

Blueprint has big plans for local nightlife

by CHARLIE SMITH on AUG 20, 2014 at 11:00 AM



Bill Kerasiotis of Blueprint says the Vancouver-based nightclub and events company is eager to expand outside B.C.

📷 STEPHEN HUI

FOR BILL KERASIOTIS, moving his nightclub, bar, liquor store, and events-management company headquarters to Gastown reflects the evolution of the city's entertainment industries.

Blueprint, formerly in the Electra Building, is now housed on top of Shine, its club at the corner of Cordova and Water streets. With a blast of natural light streaming into a roomy boardroom and spacious offices through a skylight and large windows, it's a dramatic improvement over the cramped former head office across from the Wall Centre.

In an interview with the *Georgia Straight*, Kerasiotis says that Gastown was a natural destination after his company bought Shine, opened the nearby Charles Bar, and invested in Fortune Sound Club in Chinatown. Blueprint's assets also include Celebrities on Davie Street, and three establishments on Granville Street: Venue, the Caprice, and L.E.D. Bar.

“Gastown is a good example of a resurgence of a neighbourhood,” Kerasiotis says. “It’s such a focal point.”

Last year, the Kerasiotis family’s Adelphia Management Group merged with Blueprint Events, headed by Alvaro Prol, creating a locally owned entertainment giant in Vancouver. It also owns Bismarck near Rogers Arena, the Dover Arms in the West End, and the Colony in Kitsilano, as well as three liquor stores, and Blueprint’s size offers ample opportunities to cross-promote events at different venues.

Kerasiotis, 39, says six members of his family are involved in Blueprint. He has known Prol for more than 15 years, so the merger didn’t come out of left field. “He did the promotional side of the business and the events side,” Kerasiotis says. “We had the venues. The synergy was there, personalitywise too.”

Now, the company is developing a culture around the Blueprint brand and its musical events, which include the annual Seasons Electronic Music Festival. In the process, it’s building on the legacy of Kerasiotis’s father, John, who moved to Canada from Greece in 1959.

“Work, work, work was always his mentality,” Kerasiotis says. “He did a good job, in my mind, of translating that to myself, my brothers, and my family. That’s what I learned the most: if it’s yours, you’ve got to pay attention to it. You’ve got to put the time and effort into it.”

His dad, who died in 2008, and his uncles started the Olympia Restaurant on West Broadway in the late 1960s. Kerasiotis, a B.C. Institute of Technology marketing grad, was initiated into the family’s nightclub business working at the Luv-A-Fair, an alternative mainstay on Seymour Street until the licence was transferred to the Caprice more than a decade ago.

Yaletown’s emergence as a residential area in the mid to late 1990s spelled the end of the Luv-A-Fair, Richard’s on Richards, and other clubs. A looming challenge to the industry is the prospect of new condo towers near the Granville Entertainment District and along Davie Street.

“It’s a legitimate concern, for sure,” Kerasiotis says. “I think the city needs to provide us some direction of where to go next, where we’re allowed to do these things. I think once there’s clarity in that, I’ll start feeling a little more comfortable.”

A more pressing irritant is licensed food-primary establishments that operate like bars without facing the same regulatory and insurance hassles as a liquor-primary licensee. “If you’re a true restaurateur, why do you want to be open after midnight?” Kerasiotis asks. “What happens at 2 or 3 in the morning? You’re a bar.”



A few years ago, he points out, people would flock from the suburbs into downtown Vancouver on the weekends to party. It explains the term “bridge and tunnel crowd”, which was born in New York City.

“Now, everyone is staying around their neighbourhoods,” Kerasiotis says. “Pubs are busy out there again.”

New Westminster and Surrey have invested large sums of public money to develop their downtown areas. Meanwhile, the City of North Vancouver hopes to turn the Lonsdale Quay area into the downtown of the North Shore. He admits that Blueprint is eyeing the suburbs, though he won’t reveal any preferred municipalities.

“A lot of our old customers are starting to move out there, whether it’s with families or not,” Kerasiotis says. “So I think there will be some success in these downtowns.”

In contrast, he’s eager to discuss the company’s expansion plans outside of B.C. Blueprint recently joined forces with the principals of Edmonton-based Connected Entertainment and Calgary-based Aqua Audio. Working with Live Nation, they will launch the ARRIVAL festival on August 29 in Edmonton featuring artists Martin Garrix, Afrojack, Deorro, and Matthew Koma. On August 31 in Calgary, the ARRIVAL lineup includes Knife Party, Nervo, Cedric Gervais, and Chris Lake.

When asked where Blueprint will be in three to five years, Kerasiotis replies, “That’s a million-dollar question. I think we’re going to continue our events side of the business. The nightclubs, which go side by side with events, will also remain a focal point.”

As for taking Blueprint public on any stock exchanges, that’s not on the agenda, at least “not yet”.

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