

Thom Svast Lives Happily Ever After Hours

The legit underground vibe comes alive with a new late-night affair



Yeah, we're sick of the big headliners playing the same songs over and over, too. But what is an electronic-music fan in Las Vegas to do? DJ/producer Thom Svast's new late-night After party can save the day! But where? Known to some as Utopia, more as Empire Ballroom, After (beginning at 3:30 a.m. on Saturday nights—technically Sunday mornings) has the Strip sounding a whole lot better. Currently the Tommy Wind Theater, where the magician performs his show in the evenings (turn off the Strip by Fatburger), multi million-dollar renovations have given the property a major facelift. (And that's not just PR B.S.; I saw it with my own eyes). The man bringing the vision to life gives *Vegas Seven* the deets before After's February 1 opening.

What will be the key to making After successful in a nightlife industry that seems to only care about big names on billboards?

A lot of the stuff on the Strip, even with millions and millions of dollars, seems cookie-cutter. With less money, I'll take pride in making us different. We're going to market to all people who love music and love good music, whether you're gay, black, white, Hispanic—it doesn't matter. Some people at their door are prejudiced against those things. We want people to enjoy themselves and be comfortable in a casual environment.

There are a few other after-hours parties in Las Vegas. What will set After apart?

I think it's going to be a combination of things. When you go to Body English, they play a lot of hip-hop—we won't have that at our club. Drai's? You're dealing with what currently seems like a very large hip-hop crowd, and then there's what happened [with a disgruntled customer shooting two security guards and killing a third person], a very expensive cover charge, very expensive bottle service, a very tough door. And Artisan is off the Strip. We have our own niche in what we're doing.

What is that niche? And why should we dig into underground sounds and not just listen to EDM?

We'll be one of the only clubs playing at the forefront of music—that's coming from a person who has been a producer and DJ for years and been around the world several times doing it. To me, EDM is not the forefront of music. EDM takes from the underground. Without the underground, EDM wouldn't exist because they need something to feed off of. EDM isn't forward thinking, the underground is; they're true artists. Those are the people who sit in a room and tinker with their MIDI controllers, Rolands and come up with these new sounds, new sound designs and programs.

Who have you nabbed as resident DJs?

We'll have two of the great producer duos in the city: Black Boots are on Ultra and Spacebyrdz just charted on Beatport's Top 10 deep-house and nu-disco charts, and they own their label, Riff Raff. When we open the patio in March, Brett Rubin will be the third resident.

What about touring talent?

I'm already lining up some amazing acts. We're going to keep it tech-y and house-y as much as we can, leave the commercial stuff to the big clubs, and let them overpay and gouge the market while I bring the Carlo Lios, The Marco Baileys, Anthony Attallas, up-and-comers like Hot Since 82, Andhim, Catz 'N Dogz—I really want those guys who are the forward-thinkers, the legends and the guys who keep the underground moving.

Since After is on the Strip, how much money should we pull out of the ATM?

For the Strip, our bottle prices and drinks will be more affordable, and we're not going to gouge you on the cover charge. Locals and ladies are always free unless there's a big special event—but it will be a very low cover charge. We'll still run specials through text and e-mails to get on the guest list and make it easy and accessible to not have to pay. Of course, all my friends, our industry circle never have to pay—just shoot me a text or call me.

Can people rock their raver gear if they want?

We want people who are different—look at me, I'm tattooed head-to-toe. You can wear your light gloves—I just don't like the hula-hoops, because then you don't have room for other people to dance [laughs]. But there is plenty of room, so you can actually hula-hoop in some dark corner. Rave gear? You bring it! I'm not going to say no to it. That's part of the experience and fun with the underground. Just don't put your glowsticks on shoestrings and spin them around and hit people in the head. But everything else is cool. Dress how you want; be comfortable with who you are. I'm not a pretentious person; I'm not going to run a pretentious club. Let's have fun!

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