a man who's there three days a year, but he's not out every night supporting the local economy. But maybe, in four or five years' time we can change that. Maybe some positives can come out of this."

**Asked what he misses most about Soho, Richard is melancholic at points and excitable at others. "So many things. The building itself I probably won't miss, my knees no longer hurt from going up and down the stairs five thousand times a day. It's the people I miss. I could nip out for a sandwich down old Compton St and see some mad shenanigans and come back to the bar like 'My God, you will not believe what I've just seen.' Whether it's a couple of girls beating each other to death with stilettos or Harmonica Matt on the corner - there was always something going on in Soho, always something that was worth making a comment about and**



**that's what I miss. That lovely pool of human interaction - because I've never found any place else like Soho. Nobody cares what your sexual preference is, what you do when you're not around, nobody gives a shit. That was the joy of it. Anyone you want to be - it's acceptable in Soho.**

I miss standing outside the door chatting to the people who would go by, who never came into the bar but were an integral part of Soho because they were always about. I miss all those people. There was one old boy I used to see quite often. He was born and bred in the area, he's about seventy now and he said 'Rich, I have seen it all. It comes, it goes. Soho ultimately survives, the people make it what it is. It's the center of London, you'd have to move it geographically to stop it being what it is.' I'm very optimistic.

Soho will bounce back and bounce back better. Better than it's been in the past few years. I hope the youths get off their arses and say 'I'm bored of bloody social media. I'm going to learn guitar' or 'I've always wanted to form a band with my mates' or 'I've always wanted to open a bar so I'm going to beg borrow and steal and somehow I'm going to do it'. **Similar to the swinging 60's, I hope we see the revolution of a generation. Whether we will or not - I have no idea. But I hope so, I am hopeful."**

And those empty glistening office buildings? "Soho is the people, it's not the buildings. You know it'll be nice and shiny for a year or two until the bill posters have gone up and the crackheads and the homeless have pissed and shat all over it. That's just Soho, it'll be OK."



**BY RICHARD  
+ DISCARD.**



PHOTO CREDIT: THE CROBAR

4



**YAO  
LU**

**OPENING  
THE BAR**





BORN IN SHANGHAI AND RAISED IN HOUSTON, YAO IS KNOWN THE WORLD OVER FOR HIS CHARISMA, TALENT, UNIQUENESS AND NERVE. YAO TRAINED UNDER BOBBY HEUGEL AT ANVIL BAR & REFUGE AND STUDIED HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON BEFORE OPENING THE UNION TRADING COMPANY IN HIS HOMETOWN. NO STRANGER TO THE 50 BEST LISTS, YAO'S BEEN AWARDED MULTIPLE TIMES BY DRINK MAGAZINE, TIME OUT AND MORE. IF WE MADE AWARDS, WE'D GIVE HIM ONE TOO.

**It was January 2020, shortly after the new year's countdown, the confetti was still on the bar top and Champagne dripping from the ceiling. People were yelling "fuck 2019" and how 2020 will turn their lives around. We heard whispers of a new virus breaking out in Wuhan, but like any other event that's not happening at home, no one cared.**

Next thing we knew Wuhan went into shut-down during Chinese New Year, and the rest of the country shortly followed.

CNY is China's Thanksgiving and Christmas put together. It's a holiday of gifts, festivities and loved ones. This viral outbreak robbed us of what's supposed to be the happiest time of the year and all of a sudden, we were stuck. We closed our second bar Birds of Paradise only six months after the grand opening, and Union Trading Co was asked to close to contain the virus. Closing a new bar without recuperating the initial investment, Union with only two months' working capital, and a shutdown with no end in sight - I thought my career in Shanghai was finished. But this wasn't a time for self-pity, I knew very early on if bar management threw in the towel, it's the ultimate fuck you to our team, our guests, our community and the memories we have created

together.

Automatically, we went into crisis solving mode. The first thing we did was assemble our staff online, many of whom were still in their hometowns, and couldn't leave.

**We had that very awkward sit-down meeting with the team, we had it multiple times. We made sure to make time for the team to let us know how they felt, how these decisions will affect them, what we can do to help and tell them where our bar stands, shared our fears and finances. This was the time when leadership was paramount, our bar leadership had to be their rock even if we were all panicking inside, ultimately the team are the people who make up the bars' foundation, but there is no point of talking about saving the teams' jobs when there isn't a job for them to return to.**

To my surprise, all of the staff unanimously decided to take a pay cut during the shutdown, nobody jumped ship, everyone chipped in ideas. We started pioneering the idea of delivering cocktails to people's homes. Taking advantage of China's robust courier services, we made sure to stay in touch with all of our regulars, giving them updates on the status of our bar as well as trying to comfort them remotely, we figured hospitality doesn't have to

be confined within the walls of the bar, especially in these desperate times. We pulled every trick out of the book, from preserving all perishables to finding creative ways to utilise all of our leftover stock. We partnered up with any company that would support us, taking up any odd jobs we could to get free stock or products and to create any type of cash flow and cut down costs. Throughout this whole process, there was constant and honest communication with the team.

**Fortunately, the shutdown in China proved effective, and in April businesses started opening up again sooner than the rest of the world. We then tried sharing many of our experiences and the lessons we have learned with our global bar community, hoping we could be a helping hand in a world of desperation.**

Reopening wasn't easy, people were still scared, and initially, business was slow. But at this point we celebrated any small victory we got. We created a shortened twelve drink menu as opposed to our usual twenty-five, utilising all the ingredients we had preserved to triple our stock, trying to be strategic with what we have and how we use them. We continued to deliver cocktails and reached

out to every single spirit company we could to see how we could gain support. We trod carefully, not knowing if a second wave of infections would close us down again.

**It wasn't until June when we started to see our business return to normal, and at this point we immediately started doing as many events as we could. We hosted a taco night, we did cocktail classes, and signed up for every single event and catering opportunity we could get our hands on, aiming to regain our losses during shutdown. It was exhausting but exhilarating at the same time; knowing it's a blessing to have these opportunities available, and that it's up to us make sure we don't fuck it up.**

It's weird looking back at 2020 - sometimes it feels like it's been forty years ago, sometimes it feels like it's only been four weeks. It was one of the most frightening experiences I have ever had, but many lessons were learned. We learned how to work smarter, more efficiently, we learned how

to better walk the tightrope of financial stability without cutting corners, while enhancing the guest experience at the same time. This year CNY was drastically different, the business is back into being profitable, and we all made sure to gift our staff a big fat bonus before their holidays, where they can spend time with their families, worry free.

**To be honest I am incredibly proud of how we handled COVID. We are lucky to have always followed the principle of prioritising our staff first - to be a neighborhood bar we had to build in the sense of family within the team before being able to transfer that energy and love to our guests. With this culture within the bar, with the selfless pay cuts, the endless flow of creative ideas, the faith and love our team had for each other, it saved us from doomsday. If there is one piece of advice for anyone it would be, always be in your staff's corner, because they will have the businesses back in the times that matter most.**



**BY YAO.**

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# MARIT BRØNN DARK MARKET





NATIVE NORWEGIAN MARIT HAS BEEN WORKING IN THE BAR INDUSTRY SINCE THE AGE OF NINETEEN. A FORMER EVENT AND CLUB MANAGER FOR SOME OF OSLO'S BIGGEST VENUES, SHE'S NOW THE TRADE ACTIVATION MANAGER AT PERNOD RICARD NORWAY, A POSITION SHE'S HELD FOR THE PAST SIX YEARS, ALONGSIDE MANAGING THE RUM, TEQUILA AND MEZCAL PORTFOLIO. SHE LOVES SNUS AND NEGRONIS AND SPEAKS BETTER ENGLISH THAN US, WHICH ISN'T SAYING MUCH, TO BE HONEST.

**W**hat do Dubai and Norway have in common? One is a Muslim country in the Middle East and the other a social democratic country far up in the north of Europe, but they both have some of the strictest alcohol laws in the world. We in Norway are what is called a “dark market”. So how do we build our brands, create loyalty and brand awareness when we are, in fact, not allowed to promote alcohol?

§ 8-6a. Prohibition of distribution of alcoholic beverages for marketing purposes.

It is forbidden to distribute alcoholic beverages to consumers for marketing purposes.

§ 8-12. Prohibition of sales with a discount.

It is forbidden for holders of a sales permit to give special discount offers when selling alcoholic beverages.

§ 9-2. Advertising for alcoholic beverages.

Advertising for alcoholic beverages is prohibited. The ban also applies to advertising for other goods with the same brand or characteristics as alcoholic beverages. Such goods must also not be included in advertising for other goods or services.



The above are paragraphs taken out of the Norwegian law on alcohol or the Alcohol Act. There are eleven chapters in all. I don't know how or even if they promote different alcohol brands in Dubai so I won't go into that, but I thought I could share some insight on how we do it in Norway from a brand activation manager's point of view.

**To go into every aspect of being a dark market, the rules and regulations would fill the whole zine. But suffice to say, whatever you think we can do, we most likely cannot. There are of course some loopholes, grey zones where we can communicate to our customers. For example, a trade magazine advert is permitted. We can put in ads as long as they are neutral. Journalists can review our products. They will reach out to us and ask for samples. But we are, under no circumstance allowed to contact them and ask if they want to review it.**

However, we can communicate with the industry - it's an exception and seen as educational.

It obviously helps us a lot, but it can be extremely time consuming. We can't post on Instagram or Facebook (because regular consumer can see it) so we must reach out in person or via personal

invitation to events and tastings. There are so many aspects of being a dark market and I can't cover it all but I've tried to put down some words on how we work with the bartenders in Norway to build our brands.

**I have, on more than one occasion in my professional career, thought that it would be so much easier if I worked in a country with more liberal laws on alcohol. I wish we were able to host a party outdoors, in the streets or a public park. I wish we were, as in other markets, allowed to fully brand a bar at a festival. Because the goal when working in marketing for an importer is to get visibility for your brand, for people to see and understand which brand they are being served and to remember that brand when they are buying a bottle to bring home. But we can't. So, we must be creative and think outside the box. We find other ways.**

We create experiences and we invest time with the people who buy our products. The bar and restaurant owners, the hotels and the bartenders. But with way smaller budget than other countries - you don't get the big budgets when you can't advertise. The thing to remember is that the content is more important than

the brand. Probably not the most popular thing to say when I build brands for a living, but I strongly believe that if you don't have great content it will be harder to sell your brand to your consumer. The same way a cocktail bar sets a concept for their bar or the menu, we do with our brands. Only that with big commercial brands we usually have global strategies and concepts set for us.

But you can't blindly implement global drink strategy or activation strategies the same way in every country, because they rarely work for every market, and certainly not in a dark market. We take the essence of the global strategy and then adapt it, so it works for us, for Norway. I usually start with the questions: what do we want to communicate? Is it educational or is it an experience? What's the theme of the event – sustainability? Provenance? Maybe it's a product launch? When we've set a theme or a concept we create the content and then the details, drink menu, food, music, choice of colours and materials. All to amplify the concept and the brand. It's event marketing really. You want attendees to leave with a feeling they will remember years down the line. That is my mission for every event that we do. One of my favourite events to plan and host is the Jameson Summit.

This is a concept we created a couple of years ago to reward the bartenders that have worked with us and Jameson and that are good advocates for the brand. It's a full day of interesting seminars with both local and international guest speakers. We start with breakfast and coffee and work our way through the day tasting drinks, listening to interesting people talking about interesting subjects, ending the day with a dinner and a party. We usually invite around sixty bartenders from across Norway. And as I said, it's one of my favourite events to do because we get to spend a full day hanging out with great bartenders, catching up with old friends and getting to know new ones.

The reason I talk about this is because I think the main reason we get our message out to the industry in a country where you can't mass communicate through social media or any other channel, is the importance of a personal relationship with the bar industry. To have a familiar face behind the brands they are pushing in their bar. And this isn't just something I say, from my "side of the table". We get feedback from bartenders telling us how much they appreciate that we spend time with them, hanging in their bar or taking them out for drinks and not only to talk shop but

to get to know them and what they are all about.

More and more over the years, the Norwegian bar scene and especially Oslo has been getting recognition internationally for great cocktail bars and good concepts. I think that if someone from this industry in another country hears of Oslo, they would probably think of Himkok - the highest ranking bar in Scandinavia by 50 Best Bars and the winner of countless awards. Back in the day, they might also think of the bar at The Thief hotel who also hosted the Nordic Bar Show. There are of course so many other great cocktail bars in Norway but I think they were the ones that seriously started to get Oslo and Norway on the cocktail map internationally. Previously we have always been in the shadow of our older brothers, Stockholm and Copenhagen, but if I can be so bold to say, I think we have surpassed them now (not at all biased).

We as suppliers have been invited along on the journey, through cocktails, collaborations, and guest shifts. We work together with the

bartenders and invite "Industry Royalty" to come over for guest shifts and events and we link in our brands. We try to facilitate and provide for the industry and in return we get brand recognition and loyalty. It's a win-win and a very fun journey to be a part of.

**We invest a lot of time getting to know the person behind the bar or on the floor. But it's not that awkward "you should sell my product" kind of thing, it is out of respect for the guys and girls that work hard to create great experiences for their guests. We enjoy getting to know them.**

It works being personal and not "pay our way out of it" by using an agency to do the job for us. We don't have a new brand ambassador coming in every year. We don't have the budget to send every bartender in Norway on a branded trip to Mexico. So, we hang out with them. It's as easy as that. The best assets we have are ourselves. Or time and a mutual trust that both parties want to create greatness.

That's what we're trying to do here.



**BY MARIT.**

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# MARCIS DZELZAINIS

THE  
IMPORTANCE  
OF BEING  
IDYLL





MARCIS' BARTENDING CAREER SPANS OVER FIFTEEN YEARS AND HAS SEEN HIM BEHIND THE BAR AT SOME OF LONDON'S MOST ICONIC DRINKING SPOTS INCLUDING SATAN'S WHISKERS, DANDELYAN, 69 COLEBROOKE ROW AND SAGER + WILDE. IN 2020 MARCIS CO-FOUNDED IDYLL WITH LUKE MCFAYDEN - A CONSULTANCY COMPANY WITH ITS OWN CANNED SOFT DRINK, MADE WITH FORAGED DOUGLAS FIR AND SCOTS PINE. MARCIS LIVES IN LONDON WITH HIS FIANCÉE MEGAN AND THEIR CORGI, MAVIS, AND IS KNOWN FOR HIS EXTRAORDINARY ABILITY TO MAKE THE MOST DELICIOUS DRINKS, LIKE, EVER.

**In 1925 Boni & Liveright published Hemingway's collection of short stories "In Our Time". It features some of Hemingway's earliest works, including "Big Two-Hearted River", a two part short story. Both are simple stories. A solitary protagonist, 'Nick' takes a fishing trip and we follow his journey as he leaves the burnt out signifiers of civilisation behind, to find a remote river in Michigan, where he camps and fishes for trout. There is little trace of Hemingway's muddled gender politics or Christian metaphysics. Both stories are deep meditations of how we relate to nature and the sense of rebirth it provides. Spiritual rebirth, which society and all its distractions struggles to bring forth. It speaks to the importance of being alone and being alone in nature.**

Hemingway describes the unnerving feeling of leaving civilisation and gradually becoming acclimatised to the wilderness, what it's like to hook a fish, how the taut line feels alive, the sense of oneness, the abrupt feeling of the line going slack when it breaks. He describes the currents and undulations of the river, the way light behaves upon the water depending on the time of day. He captures the character of the river, the snags that endanger his potential catch. He writes about coffee being brewed on

a makeshift stove and the importance of a good cast iron skillet used to cook bacon and biscuits. He writes about coffee being used to make gravy to accompany grits. He catches some trout, and loses a big fish. That's it. I find it perfectly (and I mean that in it's most perfect sense) evocative. It exemplifies a great truth when it comes to writing about nature, it is a character as much as any other protagonist.

**Growing up I was lucky to spend most of my time outdoors. My grandmother managed a retirement home for Latvian ex pats, nestled deep within the Herefordshire countryside. It was a large Georgian estate with a mid-sized lake at the bottom of the grounds. Overgrown and unkempt for the largest part, save for a walled garden that housed an orchard and various vegetable patches, all of which supplied the residents with most of their provisions. The old morgue, long defunct, was re-purposed as a cellar housing multiple barrels of sauerkraut (a prominent part of any Baltic diet), alongside a healthy inventory of local beer (another prominent part of the Baltic diet). The cool subterranean temperature of the morgue initially ideal for preserving corpses, was also the perfect environment for controlling lactic fermentation, especially in the warm summer months.**

Close by are the wild Black Mountains of Wales and the Malverns

of Worcestershire. Looming on the horizon, ever present, they represented true wilderness, a boundary to the rolling fields and valleys. Herefordshire was a forgotten county back then, it still is to a degree. As a child, I enjoyed that sense of being forgotten, it was like stepping back in time. Childhood favourites, such as the Hobbit, felt tangible, a sense that the slightest modulation of reality could bring them to life.

**I now realise how lucky I was to have those experiences. Many people will never get to enjoy the outdoors as I have; untethered and free. The deep connection that comes from learning the character of a landscape, to sit in that landscape as seasons shift from austerity to bountiful, from overripe decay to overwhelming rebirth. To be so still, that wildlife starts to go about its business without care for your presence and if you are truly lucky, inquisitively ask what you are doing on its doorstep.**

For the most part of my career I have been distracted by London and I never went looking for nature in the city as I always had my perfect Herefordshire idyll to think upon. Being a bartender here there was plenty socialising to be done, especially in my mid twenties. There was also plenty of traveling and I have been lucky to venture as far afield as Mexico and Australia, all thanks to my profession. Indeed on a few occasions, deep in the remote

mountains of Oaxaca, I have felt that same sense of being forgotten, of being apart from civilisation and that sense of stillness.

**I think the pandemic has changed the way we relate to nature. Something old in our lizard brains (with the deepest affection for lizards of course) has stirred. Personally it was a saving grace. Like everyone, the pandemic has caused me a huge amount of stress both in a personal and professional sense. At the height of my exasperation, my fiancée Megan had the wisdom, as only she does, to book a camping holiday in Scotland, Loch Chon in the Trossachs to be precise.** Rather gamely and due to the fact that I shamefully cannot drive (at least legally that is), she took on the driving responsibilities. At this juncture, I must add Megan is from New Orleans and this was her first time driving in the UK. After a short flight and stay over in Glasgow, we picked up our rental car and set off. There is a beautiful village named Aberfoyle, you arrive upon it just before Loch Ard, the precursor to Loch Chon. It is here, that upon the taking a rather severe left turn into the village, that the sharp corners of pavement, ungracefully decided to blow out both the tires on the left hand side of the car. We safely pulled into a cul de sac and out of harm's way. I won't go into the details of our forty-eight hour stay in Aberfoyle, as we dealt with useless breakdown insurance, only to say how wonderful and welcoming everyone in the

village was. Megan is now a de facto member of the village Facebook group and is regularly kept abreast of any pertinent developments. I hope that we have the good fortune to break down in Aberfoyle again at some point.

**Before we departed Aberfoyle and as we waited for the local garage to fix the car, we decided to take a scenic walk along the river Forth. As we walked along the path, past the cottages, into the fields and further into the green mass of pines and spruce, I started to notice meadowsweet in bloom, first by the heady scent of tonka bean and hay, then it's big white bouquets. Then came the alexanders, elderflower and ground ivy, accompanied by the most perfect new shoots of Douglas fir, which upon nibbling burst with pink grapefruit and Amalfi lemon. The rest of our time in the Trossachs followed suit as we attempted to catch one of Loch Chon's elusive pike, cooked our meals on an open fire and spent our evenings talking about all manner of silly things, aided by several glugs of Old Pulteney. It is in these moments that time resets, priorities become revised, essentials considered anew and the flimsy canvas of the tent becomes a perfect fortress within which to spend the night.**

Lately I worry about the future of such experiences. I worry about the influence of political lobbying and who has access to nature, that the

outdoors is becoming carved up in our ever increasing wealth divide. That access to the outdoors is no longer seen as a basic human right, no matter your income or social status. I worry about access to nature becoming a luxury commodity and not a common right. In a recent article published by the Guardian, it was ascertained that half of England is owned by less than 1% of the population, with corporations increasingly becoming custodians of large swathes of the English countryside. Further to this our right to roam is increasingly under threat by new legislation, making trespassers out of gentle ramblers, who are now vulnerable to prosecution. I worry that landscapes we think of as bastions of wilderness, such as the Scottish highlands are actually scenes of devastating ecological collapse, remarkably low in bio-diversity, nothing like their old forested selves. **I worry that if we communally cannot experience the wild, we will forget what it looks and feels like. That in losing all this, we are losing part of ourselves in the process.**

I believe, as with most modern socio-political ailments, information is the key to fighting back. In particular books have a role to play in this fight. Books are difficult to hack for starters,

and provided your book is published by a reputed publisher, the veracity of its research will have been verified by an editor and more importantly a legal team. In that spirit I recommend two books: *The Book of Trespass* by Nick Hayes and *Who Owns England* by the superbly named Guy Shrubsole. Further to this, I fervently believe that the hospitality industry has a deep responsibility with regards to highlighting what is happening to our landscape and the impact of farming and fishing upon it.

**Finally, as I sit here writing this, the first days of spring are upon us and sunlight is streaming through the window (much to the dog's enjoyment, having recently discovered the joys of sunbathing). So get outside and find the wildest place you can, if you live in London there are more than you know. I**

highly recommend the old filter beds in Leyton, Tower Hamlets Cemetery, Walthamstow marshes or Hampstead Heath, amongst many, many spots. It's these places that showcase the resilience of nature when given half a chance. **If these enclaves of biodiversity can thrive in the middle of a city, such as London, there is hope for our countryside, we just need to give nature a chance.**



**BY MARCIS.**



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# HANNAH LANFEAR INTERVIEWS

# FAWN WEAVER





THE PHRASE 'NEEDS NO INTRODUCTION' IS BANDIED AROUND BUT GUYS, WE REALLY MEAN IT THIS TIME. FAWN IS AN ENTREPRENEUR, HISTORIAN, NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR, TED SPEAKER AND THE CEO OF UNCLE NEAREST PREMIUM WHISKEY, WHICH SHE LAUNCHED IN 2017 AND HAS CATAPULTED TO HISTORIC SUCCESS WITH AN ALL-FEMALE LEADERSHIP TEAM. IN MARCH OF THIS YEAR FAWN WAS ADDED TO ENDEAVOR'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS, ALONGSIDE SOME GUY CALLED ELON MUSK. HERE, SHE SPEAKS WITH FOUNDER OF 'THE MIXING CLASS' AND WSET EDUCATOR, HANNAH LANFEAR.

**HANNAH:** You have grown up around music all your life, at the heart of Motown's extended family. Did it seem quite normal to you when you were small to have to have soul stars coming around for tea?

**FAWN:** They wouldn't come for tea, but they would come for Bible study. My father began a group called the Christian Entertainers Fellowship (CEF) so folks like Stevie, Smokey, Phillip Bailey and more than I can even recount were at our home all the time. That continued well beyond my childhood though. Any time I'd visit my parents, they always had entertainers at their home.

**H:** Looking at the incredible career you've had, you're exceptional at making things happen. Where did your business acumen and drive come from?

**F:** My mother would tell you it was just innate, that what I've done is something she nor my father could have ever fathomed, and that was before Uncle Nearest. I think some of it came from my father, however, as he was one of less than a handful of people who negotiated his publishing rights with Berry Gordy from the beginning. Barry was known for his 360 deals, but my dad always owned the rights

to his music and now we (his children) do. I don't think he could have done that without some sort of innate business acumen, as he grew up picking cotton in the fields of Houston and his mother was a housekeeper.

**H: You had already bossed out an amazing career in writing, becoming a best-selling author, and opened one of LA's hottest restaurants with renowned Chef Garvin when you then chose to immerse yourself in the hospitality industry, taking a series of roles within the trade. Can you tell us more about that experience, (where you worked and what you did) and how you found that change in work culture?**

**F:** It was wonderful as many successful entrepreneurs from an early age never really have a chance to learn how to lead by having been led. Meaning, I became an employee, which made me a better employer. I opened a special events firm, FEW Entertainment, in 1994 and soon after added public relations as I had a natural knack for it and gained two significant clients on the events side who wanted me to also take over their PR. I met Chef G. Garvin when he was opening up Reign restaurant in Beverly Hills as their executive chef. He'd mentioned to one of my

team members that they needed someone to do their grand opening party and so G. Garvin reached out to me. I wasn't available to do his event but agreed to do the walk-through and give my thoughts on what type of events person he should hire. After that, we hit it off and I began bringing clients to Reign regularly. When G. decided he wanted his next career move to be a restaurant of his own, I developed the business plan, oversaw a re-branding (he was known by Gerry Garvin before the re-branding), raised the half million dollars to get the restaurant started and then worked alongside him as minority owner and business manager for the first four years of the restaurant's lifespan. It was following this experience that I made a decision to step back from entrepreneurialism and enjoy what I thought would be a much more relaxed life. As it turns out, I'm not wired to have a leisurely life. I happen to love working very long hours, six days a week and I was made to be an entrepreneur. So, I fully leaned into that and have continued on ever since.

**H: You have used your resources to support and elevate black talent – and specifically in an industry like hospitality where black-owned businesses are underrepresented,**

**and legacies overlooked. Do you see positive change on the horizon for making cocktail and spirits culture a more equitable industry?**

**F:** 100 percent. We're about to make an announcement that will help spur this along even faster and I couldn't be more excited about where our industry is heading. I believe we are paving the way for other industries to follow our lead, but if we can take this industry from being almost all white male to actually looking like America (70% minority, e.g., BIPOC and women), then any industry can successfully make that shift.

**H: Where did your attraction to the cocktail and spirits world spring from? Was it the cocktails, the hospitality, or the use of spirits themselves that drew you?**

**F:** I was following a story and building a legacy. Everything else came secondary to that. If the story I'd been chasing was that of the first Black jeans maker, what we'd be talking about right now is the fastest-growing independent jeans company in America. So, the reason we're talking about Uncle Nearest being the fastest-growing, most awarded American whiskey in the world, is because Nearest Green was a whiskey maker.

**H: We're all bartenders that read this mag by and large so I have to ask! Is there a cocktail bar that has been a transformative experience for you? Do you make cocktails at home and what do you put together if you do?**

**F:** Multnomah Whiskey Library in Portland, OR. Before my experience there, I mostly drank barrel strength single barrel Bourbons. I had this misperception that you shouldn't mix great whiskey. Then I went to MWL, and the mixologists were part spirits historian and part drink maker extraordinaire. I shared the flavors I liked and next thing I knew, I was sipping on what remains one of my favorite cocktails of all time. I don't think it actually has a name, but it's a little like if you took a Tennessee Gold (essentially, a Gold Rush made with Uncle Nearest), added ginger, and then took that mixed drink and then carbonated it. Let me tell you, after that drink, my little snooty "I only drink my whiskey neat" went right out the window. I wanted to then experience any and every talented mixologist around the world. I've had some spectacular cocktails since then, but whenever I'm in Portland I have to go to MWL and ask for them to recreate that drink.

**H: I read that your inspiration to further research the life of Nearest**

**Green began after stumbling on an article about him. On learning that this man's name had been erased you got completely caught up in the history of this unsung hero of whiskey distilling, dedicating yourself to elevating his story: the man who taught Jack Daniels to distill (and in doing so can be credited with the success of the entire category of Tennessee whiskey). I'm so keen to know more about your trip to Lynchburg to find the living family of Nearest Green. With some of those you interviewed more than a hundred years old, it seemed like you got to meet living connections to distant history! How aware were they of their family legacy? Has it been a project that has brought the family closer together?**

**F:** Everything fell into place when I arrived here in Lynchburg, like a movie that was being directed from heaven, as none of it makes sense to me -- even to this day. My husband and I hadn't been in Lynchburg but for a few hours before the now eldest living descendant of Jack Daniel came through the library doors where we were doing research. By the time we finished speaking to her, she'd not only connected us with a descendant of Nearest who had been researching their family history full-time for over 25 years, but also told us the home where

Jack grew up and where the distillery was where he learned how to make Tennessee whiskey from Nearest Green (that turned out to be Distillery No. 7 in district number 4, and then changed to Distillery No. 16 in district number 5 in the late 19th century) was for sale. The 313-acre property had been on the market for 15 months and still hadn't sold.

She then had her cousin call me, who was a realtor, and offered to take us to see the property the next day. We immediately put an offer in on the home (I mean, seriously, this was a piece of American history... how it was sitting there for 15 months is still baffling to me). The next month, I learned she wasn't just a realtor. She'd worked in the family business - Jack Daniel's - her entire life, and when she retired from the family business after 31 years, she was the Director of Whiskey Operations. She offered that if I ever decided to honor Nearest with his own bottle, she'd come out of retirement to make sure I got it right. She is the Director of Whiskey Operations for Uncle Nearest.

**H: It seems to me that while at some point over the 20th century Nearest Green's history was written out of the Jack Daniels story, that present day Brown Forman has**

**readily embraced Green's history, even re-writing the story to make Jack himself the 'second master distiller'. Were you pleasantly surprised at the response of such a large company?**

**F:** I was, and believe it was the right thing to do.

**H: At what point did you realise the whiskey industry was calling you?**

**F:** I don't know that it was the whiskey industry that was calling me. I think it was the legacy of Nearest Green that was calling me, and the whiskey industry was where his legacy needed to be cemented.

**H: Fast forward to today and you've relocated to Tennessee, built a distillery, and have as the master blender the great-great granddaughter of Nearest Green. It's a phenomenal achievement to have pulled together this project and to even have drawn in members of the surviving family. Have you begun distilling at the new site? Can you tell us a little bit about the stills, the site, and maybe anything you learned in getting a distillery off the ground?**

**F:** We have been distilling ourselves since very close to our inception at Tennessee Distilling in Columbia, TN. They have several 36" column

stills and have been a brilliant partner of ours on the distilling, aging and bottling side while we get our own Still House up and running. At our 270-acre Nearest Green Distillery in Shelbyville, TN, our still house was built out with an 18" Vendome copper still but the space was designed to accommodate a second 18" Vendome copper still the moment it's needed. We are fortunate that so many of the industry's foremost leaders came in as consultants for us, because they understood the significance of having the first distillery in the world named after an African American and came alongside us to ensure we got it right.

When you're building a start-up distillery with a copper still, you can figure things out as you go. When you're already selling 250,000 cases and in your 11th quarter in a row of triple-digit gains (100%+ over same time prior year), you don't have that kind of flexibility. You have to make sure you're prepared to scale up to a million cases a year pretty quickly, which means we had to bring in the best engineers and industry leaders to assist. And I'm definitely not above phoning a friend (which, are usually the folks at Jack Daniel's) whenever I run into something I don't fully understand. Our Director of Whiskey Operations, Sherrie Moore,

hired and trained Jeff Arnett, trained his predecessor, Jimmy Bedford, and hired their current AGM, Melvin Keebler. So, I've been fortunate to be able to have that connection from day one. I reach out to Melvin anytime we're trying to make a decision on an element of our distillery and we have multiple options. He's on speed dial for that.

**H: What's the method to making your award-winning Tennessee whiskey?**

**F:** That's a two-part question now that we have our own 2017 barrel entry whiskey making its debut into the market soon through one of our blends. For our current Uncle Nearest, beginning with spectacular sourced whiskey is imperative. Then having someone with an innate talent for blending, like Victoria Eady Butler, is the second ingredient. Bring the two together, and it is magic.

For our whiskey we laid down that we will begin blending in soon, the key was following every single thing we knew about Nearest Green's way of making whiskey. We knew his barrel entry proof was 110 and that is a recipe utilized between 80-84% corn. We can assume his grains were non-GMO farm to glass so ours are too. We know he never stored in a rick house that was

taller than one-story and that his warehouse was non-temperature controlled so we've followed that too. Uncle Nearest is the most awarded American whiskey (which, of course, includes Bourbon) of 2019 and 2020 and we're currently working on retaining that title in 2021. So far, so good!

**H: Are you musical yourself? How do you incorporate music into your day-to-day and what are you listening to most right now? What do you drink when you have an Uncle Nearest and is there a soundtrack to that drink?**

**F:** I love to sing (although I prefer singing loud and off pitch...not sure why) and I love to dance. My favorite music ranges from country (Garth Brooks and Tim McGraw) to gospel (Maverick City) to "The Carters," as my husband refers to the two Spotify playlists I like to listen to most on long drives (Beyoncé and Jay Z).

**H: In setting up the Nearest Green foundation your company has made it possible for any descendant of Nearest Green to access a fully supported college education. What have been your proudest moments from the Nearest Green Foundation to date?**

**F:** There have been so many! I

attended our first graduation in 2019 and one of Nearest's descendants graduated with Honors from the University of Tennessee. She then went on to get her masters at the University of Alabama. We just had another graduate from UT a few weeks ago (but this time I couldn't attend as it was a virtual ceremony) and have had quite a few graduate with either their undergraduate or master's degree since. But my proudest moments would have to be forming the Nearest & Jack Advancement Initiative alongside our friends at Jack Daniel's, launching the

Black Business Booster program which actively assists 17 different Black-founded and owned brands, stepping up during the pandemic to distribute more than 250,000 N-95 masks to hospitals and front-line workers, and distributing cloth masks to those within communities in which people of color were dying at disproportionately high rates. Between each of these initiatives in 2020, we gave away over \$500,000. For a company only three years old at the time the pandemic hit, I think that's pretty extraordinary.



**BY HANNAH  
+ FAWN.**



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# STEFFIN OGHENE, FANY CAMARENA + 'CHAVA'

## A MODERN LOOK AT MIXTO



**While in recent years there have been other pretenders to the crown, it's probably fair to say that tequila remains the bartenders' choice the world over.**

No two bars are the same of course, and bartending styles and tastes vary wildly around the globe, but it's unlikely you'll lose friends in most places by offering a shot of Jalisco's finest to the people behind the bar. For many (DISCARD included), it is a spirit that provided an early "AHA!" moment in their hospitality journeys, upon realising there was a huge difference between the turpentine-esque stuff you drank (and threw up) at that party when you were seventeen, and the real stuff gracing the shelves at big name bars the world over. It is often a rite of passage for young bartenders – you learn that the horrible stuff you drank was bad because it was made badly, and because crucially, it wasn't actually all agave in the bottle. Only tequila that could make the boast that it was made from 100% Tequiliana Weber Azul (or blue agave to those similarly lacking in Spanish) could ever be good enough from now on, this was real tequila, the rest was just for frat boys, hen parties, those who weren't educated, those who weren't in the know. Idiots.

But surely we're not so shallow nowadays? For an industry that prides itself on prizing flavour

above all else, should that not be the deciding factor on what goes in your speedrail?

The sad passing last year of Don Javier – owner and long-time operator of La Capilla, the oldest and probably most well-known cantina in Tequila – brought about a social media inspired resurgence of his signature drink, the Batanga. A simple affair, the drink comprises tequila, fresh lime, and Coke, in a salt rimmed glass (stirred with a knife if you want to be authentic), but it was his choice of tequila that was surprising. El Tequileño blanco; A mixto. This place – for many years a mecca for thousands of agave loving hospitality folk the world over was going through cases of the stuff. It's not like they did it accidentally, La Capilla is one of the best bars in the world (number fourteen in 2013, no less), and the best tequila distilleries on earth are on their doorstep. If Don Javier was able to take his pick of the bunch, why would he choose a mixto?

Thing is – and this might come as a shock – sometimes, even at DISCARD, we might not be totally correct all the time. For starters, calling tequila "Jalisco's finest" is a little disingenuous when tequila can be made in five different states in Mexico, and while we at DISCARD do have a genuine love for tequila, we're certainly not experts. So DISCARD reached out to some of the finest agave minded people in

the business to explore both sides of the debate, and find out whether we have been doing mixto dirty all these years.

So, what is mixto, and if it is so derided, why make it at all? As mentioned earlier, tequila is made either entirely, or in part by fermenting and distilling the sugars found in blue agave. Since 1970, all tequila must contain at least 51% blue agave, but the rest can be made from other sugars, such as corn or cane, generally known as piloncillo.

Fany Camarena is the Commercial Director for Tequila Ocho, and a sixth generation tequilera and agavera [agave grower]. Based in Arandas, she has been involved in the family business since she was fifteen. “I don’t have a lot of experience with mixto because my family has always produced 100% agave tequila, since 1890. The 100% agave category has grown, and from 2018 to 2020 the industry produced more 100% than mixto. The consumer is more informed and looking for transparency on every product they consume, this is my perception of why mixto is decreasing. Of course, there is always a market for both categories. There could be a market for “high quality” mixto because of the price, that will be always cheaper than a good 100% Agave Tequila, I think there is no comparison.

There is no getting away from the fact that agave is an expensive, resource-hungry commodity, and the cost of this raw material is reflected in the bottle price of premium 100% agave tequilas.

**Mixto tequilas were introduced at a lower price with the intention of being served in mixed drinks, and for most of us these mixtos were the only tequilas widely available at the time. The odd thing is that while mixto tequilas are generally derided by the bar industry and increasingly knowledgeable consumers, this practice is commonplace, and widely accepted in other categories. No one would bat an eye at a blended whisky being used in a highball, so why do people turn their nose up at a mixto in a Margarita?**

Salvador Rosales Trejo is a third generation Tequilero and is in charge of production and commercialisation of Tequila Cascahuin in El Arenal, Jalisco. “I work alongside my father and brothers; we try to maintain authentic and traditional processes for the production of tequila. I have fourteen years experience working formally in the tequila industry. For me there is a lot of passion, pride and tradition in what we do which is distilled agave tequila.” Cascahuin produce a mixto tequila and Salvador – or Chava as he is introduced to us – states there is a place for it if it is made well. “It is important to define quality before

anything else. Tequila mixto made with proper development, looking for an interesting profile would be something important within a portfolio.”

**It seems to some very much a binary issue – mixto is bad and 100% agave is good – but it is most certainly possible to make a bad 100% agave tequila. Advances in the processing technology used with agave, coupled with an increased global demand meant many brands realising that there was huge profit to be made in sacrificing taste for efficiency. Traditional brick hornos used to caramelize the natural sugars are effective but can take three days to slowly roast and cool the agave before it can be fermented and distilled. Steam pressured autoclaves replaced them in some distilleries, quartering the time needed to cook the agave, and then in more recent years that too gave way allowing some of the larger producers to switch to using a diffuser – which extracts the raw starch from the pina directly, without any pre-cooking at all.**

This process is super-efficient and wastes little, so it’s great for the bottom line, but many would argue the process creates an inferior tequila.

Steffin Oghene is VP of Business Development & Global Marketing for Tequila El Tequileño, and now lives in Mexico. “I gained an interest

in tequila around 2006, but tequila in the UK was really small at this point and only a handful of brands existed so there was limited info to learn from. In 2007, I was asked to run Green & Red in London by Henry Besant and Dre Masso; two of the leading agave experts in the UK at the time. Our team there was fantastic, and we focused on creating an authentic Mexican experience and serving some amazing agave spirits. Since then, I’ve traveled to Mexico hundreds of times and made great friends in the industry who all have the same objective - to spread the word of agave and ensure people have the best experiences drinking the magical spirit of tequila!”

“Let’s look to the past and the present. Regular tequila [mixto] was an extremely common and popular category in the past and it wasn’t until the late eighties when a raise in price on sugar taxes drove producers to focus and build the 100% category. For years it has been the message that 100% is high quality and mixtos are cheap and low quality. However, this is a bit of a general assumption to apply it to the whole industry. With the rise in modern production methods, we have seen in many cases a decrease in quality of 100% agave tequilas where producers focus on quantity over quality - harvesting immature agave at three years old over mature six- to eight-year-old agave for example. The true statement

that everybody should learn is that a well-crafted tequila is a great tequila! A producer that focuses on quality when producing their mixto can produce a product of higher quality than a badly made 100% agave”.

**We ask whether there is a feeling in Mexico that the global consumers' attitude toward mixto has changed in recent years: “I would say that the global consumers' attitude has changed towards the category as a whole. Consumers have become more educated and understand the category more. It has become more and more a choice spirit and mixto fits into that for those tequila aficionados that understand the quality that can be shown in these products. However, for sure, more education is required for a larger audience to accept good quality mixto in the same way as 100% agave tequila is perceived.”** Chava also believes consumer knowledge has risen significantly. “Yes, it has totally changed. Now, the market is looking for 100% agave tequila. But I believe that [to some people] the profile of tequila mixto producers is that they are only looking for better prices and production efficiency; leaving aside the part of being a product that can provide interesting and different characteristics to express other tequila profiles.”

Two factors that have forced

the hand of producers in other categories were a sudden rise in popularity for that spirit, and a lack of aging stock to meet this demand, leading to a push towards blended and non-age statement products. As agave can take up to eight years to grow and the spirit can be aged up to three years, coupled with rising agave prices, the panel were asked whether they felt a similar situation could occur with the tequila industry?

“I don't think it's a maybe, I think it's a definite.” States Steffin.

“Agave prices have been so high that producers are reluctant to fill their barrel houses with expensive tequila, and so producers have been extremely careful in how they manage their inventory and have been less active in setting down tequila for the future”. Chava highlights the shortage of agave as a big issue in the future: “What is a reality is the popularity of tequila alongside other factors has taken us to a shortage of raw material [blue agave], maintaining an expensive price in the market, meaning businesses and above all the small businesses don't have enough inventory to maintain categories like añejo and extra añejo. Therefore, in the near future there may be a shortage or fewer inventories of these categories”. Fany confirms the shortages but is more thoughtful on the future. “I believe that each distillery knows how their customers and importers

tendency is going to go and have been planning accordingly. In our case, we say that making tequila is like having a crystal ball that needs to tell you how the future for tequila will be, so you can start acting today to be ready for seven to nine years later, and this applies for Tequila Blanco or Aged Tequila too.”

So, do the panel see any parallels between tequila and Scotch when it comes to more reasonably priced, higher quality blended products? “Yes” states Chava “this topic is growing, and it is normal that we all are seeking growth, I think the issue is more in the form that growth takes”. Fany points again to consumers driving change in the market but stresses the need for honesty and transparency. “I think the new consumers are more conscious about the products which are transparent and honest. We are proud to tell exactly all about our process, what we have blended or how old an aged tequila is. If you do things right, there is no need to ‘non-say it’”.

Steffin remarks that perhaps the two industries, both so rooted in tradition, might mutually benefit from embracing a more modern, collaborative approach. “What I will say is that in my opinion, despite some amazing creations, in the tequila industry we are still learning and are a little behind Scotch whisky in terms of aging and blending expertise. In fact, there are

many working in tequilas that have learned their trade from the Scotch and Cognac industries. Enrique Fonseca, a well-respected master distiller in the industry, studied in Scotland and Cognac, learning the art of aging and blending before setting out on his journey to make tequila. Don Jorge Salles Cuervo, the founder of El Tequileño had learnt the impact from the softer aging methods of larger barrels that were more commonly found in the Cognac and wine industries.

**But overall, from a consumer perception, I think there is still a way to go in order to educate and in turn gain the same respect that is seen in non-aged and blended Scotch. But to say all mixto is bad and 100% agave is only good is like saying all Blended Scotch is bad and only single malt is good, I would like to see what John Glaser from Compass Box would say about that!”**

The tequila industry is certainly steeped in tradition, just a glance at how it is marketed to the trade and consumers shows words like heritage, family, time-honoured used throughout. We ask how the industry is innovating and whether they should be embracing change a little more, especially in light of the success of relatively recent non-traditional products such as extra añejo, or cristalino?

“I wouldn’t say they are non-traditional’ begins Steffin, “I

personally would describe them as part of the evolution of the industry through innovation". "Extra añejo I think has earned its place to even compete with a bourbon, whisky or a nice rum" says Fany, "the oaky and sweet notes are perfect to sip and savour, but not the same case for a cristalino that I see more as a fad or mode that cannot last forever. **Honestly we [at Ocho] don't see the purpose of doing an extra distillation with an añejo, you spend effort, time and money making a nice tequila that sits on a barrel for more than a year and then you decide to get rid of the colour and cut the flavour and aroma distilling it again or (even worse) passing it through charcoal filters that will remove everything that you have gained. Don't really see the point. In this case I would better recommend to drink vodka and let's forget about tequila**".

To conclude we talk about sustainability, and whether the process of making tequila itself can be improved. An agave plant takes up to eight years to mature and requires a lot of processing and energy to make it into the final product. By using other sugars in place of some of the agave, would that not be creating a more sustainable spirit? "The tequila industry with or without mixto needs to search for ways to impact the environment less" concludes Chava, "and that includes a lot of resources, talking about raw agave

we need to be more careful with the way the plant is produced and the land where it is planted, and use more sustainable agricultural practices." This sentiment is echoed by Fany "when an agavero cares about the agave and his land, there are always ways of reducing the environmental impact and not damaging the soil. We let the land rest using crop rotations for at least two years before planting agave on the same place again, we use organic fertiliser and this reduces the need to use chemical pesticides." Steffin highlights a different production issue "The biggest challenge for nearly all producers I speak to is how to deal with the vinazas. This is the stillage. It's a complicated by-product of distillation that is extremely toxic. There are currently loose regulations regarding the disposal of it and unfortunately, many producers still discard of this in local waterways which destroys wildlife and negatively impacts the surrounding area. At El Tequileño, as with other environmentally conscious producers, we combine the vinazas with the agave fibres to create a rich compost which can be used as a natural fertilizer on the agave fields. That way you take from the earth but you also give back!"

It's clear that all three of our panel are fiercely proud of their products and contribution to the tequila industry, and rightly so. The tequila

industry is one that has seen huge changes over the last few years, and with a continued trend upwards in sales globally predicted in the next year or so, it seems inevitable that increased prices of raw materials and reduced quantity of aging stock will force producers and consumers to rethink their positions on mixto – if it's good enough for the late, great Don Javier, surely it's worthy of your spicy marg? As we finish putting this article

together there's a ping as another email comes through with a last word from Steffin. "Just another thing that's worth mentioning. There are millions of competitions around the world that split mixto from 100% agave. Personally, tequila is tequila and should all be judged in the same way under the same conditions to avoid judges favouring one category over another. I think this would raise some surprises!"



**BY THE AGAVE  
DREAM TEAM.**



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**MICHAEL +  
SARAH  
VACHON**

**CITIZENSHIP  
FROM THE  
GROUND UP**



MICHAEL AND SARAH ARE THE FOUNDERS OF CITIZENS OF SOIL, A SINGLE ESTATE EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL THAT SUPPORTS INDEPENDENT FARMERS, SHOWCASES TERROIR AND INVESTS IN HEALTHY SOIL. ANND THAT'S NOT ALL THEY DO. MICHAEL FOUNDED THE AWARD-WINNING MAVERICK DRINKS AND IS AN ADVISOR TO FOOD AND DRINKS STARTUPS WHILE SARAH HEADS UP MARKETING AT THE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE 'PROVENANCE' A SOFTWARE FOR COMMUNICATING SUSTAINABILITY WITH PROOF, AND IS A MEMBER OF WOMEN IN OLIVE OIL, AND! YOU CAN GET 10% OFF THEIR PRODUCTS WITH THE CODE DISCARD10. GET SHOPPING. THIS ARTICLE IS WRITTEN FROM THE POV OF MICHAEL, PERFECTED BY SARAH.

**When the real impact of the pandemic on the hospitality industry became clear in April of last year, I found myself at a bit of a crossroads – founder of a business that didn't need a founder to see its way through the challenges it was facing.**

You see, over time and as a business grows, the founder's role becomes

increasingly strategic and a lot less about the day-to-day. It's just the natural way of things; founders like to create things, but there's almost certainly better people to run them. With the Maverick Drinks business being forced to adjust to find new opportunities, anyone in our business who found themselves without much work to do was asked to volunteer for furlough – myself included.

I spent the next few weeks trying to stay informed of what was going on with the business, even as I was sitting on the sidelines. It was the first time in the seven years since we started Maverick Drinks that I wasn't there putting all of my energy into seeing it succeed (or to share in its struggles). It was more than just the work – I actually felt like I'd lost a bit of my identity. Almost the entirety of my career in hospitality was as the founder of Maverick Drinks and if I wasn't doing that, what was I going to do?

Back in the Summer of 2006, having backpacked (and partied) my way through the Greek island of Los and made my way back to the UK, I ended up on an early morning ferry to Crete, so that I could catch a cheap flight that evening. Sat next to me was a woman from the Cretan capital, Heraklion, who happened to be an English teacher.

She invited me into her home, cooked easily the best meal I'd had all week (not hard when my diet consisted of hard liquor and kebabs), gave me a tour of the city, and made sure I was at the airport on time. (It was only years later that I'd find out that Cretans are known for their abundant hospitality). A friendship was born.

I have continued to visit every year since, now two or three times a year. They really are like family - I'm even the godfather to her son. With each visit, they would always send us back to the UK with bottles (read: five litre jugs) of their olive oil. When we'd share it with friends, the reaction was always the same - there was something special about this oil.

**Long before the pandemic hit, my wife, Sarah, and I had been thinking about how we could bottle a small amount or just get the oil from a few trees (because that's how we thought it worked). Towards the end of 2019, we even went so far as trademarking a name and making a plan to get the oil here, but never really had the time or focus to do much more than that.**

Full-time furlough meant I now had the time, and I also knew how fortunate I was to have a supportive

employer, and some pay still coming in, which gave me the motivation. We also reduced our outgoing expenses significantly by being forced to give up our two favourite things: going out and traveling. So, we started putting every penny we had (and a bit more) straight into creating our own brand of Single Estate Extra Virgin Olive Oil.

Everyone thought we were crazy - what did we know about the olive oil business? Just because we had a source for the liquid didn't mean we had any experience of how to create a food brand, much less how to sell it. Shouldn't we be saving our money for what was (and still is) an uncertain future?

We decided to start selling olive oil for a few reasons. For starters, hardly anyone we knew could name any olive oil brands. Something that many of them used almost every day and yet - they couldn't name a single one. That signaled an opportunity to do something different in the category.

We bought every Greek olive oil we could find (and many from other countries too) and truth be told, there were hardly any differences from one brand to the next. They all shared the same design cues: gold foiling, old world font styles, almost cliché references to their

heritage and tradition. The flavours all seemed muted compared to our vibrant Greek oil. There was just nothing exciting about any of them and so we were convinced we could do something different.

Drawing on my experience with craft spirits and our shared love of wine, we chose a Burgundy wine bottle for our olive oil which set the framework for what we were trying to do. We often look at the natural wine movement and have drawn many parallels between these two worlds – highlighting terroir, different varieties of olives, their impact on flavour, and more.

Another reason was, obviously, that we had direct access to this incredible olive oil - but it was more than that. In the past, the Amargiotakis family would typically sell their oil to a bulk agent who would carelessly blend it with hundreds of other families' olive oils (of differing qualities) and send it off to Athens, where it'd be sold as a commodity. From there, it would be shipped off to any number of other bottlers (and countries). Any sense of where this beautiful olive oil came from or who produced it would be erased and the original producers (our extended Greek family) got very little for it – not enough to live on and certainly not enough to invest in improving their

farming practices from one year to the next.

We believe in fair pay, so we were driven by a desire to help them make their harvest a meaningful part of their lives. Even if we failed, we'd still be putting more money into their pockets and making a positive difference in their lives – even for a short time – and that'd be enough for us.

Lastly, we couldn't believe that people knew so little about something used every day – and even praised in the foodie community – as a central part of so much of our food. People have no idea where most of their olive oils come from, who makes them, or what goes into them. They don't know how true their health claims are for different styles of olive oil or even really how best to use them (hint: there's more to olive oil than just salads and breads).

So we set out to create a brand that, first and foremost, we could develop a community around – something I'd always pushed for with Maverick Drinks. It had to relate to the land where we source the product from, but also be something people could identify with. We thought about some of the things in our lives that become the strongest bonds for many of

us, like family, religion, and country. With Sarah and I both being from the US and thinking of ourselves as ‘global citizens’, we originally agreed on the name “State of Soil”, because it was both about the state (country), but also the physical state (health) of the soil – geddit? We even trademarked the name, but eventually agreed that it wasn’t the country that was important, but the people within it, and thus Citizens of Soil was born.

What we didn’t realise was that we’d quickly fall even more in love with olive oil and discover an entire community of similarly passionate people that we didn’t even know existed. We listened to olive oil podcasts, subscribed to the Olive Oil Times, Sarah joined an international group called “Women in Olive Oil”, we did virtual tastings with olive oil sommeliers, and we watched every olive oil production video we could find.

We learned about acidity levels, polyphenols, and olive varieties. We tasted dozens of olive oils and, of course, learned the proper way to taste them. Most importantly, we went out to Crete for the harvest and were involved in every step of the production from collecting the olives to extracting the oil at the mill. We literally had a hand in creating something delicious

from its raw ingredients – and it reminded me of the craft that went into producing the extraordinary spirits at the first distillery I ever visited (Ransom Spirits in Sheridan, Oregon).

That’s what really draws me in and makes this all so easy to write about – watching something go from a natural raw resource, whether that’s grain, fruit, nut, or anything else, and through processes that have been around for thousands of years, turn it into something completely different that can be enjoyed by all. It’s as much art as it is science, and the result is something that brings people together – whether that’s around a dinner table or propping up a bar.

**It’d be cliché to say we’re not doing it for the money – it also wouldn’t be true – but the main reason we want this to be successful, is so that we can continue doing more of it. We’d love to do more olive oils from more producers who are doing things in a regenerative way. This means right by the planet and people. We also have plans of how we could replace other household staples that we all take for granted and do this in a more fair, circular way.**

But most of all, we want to continue

creating things that everyone can enjoy that pay respect to the people that make them and the places they come from. **As the owner of the olive groves, Maria, said to me, what they were producing was previously under-appreciated, so it fills her with pride to see people here in the UK saying such wonderful things about something they work hard to produce.**

We may not have known anything about olive oil at the start of this

adventure, but the best investment I could think to make was investing in ourselves. We're learning new things every day, developing new skills, working through the issues, and celebrating even the smallest wins. We're hustling, we're growing, and we're doing it our way. Most importantly, we're doing something with purpose that connects people and places at a time when many people, including ourselves, have felt a lot more disconnected than usual.



**BY MICHAEL  
+ SARAH.**

10



# AMANDA VICTORIA

ON

# PASSION + ENTREPRENEURSHIP





AMANDA IS AN AWARD-WINNING COCKTAIL AND SPIRITS ENTREPRENEUR WITH OVER FIFTEEN YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN THE ALCOHOLIC SPIRITS INDUSTRY. MOST NOTABLY, SHE IS THE FOUNDER OF SIPONEY - RYE WHISKEY CANNED COCKTAILS MADE WITH THE BEST INGREDIENTS, ON A MISSION TO SUPPORT HONEYBEE ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM. SHE IS A PROUD NYC NATIVE, LATINA AND MOTHER WHOSE WORK HAS BEEN FEATURED IN THE NEW YORK TIMES, FORBES, THE WALL STREET JOURNAL AND NOW - DISCARD. A CAREER HIGHLIGHT, WE'RE SURE.

**E**ntrepreneurship, for me, is rooted in my love of storytelling. My passion for performance began as a young girl hosting neighbourhood magic shows, with early signs of establishing a revenue model through ticket sales using currency found in nature, like leaves and twigs.

Having attended college during the Great Recession of the early 2000s in NYC, I found myself working in bars and restaurants - sadly considered a formerly more recession-proof option than nowadays - to make a buck. But, as with anything I do, I'm unable to just stick a toe in, so to speak. I couldn't simply just wait tables and go home. I had to learn every aspect of the business of operating a bar where ingredients and craft mattered; to my fortune of being in the right place at the right time, I found myself sharing this mindset while working alongside some of the greatest leaders of the eventual craft cocktail resurgence. With fresh ingredients, namely citrus, to thank for our passion.

I transitioned to corporate liquor after working many late nights, seeing it as an opportunity to work during the daytime, travel the world, and spread the love of the craft cocktail that my peers and I set forth in NYC. I was given a chance to tell stories for a living - those of the brands I would go on to become ambassador to - as well as the



stories from the bar scene in NYC, leading the charge in changing the way people drank around the world. Storytelling became educational; our passions in New York were replicated in bars across the globe. Using real ingredients, real fruit, all I had ever known, was now of utmost importance to this burgeoning new bar scene. To share our passions and methods as a traveling teacher is how I thrived working in well-regarded “entrepreneurial” corporate alcohol jobs. But these roles, as many do in corporations, often expired. However, my passion for integrity in how cocktails and spirits are made, as well as ingredients, only became more paramount.

**I held the role as “traveling teacher” (i.e., “ambassador”) for approximately six corporations, some of the very largest in the world, before I found myself leaving my office on Fifth Avenue while shredding my corporate credit card and awaiting my last paycheck in February 2018. While these roles were often sold as entrepreneurial because they were rooted in combining brand endorsement with professional experience, they were far from it. I would come to learn the grit of working for myself the hard way, as I so often do.**

I was fortunate to have been able to spend the better part of a year on the ground - healing myself from years of consistent plane travel, late nights, jet lag and dehydration -

prior to launching my first product, as well as having my first child. During this year of purposefully slowed-down time, I got to know myself better, my desires, my wants and wishes, but most of all what would eventually become my life’s mission. And so, I prepared my parachute while focusing on my health and athleticism, and for the first time, learning how to “travel” expansively while looking within through meditation, and not leaving the ground at all.

Siponey, my first product in spirits, a premium canned cocktail made with the best ingredients and on an environmental mission, was born about a year after this time upon meeting the key to my keyhole, my co-founder Joseph Mintz. Our first child was born soon after.

**While I had taken the time to heal and prepare for what would become the true beginning of my entrepreneurial journey, nothing could have prepared us for launching a new company postpartum during a pandemic. My pregnancy, although apparently textbook, was the hardest time of my life, mainly because I felt I was losing the athleticism that had come to define my approach to survival in an industry that was historically very challenging on health. Postpartum was similar, I was living in what felt like a foreign body that was so greatly relied upon by a baby for survival. Joey and I spent these times building Siponey conceptually, which was**

challenging for the many numerous reasons creating a new product with worldly ambitions would be. When I was three months postpartum, we planned our first production run. And then the pandemic began.

**Siponey's point of differentiation came largely from the frustration of not being able to make as large of an impact as I would have liked to while working for corporate alcohol companies. I would create concepts in-house supported by large budgets that would still somehow fall short of follow-through because of an overall lack of passion. There is a lot of stifled creativity in corporations across all industries - alcohol is no exception. The various reasons range from lack of diversity to poor leadership, but overall, it's the idea of this is how we've always done it, and this is how we will continue to do it.**

**Here lies my breaking point: my passions are stubbornly uncompromisable. Innovation is rarely, if ever, truly bred within larger corporations. It's counter-intuitive to the tried-and-true profit-drivers - no matter how flat the outcome, the old way of**

**doing it usually wins, and the old guard, often painfully lacking diversity, leads that charge. All at a pace which is far too slow for my particular overall passion of changing the way the world drinks.**

Siponey is made with the best ingredients and produced in a mindful way that is both sustainable and giving to the environment, as part of its DNA. Our passion for ingredients is born of my time creating craft cocktails and our passion for the environment is born from my co-founder, Joey's, time studying as a horticulturist. It's really as simple as our passions epitomized.

Building a successful brand with authenticity has to be a personal journey. Identifying the opportunity, perhaps something largely upsetting to you personally, is where the greatest ideas come from. An honest point of differentiation that solves a problem is what long-term brand vision is built upon. Passion is possibly the only credential needed of a founder.

For us, that passion is people and the planet.



**BY AMANDA.**

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**LUCY  
PALLETT - JONES**

**FROM  
THE  
BONE**

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LUCY WAS RECOMMENDED TO US BY PAIGE AUBORT - AND RECOMMENDATIONS DON'T GET MUCH BETTER THAN THAT. SHE HAS ELECTED TO WRITE HER OWN BIO, AS FOLLOWS. "MY NAME IS LUCY PALLETT - JONES. I AM A BARTENDER AND ANALOGUE PHOTOGRAPHER. MY PHOTOGRAPHIC WORK SEEKS THE MOMENTS OF POWER CREATED BY PEOPLE BEHIND BARS. BARTENDING HAS GIVEN ME AN INNATE SENSE OF SELF. I DON'T HAVE COUNTLESS ACCOLADES TO LIST FOR YOU, BUT I DO HAVE A SERIES CALLED SILK AND GRIT.'

**T**he outside world is swallowed whole. You hang your coat, pull up a barstool, and your feet find home. The beat of service swells. It puts a breath in your chest. Scoops plunge into the ice well. Coupes ring out as they are pulled from the back bar. Fridge seals reach but never seem to close. Nothing else matters. Welcome to your Third Place.

Our First and Second Places are the pillars of our lives. First is home. Second is work. Our Third Place is the in-between. It is a transitional space. It is powerful, and it plays the role of mediator in our lives.

A sociologist named Ray Oldenburg coined Third Place in the 1980s. The theory can be applied anthropologically, architecturally and in personal development. To function fully in our private and working relationships, we need to gain distance from them. Third Place brings clarity and perspective to the commotion of home and work. Your Third Place could be a mountain, a library, your gym or a café. My Third Place is a bar.

In your Third Place, social hierarchies are obsolete. Strangers mingle and norms are left at the door. It is comfortable and safe here. You can choose to be engaged or alone, depending on

what you are hungry for. This place is your own, and you are protective of it. You should be. It gives you what you need. Distraction or solitude; a good time or a hard time, a double rye or a martini. Escapism or reality.

It is a powerful realisation to understand that you hold a person's in-between in your hands. You have the ability to make time stand still. Acknowledging this capability changed my understanding of bars and created an acute sense of belonging in hospitality.

**The feeling of a Saturday night in service is indescribable. The back of your neck grows damp with sweat. Your eyes move from garnish to patron and back in rhythm. Dockets fire from the dispense machine faster than Chef can throw plates. Everything feels right, and acute, and endless.**

**This feeling is addictive. It is a sensation so complex that it is impossible to explain to a stranger. Bringing Third Place to life comes from the bone, and with it, a deep sense of purpose.**

The double-edged sword of this purpose is that it can be very difficult to separate our own Places. In the hospitality industry, we quickly find them bleeding together

into a single current. The turmoil of service thickens.

**I'm not sure I can pinpoint when my Places intertwined. Probably very early on in my bartending career. Perhaps when I made friends with the stray lime living behind the glass washer. I found myself deep in the gritty, beautiful current of hospitality, and I quite frankly loved it. I lived with my co-workers. None of my friends worked Mondays.**

**But for a long time, my Third Place was compromised. I didn't really have one. Without this place, I struggled to gain clarity. Life blurred. While I was deeply satisfied by sculpting Third Place for others, I had sacrificed this experience for myself.**

Once I faced the problem, which was tied in with ego, sense of belonging and lack of self-control, I worked to untangle it. The ache in my mind thawed, and my subconscious had the opportunity to tick over. My life became extraordinary. From my favourite seat, in my favourite venue, I have celebrated, mourned, struggled and succeeded. My Place has held me tightly through two years of highs and lows.

Those of us behind bars intuitively

get it. We may not always be able to articulate it. Many a shift has seen us yearning for the sweet release of a keg exploding, or the roof falling in. There will be many more. But at the end of the day, the answer to “why do you do it?” is always the same: a shrug, and I love it.

To each person reading this, thank you for creating Third Place.

And to my own, Bar Rochford: I love you.

*If you want to read more about Third Place and Third Space, check out *The Great Third Place* by Ray Oldenburg, and *The Third Space Theory* by Adam Fraser. If you are hungry to create better Third Places, read Charlie Trotter’s *Lessons in Excellence*, and *Kitchen Confidential* by Bourdain.*



**BY LUCY.**









These photographs are part of the  
Silk and Grit Series by  
Lucy Pallett - Jones, named as follows.

1. Rochtown, Bar Rochford
2. The Pause, Sideway
3. What About It?, Heartbreaker
4. Line 'Em Up, Sideway
5. Best Seat In The House, Above Board

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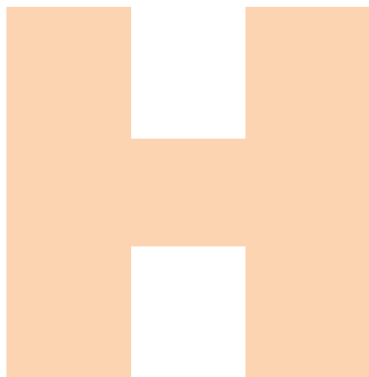
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# HEDDA BRUCE

24  
HOURS  
IN STOCKHOLM





HEDDA HAILS FROM THE SOUTHERN TOWN OF KARLSKRONA, WHICH IS SPLIT ACROSS SEVERAL ISLANDS WITH THE PLEASINGLY SWEDISH SOUNDING NAMES OF TROSSÖ, SALTÖ, STURKÖ, HÄSTÖ, LÄNGÖ AND ASPÖ. STARTING HER HOSPITALITY CAREER IN THE THIRD WORST MCDONALD'S IN SWEDEN, SHE ULTIMATELY DECIDED BARTENDING WAS A BETTER FIT, WORKING HER WAY UP IN SOME OF THE COUNTRY'S BEST BARS BEFORE SETTLING IN AT STOCKHOLM'S INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED (AND FIRM DISCARD FAVOURITE) LITTLE QUARTER AT MARIE LEVEAU. NOW AT 50 BEST EVER-PRESENT TJOGET, SHE SPLITS HER TIME BETWEEN BARTENDING AND CONSULTING, YET STILL THINKS MCDONALD'S IS BETTER THAN MAX BURGER, WHICH FOR THOSE WHO DON'T KNOW, IS COMPLETELY AND UTTERLY WRONG.

### **D: Which area should we stay in, and at which hotel?**

H: Södermalm for sure. Stockholm is spread across over 30,000 islands, and Södermalm is an island in the southern central part of the city that was once known as the “slum” area. Today it's more known as the ultra-hip neighbourhood in the heart of Stockholm. If you want to stay at a hotel my recommendation is Hotel Frantz, a small boutique hotel located in Slussen on Södermalm. Perfectly located if you'd like to visit the central part of Stockholm, as well as the other central islands, and you can easily go from there by walking or the subway. Also if you want to visit other islands in the archipelago, you can easily take boats not very far from there.

### **D: Early or late riser?**

H: Late riser. Stay up with the sun! During spring and summer in Sweden the sun sets very late and rises early [sunset at 11pm, sunrise at around 2am] and it gives you a lot of great energy.

### **D: Where should we eat breakfast and what should we eat?**

H: Kaferang. I love that they have a huge breakfast selection and just not a simple and boring sandwich.

Otherwise Kaffebar at Bysistorget is a favourite.

**D: What sightseeing should we do?**

H: Walking around Södermalm is beautiful and doesn't cost you anything, and what's great about Stockholm is that you can walk everywhere. Take a walk by Södra Mälarstrand, Monteliusvägen and up by Skinnarviksberget where you can take a stop for a beautiful view over the city. Life hack - bring some beers and a picnic with you. From there you can continue your walking journey to Fotografiska. A beautiful museum by the water where everything revolves around photography.

**D: Are there any super Swedish things we should look for or try while we're here?**

H: Well, other than taking a boat to the archipelago you haven't had the full Swedish experience until you've tried some traditional Swedish meatballs. (Try Restaurant Pelikans). But If you feel like being hardcore you should try eating surströmming which is a salted fermented herring (in a nutshell a Swedish super stinky fish). But do it at your own risk. The smell is really horrible and will piss people off if you open the can with surströmming nearby them. After that you can celebrate your bravery with a fika (a coffee and a cake break).

**D: Lunchtime! What should we have?**

H: Grab a pizza slice at 800grader. Or go to 'Omnipollos Hatt' for a pizza and beer. Omnipollo is also a brewery with a lot of fun crafted beers. And Omnipollos Hatt is their restaurant/bar.

**D: Any good places to get a coffee?**

H: Swedes are famous for drinking a lot of coffee, and very strong coffee [Currently Swedes drink 9kg of coffee each per year, the 4th highest in the world]. You'll find a lot of great coffee places on Södermalm - Bageri Petrus is my favourite! But don't forget to order a cake with your coffee. Remember, it's not a proper Swedish fika without sweets. You can never have too many.

**D: Where's good for dinner? Fancy or casual?**

H: Bar Agrikultur at Nytorget is my favourite restaurant. A small restaurant with a great atmosphere serving delicious food and wine.

**D: Ok time for a bar tour, where are we drinking? What's your favourite drink? Anything we need to try while we're in Stockholm?**

H: Take a walk to Mariatorget and visit Paradiso, a small rum bar serving great cocktails. Order all their rum cocktails from their menu. A two-minute walk from Paradiso you'll find Häktet and Häktet Vänster. Häktet Vänster is Häktets

speakeasy bar. Häktet Vänster is famous for having different fun themes on their menus. Finish your cocktail tour at the one and only Tjoget. Try signature cocktails from the menu or classic ones. Tjoget also has a wine bodega and a beer café. So you can stay there all night long. During the weekends the ambience gets turned up a notch with DJs playing.

**D: Right, everyone's drunk, where do we go now for a nightcap?**

H: Both Tjoget and Häktet are open until 3am. But if you're up for more dancing and a night club vibe I would recommend Trädgården/F12. Both of them are outside nightclubs open only during summertime where you can party until the sun rises.



**BY HEDDA.**



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