

Las Vegas: Genuinely Inauthentic

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INTRODUCTION

The coolest memories I never had...

There is something particularly interesting about a tradition that starts from the premises that no history is real and everything can change. With no stable notion of the past and no theories at all of the future, Las Vegas¹ presents us with an experience of immediacy. These experiences are so compellingly genuine – so full of the present – that authenticity is irrelevant. Yet we should not judge this non-referential stance as inauthentic any more than we should judge the genuine psychological draw to this environment as trivial. Instead, we should realize that Las Vegas has presented a wonderful legacy of an unusual but genuine psychological relationship with the country. Spanning seventy years, this relationship can be characterized as having evolved through four distinct periods:

Irresistible Fantasy (1931-1945) – Nostalgic recall of a history that never happened.

Hyperreal (1946-1959) – Cold War period characterized by the attraction of real danger at a safe distance.

Magical Realism (1960-88) – Post-Cuba period obsessed with endowing the normal with surreal qualities.

Spectacle (1989-present) – Period of globalization commodifying the attraction of larger-than-life events and super-reality-simulations.

PERIOD 1: IRRESISTIBLE FANTASY (1931-1945)

This story begins in 1931, when three factors simultaneously affected a small desert outpost – Las Vegas. The country had been suffering from a devastating depression, gambling had just been legalized in Nevada and construction began on Hoover Dam (then called Boulder Dam).² The huge construction project less than 30 miles outside Las Vegas brought people and federal money and Las Vegas offered, in return, the hope

for riches and momentary escape. In only a few years, the once inconsequential outpost was attracting 300,000 tourists a year, billing itself as the “gateway to Hoover Dam” but building on images of the Wild West and the brawling Barbary Coast of the previous century. Las Vegas was too young to have any heritage of its own, so what it showed was a fabricated one.

Within the first ten years, “wild west” resort hotels opened on the Los Angeles Highway (later known as the Strip) – El Rancho Vegas and the Hotel Last Frontier. The Frontier did the most thorough job of exploiting the Wild West theme by building a mock western-frontier village as a “museum” and keeping a stable of riding horses for guests. Helldorado Days, an annual weeklong event instituted by the Elks Club in 1935, celebrated this invented heritage. With characters such as Roy Rogers and Gabby Hayes, guests delighted in a rodeo or two, at least one mock shoot-out and always a parade.

As World War II was drawing to a close, members of the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce initiated the first unified effort to establish a singular image for their town. In 1945, they hired the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency who picked up on the established Wild West notoriety of the town and carried it into an ad campaign that covered the southwest with billboards and the nation in magazines such as the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Holiday* and *Life*.

While the Chamber of Commerce was working to make Las Vegas an appealing destination for the entire family, the wild west image gathered a momentum all its own. Rarely did Las Vegas appear in the popular media of the forties and fifties without the description “wide open.” While sometimes this term referred to the desert landscape, more often it was used to describe the atmosphere of the casinos and the torrent of signs that lit the street soon to be called “Glitter Gulch.”

In 1948, a writer from *Argosy* magazine describe the town as: “So wide open it makes the Grand Canyon look like a drainage

ditch. It's probably the crap-shotingest, hard-drinkingest, and high-livingest town in these United States..." Las Vegas was known as a fast and loose city where it was easy to end a marriage¹ or to risk everything on a throw of the dice.

This was the beginning of the complex, multi-faceted phenomena of Las Vegas. Las Vegas had responded to the dispassionate reality of war and recession with an irrational passion for lived, on going, experience – no matter how "real" or "fake." For a country faced first with recession then war, the "wide open" "wild west" provided an irresistible fantasy. Las Vegas opened up new possibilities for a battered nation.

PERIOD 2: HYPERREAL (1946 - 1959)

For cold war era America, a reality fix was needed – not a fantasy. The American imagination was fueled by close contact with the very things we feared. This reality fix showed itself in a new phase of growth in Las Vegas. Through amplifying the tension between "safe" and "dangerous," visitors were offered a more distinct sense of the boundaries between the cold war bombs and safe homes. This amplification quickly became more than just a heightened sense of reality, it was a hyper-reality.

The newest casinos created an environment encouraging a tension of real dangers at safe distances, where narcissistic or erotic fantasies (where the object of desire is beauty, fame, wealth, or power) could be vicariously experienced through close encounters with Hollywood stars, gangsters, enormous wealth, and the nuclear bomb. Whether it was bumping into a gangster (with the obvious bulge in his suit coat) or in the closeness of Dean Martin as he sat at your gaming table, it was the 'close but don't touch' tension that fueled the new appeal.

Rubbing elbows with Hollywood stars, gangsters and professional gamblers

This period began in the mid-forties when a new element of excitement arrived in Las Vegas in the form of gangster Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel. His arrival marked a new era for Las Vegas and initiated a postwar building boom that became a race to see who could build the next most lavish resort. In 1946, Siegel built the *Flamingo Hotel*. Only a year after he opened his hotel, Bugsy Siegel was murdered – gangland style – in Hollywood. His death once again put Las Vegas in the limelight. The *Flamingo*, with its pink neon birds and exotic palms, was pictured as the gangster's last great achievement and the connection between Las Vegas and illicit underworld activities was fixed in the popular imagination.

Each swank new hotel billed itself as more extravagant than the next with sprawling floorshows and big-name entertainers from

Hollywood and Broadway. These characters fascinated the ordinary folks from back home who, while in town, could actually sit at the same gaming table with one of the 'Rat Pack,' or be greeted by the likes of Wilbur Clark. This was not the themed environment of the 'Wild West.' It was "real" – a reality filled with vivid, although vicarious, dangers of gangsters and hoodlums. This real but safe danger was a welcome substitute for the generalized anxiety surrounding the cold war.

Rubbing elbows with the Atomic Bomb

Gangsters and professional gamblers, however dangerous or endangered among their own, posed no real risks to tourists. In all likelihood no one would be shot or jailed. But rubbing elbows with the atomic bomb upped the anti on the vicarious danger offered in Las Vegas. The atomic bomb was a tremendous draw for the city. In fact, the thrills promised by the explosions were very much in the spirit of Las Vegas as evident in a postcard from the mid-fifties where the mushroom cloud itself was often rendered almost as if it was another Las Vegas sign. In 1951, shortly after the first detonation, *Life Magazine* featured – as its "picture of the week" – a photo of an atomic cloud rising beyond the signs of downtown. The caption read "wherever you look there's danger in Las Vegas."

While the testing program was in full swing, Las Vegas became a regular dateline in every major newspaper in the country. In 1952, the *New York Times* ran an article in their Leisure and Entertainment section telling readers how to make the most of the event: where to go for the best views and how to find out from locals when the next "shot" would occur.²

Tourists had fun with the bomb, trivializing its danger by drinking "Atomic Cocktails" at the *Flamingo*, dancing the "Atomic Bomb Bounce" or cheering contestants in the "Miss Atomic Bomb" contest at the *Sands*.³ At the *Desert Inn Hotel*, guests staged all night parties in the hotel's Key Room that offered a sweeping panoramic view of the distant flash. Wilbur Clark, owner of the *Desert Inn*, even commented on how "the take" went up at the tables and the drinking got heavier around blast time.

Perhaps more than any other symbol of the cold war years, the atomic bomb signaled the worst danger while promising the most security for the family and country. This irony was surely felt by those who witnessed the blasts in Las Vegas. They were told at once about its destructive force and about its harmlessness if properly contained. While back in Grand Rapids, children were practicing a dive to fetal position under their child-sized wooden school desks; in Las Vegas, picnic lunches were sponsored for a close-up view of the atomic blast.

Over the following decade there would be more than a hundred nuclear weapons exploded in the air or on the ground at what

was now called the Nevada Test Site, as many a four a month at the height of the experiments. The explosions became part of the lure and lore of the city. In 1958, the Soviets and Americans agreed to a moratorium on testing, which lasted only until 1961, and in 1963 all testing was moved underground. For almost eight years mushroom clouds had graced the Las Vegas skyline, adding just a little more nervous energy to the scene dominated by some of the largest electric signs in the country. Las Vegas and tourists alike became nonchalant about the blasts after about 1953. Nonetheless, the excitement of the place continued to build.

Rubbing elbows with the exotic and the taboo

Although other cities tried to copy Las Vegas' success, only Havana offered any serious competition. In Cuba, the boundary between real and vicarious thrills was even more fragile. Cuba was, herself, in a delicate balance. Faced with economic recession and political unrest, Cuba set about to recapture the tourist trade. After Estes Kefauver's "Committee to Investigate Organized Crime" put a major damper on illegal gambling around the US, the Cuban government aggressively moved to capture the opportunity—spending money on advertising, allowing American concessions, and relaxing the anti-gambling regulations in order to expand its gambling industry. One major move was the enactment of a law in 1955 permitting hotels worth over \$1,000,000 to install gambling.⁹

Although the conditions were risky, this set off a chain reaction of activity in Las Vegas. Wilbur Clark, who was running the Las Vegas *Desert Inn*, secured the concession to open a casino in the *Hotel Nacional*, Cuba's largest hotel. The casino, the first in a Havana hotel, opened in January of 1956. American money was behind at least two other revitalized Cuban operations—the *Oriental Park* race track and the *Sans Souci* nightclub. Both operated with casinos and both were enjoying a new rush of business.

Havana was being advertised as "Cuba Libre:"

"The sexiest city in the world... an hour by plane from Miami."¹⁰

"She is a seductive sorceress exuding an essence of warmth and indolence and delicious lethargy. Her streets throb with a dark and pulsating beat. The air is a heavy, aphrodisiacal wine that dissolves the inhibitions and dissipates restraint.... Time is an endless round of dark rum and rumba, light rum and marimbas, for Havana is the mistress of pleasure, the lush and opulent goddess of delights."¹¹

Las Vegas was captivated by the seductive sorceress and tried to bring her home. In 1957, the Las Vegas *Tropicana* was opened.

Havana's *Tropicana* had been one of the few to survive through the political and economic difficulties of Cuba. Known as "the most beautiful nightclub in the world," it was also the world's largest. Las Vegas desired this Cuban exotic and, what it couldn't copy, it bought.

PERIOD 3: MAGICAL REALISM (1960-88)

Then, in what seemed as quick as a toss of the dice, Cuba was gone—closed to the United States. Castro nationalized \$20 billion of American assets. That left Las Vegas without competition and the mob with no place else to do its dirty laundry. As a result, an overpowering flood of money and energy poured into Las Vegas and a new period began. Back in Cuba, Robert Stone writing for *Harper's Magazine* described that "... magical realism seemed more appropriate to the frame. Everything in the early evening's landscape appeared fantastic." In Las Vegas, the casinos saw people in a frenzy of gambling as though they were possessed.

"At the Sands, guests entering the showroom found barrels full of silver dollars to be grabbed by the handful. Smartly uniformed ushers handed out Italian silk purses to the ladies, English leather wallets to the gentlemen, each enfolding a crackling new hundred-dollar bill courtesy of the house. ...the Hacienda Hotel's private airline junkets flew planeload after planeload at no charge from Chicago into McCarran Airport, stewardesses serving passengers what one of them remembered as "bubbly torrents of free champagne." The mood was more extravagant than ever. "Everything's nice and cool," Rosselli told a friend over dinner. "There's money pouring in like there's no tomorrow. I've never seen so much money."¹²

Americans, apparently bored with nuclear testing, bored by the cold war, now felt a diffuse, generalized anxiety. This nameless, faceless fear entered like Milton's "stubborn unlaidd ghost/ that breaks his magic chains at curfew time"¹³ Obsession with supernatural effects had quickly become a hallmark of the new Las Vegas.

"It is modern alchemy, the turning of bodies and objects into pure gold, the mastery of the quantitative, with no subtleties required and no consideration of meaning or esthetic value permitted to distract from the single-minded pursuit."¹⁴

While the rest of the country bobbed up and down in periodic recessions, there seemed much to envy in the Las Vegas boom. Visitors found the town more intriguing than ever at the beginning of this new decade, possessed of a "strange animus," wrote one journalist, making "the grotesque and the absurd appear to be quite normal." The "Miami Baroque" look of the Strip might be "the dwelling place of the deity," or the "divinities of Lust and Greed," wrote Arthur Steuer in *Esquire* in August of 1961, but "the flash and glitter has an ecstatic

appeal ... the utter frankness of the ostentation a certain vulgar charm."

Ten million visitors a year, half of them return visitors, flooded onto the Strip. Las Vegas was building as never before, pushing its already massive hotels up and out, as well as planning new casinos, transforming, redefining the many faces of the Strip. By 1963, \$100 million in fresh investment had paid for more than 5,000 rooms – the largest, fastest, most concentrated sustained expansion of its kind anywhere in the world.¹²

When Tom Wolfe visited Las Vegas in 1963, he saw what he called a "super-hyper-version" of a "whole new style of life in America." In the extravagant signs and in the nasty habits of tourists he saw "the new world, submerged so long, invisible, and now arising, slippery, shiny, electric – Super Scuba man – out of the vinyl deeps."¹³

Corporate Control of Casinos

As Johnny Rosselli had said, "Las Vegas had never seen so much money!" Because of the enormous popularity and record growth of the new metropolitan area, Las Vegas was now the subject of interest by venture capitalists. One big problem – the state's laws on gaming allowed only individual persons to hold a gaming license. That is until 1967 when Howard Hughes convinced the Nevada legislature to ease the law and allow public corporations to own casinos and the associated gaming licenses.

Corporate ownership brought a new, "cleaned-up" image of Las Vegas as well as new rules on making money.¹⁴ Corporate gaming/casino ownership carried with it, diverse forms of financing including defense-profits, junk bonds (a financial form of magical realism),¹⁵ corporate stock¹⁶ (popular among the Hollywood glamour set) and a global reach. But this was a much different set of investors than the couple of guys that got a deal together. Corporations were businesses accountable to stockholders.

"...the hotels are owned by squeaky-clean, image obsessed companies like Hilton and Holiday Inn. They are staffed by bean counters and micro-managers who live in the same suburbs and sport the same dress-for-success suits as ... the stockbroker from Iowa. ... The hottest ticket in town is no longer a revue of bare-breasted showgirls, but the Siegfried and Roy magic act starring white tigers."¹⁷

What Las Vegas offered now was a great time for the whole family. The thematic nostalgic images of the first Period of Las Vegas fake had evolved into themed environments made as "real" as possible through highly sophisticated and technically advanced special effects. What was once the appeal of "safe-danger" was now creative and magical showmanship.

When Kirk Kerkorian opened the *International Hotel* in 1969, he said to the world that Las Vegas was "open for global business." Indeed, Las Vegas was also open for international investors. When he opened the *MGM Grand* in 1972, he said ...and bring the whole family. There was something for everyone. He had purchased exclusive rights to all MGM titles, memorabilia, characters and films. The children could pet the real "Leo, the Lion" (who roared in every MGM film) and see their favorite movie characters while Mom and Dad watched the fast-paced jai alai, recently imported from Cuba (along with dealers, managers, and maids).

The wholesome image of the American corporation replaced the lore of the gangster. "We have no gangsters here..."¹⁸ although the cleaned-up version of "mobster-chic" was still popular. The town even boasted round-the-clock street cleaning covering nearly three hundred miles of newly paved avenues and a good scouring of the ever-expanding Strip five times a week. This new Las Vegas was a cleaned-up town ready for the nicest people and the whole family.

Las Vegas was changing once again. Corporations took over the Strip during the '80s in what seemed like slow motion. The first brush of the rationalizing minds of the corporate men in their well-tailored suits with the emotionally charged chaos of Las Vegas would result in a fifteen-year stalemate – fifteen years with no new buildings. Ultimately, it would result in Las Vegas getting ready to compete with the rest of the world for tourists.¹⁹

PERIOD 4: THE SPECTACLE (1989-PRESENT)

Global competition meant that tourists once drawn to Europe or the South Seas had to find Las Vegas a better choice. Since 'authentic' – as sedimented layers of history – was not a terrain on which America could compete, Las Vegas turned its focus not to the authenticity of the artifact but to the plausibility of the performance.²⁰ "Real" and "fake" were mixed together to the extent that the performance or environment could "pass" for plausible.

Baby-boomers had never really known danger so the "safe-dangers" Las Vegas once offered had no appeal and the magical illusions of turning money to gold had become, just as magically, dis-illusions. What drew in the new crowd of tourists were spectacles – high-tech simulations and larger-than-life events!

The first of the new, larger-than-life, "mega-resorts" was the *Mirage*, which opened in 1989 at a cost of more than \$700 million. Among its features was a "real" tropical rain forest, a 53 foot long tropical fish tank, and outdoors, as a device to draw in customers, a five story simulated tropical volcano "erupting"

every 15 minutes in hot flames and piña-colada scented gases. This once again upped the anti for hotel development.

Although the junk bond market collapsed in late '90s, venture capital had found enormously profitable opportunities where none were thought to exist and debt financing was being accomplished on an immense scale. The new mega-resorts made the corporatization of Las Vegas finally work. The Hilton, IITF Sheraton, and Ramada Corporations had all gotten into the gaming business. Once again, Las Vegas saw record growth.

The new buildings and their outdoor spectacles became, themselves, the signage. The neon that made Las Vegas signs famous all but disappeared. The *Luxor* appeared in the form of a \$375 million "Egyptian" pyramid rising out of the desert. *Treasure Island* topped the outdoor spectacles with a mock pirate battle complete with flying cannon balls, heat producing pyrotechnics, and sound system blasting in excess of 100 decibels.

In order for the next mega-developments to take place, the old icons of the Strip had to go – five in all.²¹ Not to miss any opportunity for a spectacle, the famous strip landmarks were blown up – "imploded" – as larger-than-life entertainment. The first of these was on Oct 29, 1993. The *Dunes* was demolished as the warm-up act for the opening festivities of *Treasure Island* that included a \$1.5 million fireworks spectacular. Perhaps the most dramatic was the implosion of the *Hacienda Hotel*. The event was aired live on Dec 31, 1996 at 9 p.m. (MST) as part of East Coast New Year celebrations. The size of the crowd and the hotel implosion/fireworks served formal notice to New York Times Square that there was serious competition from Las Vegas. The hotel, *New York New York*, opened on Jan 3, 1997.

Shortly after *NYNY* opened, the New York Stock Exchange filed a federal court law suit charging that the columned façade and letters NYSE suggested Wall Street sponsorship. Their claim was that the casino was "bastardizing" NYSE trademarks and diluting their value by "tending to make them generic, the subject of ridicule, [and by] associating gambling, its speculative nature and risks, and its reputation with the [NYSE] and its marks."²² The boundaries between real and fake were definitely being blurred and nothing was sacred.

The newest of the mega-resorts sought the big spenders by replicating high-status European environments. The *Bellagio*, taking its cues from Bellagio, Italy, the "Pearl of Lake Como," is a high-end resort (with a casino) and a \$300,000,000 art collection that includes work of Picasso, Van Gogh, Monet, Cezanne, Gauguin, Matisse, and Renoir. The *Venetian* – with its fake canals and authentic gondolas, simulation of St. Mark's Square and million square feet of shopping space – came in at a spectacular \$2.8 billion. *Mandalay Bay* re-created a 10-acre tropical lagoon, sand and surf beach, snorkeling reef and swimming shark exhibit in the heart of Nevada's desert. Not far

away, the *Paris* re-created the cultural icons of France: the Eiffel Tower, Arc de Triomphe, Paris Opera House and the Louvre.

CONCLUSION

As philosophers search for value in the 'authentic', the value of the 'fake' has made Las Vegas a worldwide tourist destination and one of the fastest growing urban areas in America.²³ But this is not just one kind of fake, nor should its value be easily dismissed. Development of Las Vegas occurred in phases, each with its own characteristic face of "fake," each following the natural and irresistible pleasures of fantasy, illusion, eroticism and spectacle.

Upon deeper reflection, the story of Las Vegas teaches us something even more interesting – that genuine human desire is sensual rather than ascetic, fluid rather than static, volatile rather than fixed. For all the chest beating about authenticity in the domain of cultural encounters, scholars seem not to hear the story about how Las Vegas has appealed to something fundamentally human in us – our emotional life. Genuine emotional desire flies in the face of the aesthetic judgement of authenticity. Emotions are what furnish us with our values and priorities – our vistas of defiance and resistance – our irrepressible spirit.

There is an emergence of a 'sociological imagination' played out in Las Vegas. It has continuously and naturally accommodated itself to the 'mood' of the country. Through a system of embodied, inter-dependant, human experiences, it invokes certain primary experiences of the world and draws on, interprets and elaborates those experiences. It has become, perhaps, the last great ritual site for contemporary man. Perhaps it is something like the call of the drums that brings us there – drums that set in motion the ritual dance of our emotions – continually opening up new possibilities for the 're-enchantment' of American society.

NOTES

¹ Politically and administratively, LV is not one city but five (four cities and one county: Las Vegas, North Las Vegas, Henderson, Boulder City, and Clark County). This fragmentation resulted from Las Vegas' inability to annex its suburbs. It stalled at Sahara Ave. as the Strip casinos repulsed all city attempts to tax their games.

² 1928 – the Boulder Canyon Act

³ These years, Nevada was also gaining a reputation for its lenient divorce laws. When Clark Gable's divorce-seeking wife, Ria, came to town in 1939 to fulfill the state's six-week residency requirement, nation-wide publicity came with her and the city's divorce industry blossomed.

⁴ New York Times, Travel Section, 1955, Feb 13, "Desert Capitol of the Atom Bomb" referred to "...the non-ancient but nonetheless honorable pastime of atom bomb watching."

- ⁵ There was also the "atomic hairdo" (originated at the *Flamingo*) and "atomic cocktail"; "Atomic Bomb Bounce" (boogie woogie tune by Ted Mossman); the "Original Atomic Comic"; a musical group: "Atom Bombers: Detonators of Devastating Rhythm"; and advertisements such as: "Atom Drops on High Prices" at a car lot and at the "Atomic View Motel" – "see the flash without leaving poolside."
- ⁶ By 1955 only two big nightclubs with gambling remained in Havana – the *Tropicana* and *Montmartre*.
- ⁷ Cuba's Cabaret Yearbook, Winter Resort Number, Volume One, pass 1956, p20
- ⁸ Cuba's Cabaret Quarterly, Special Resort Number, Volume Five, pass 1956, p43
- ⁹ Denton; p 224 (also Rappeleye, Charles, and Ed Becker. *All-American Mafiosa: The Johnny Rosselli Story*. New York: Barricade Books, 1995)
- ¹⁰ Milton, John: "A Mask;" Lines 432-437; presented at Ludlow Castle, 1634.
- ¹¹ *Newsweek* (Sept 28, 1964, p 90):
- ¹² Denton 2001:226.
- ¹³ Wolfe, Tom. *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1965.
- ¹⁴ The Strip of the past had really been a group of casinos with associated rooms and restaurants run at a loss to support the gambling. In this new corporate model, the Strip was a collection of very large resorts, which happen to have casinos and every department, whether restaurants or stage shows, needed to show profit. Gone were the cheap buffets, free drinks and under-priced rooms and big name entertainers were replaced by extravagant, but less expensive, production shows.
- ¹⁵ There was also some new, not-so-clean, hand-is-quicker-than-the-eye financing. "If Jimmy Hoffa's pension fund bankrolled the old Las Vegas, Michael Milken's [the junk-bond king] black magic constructed the new one." J.L. Smith 1995 "Running Scared: The Life and treacherous Times of Las Vegas Casino King Steve Wynn." New York: Barricade Books.
- ¹⁶ Some of the first corporations to take advantage of this change were Hughes Corporation; Recreation Corporation; Tracinda Corporation; Paradise Development Corporation.
- ¹⁷ Gabriel, T. (1991) "From vice to nice: The suburbanization of Las Vegas" NY Times Magazine, Dec 1; Sec 6, p 68.

¹⁸ Saturday Evening Post, November 11, 1961

¹⁹ Reno never had the same draw as Las Vegas. Being "land-locked," Reno was never able to call up the vast amounts of either real estate or federal money.

²⁰ For Eco, authenticity is a judgement on the integrity of a practice rather than a property that is immanent in material artifacts. (Eco 1987:34)

²¹ *Dunes*, Oct 29, 1993; *Landmark*, Nov 7, 1995; *Sands*, Nov 26, 1996; *Hacienda*, Dec 31, 1996 and the *Aladdin*, April 17, 1998. There is a web site with video clips of the demolitions at http://www.lvrj.com/lvrj_home/ind-depth/package-/onlyinvegas/implode/

²² J. L. Smith: "Casino's signature leaves Wall Streeters whining." Las Vegas Review-Journal May 28, 1997.

²³ Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce Web Site, 2002: "...you may do what almost 50,000 people a year do: relocate here! Las Vegas is the fastest growing city in the country." "The Entertainment Capital of the World" welcomes 32 million people a year."

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