

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Mitchell Camera Corporation
Other names/site number: Studio One (preferred), The Factory
Name of related multiple property listing:



(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 665 N Robertson Boulevard & 652 N. La Peer Drive
City or town: West Hollywood State: CA County: Los Angeles
Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide ___ local
Applicable National Register Criteria:
___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D

<p>_____ Signature of certifying official/Title:</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	

<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____ Signature of commenting official:</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>_____ Title : State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	

Mitchell Camera Corporation Factory/Studio
One Disco-Backlot Theatre
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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- INDUSTRY/manufacturing facility
- COMMERCE/professional
- COMMERCE/business
- RECREATION AND CULTURE/music facility
- RECREATION AND CULTURE/theater
- COMMERCE/restaurant
- INDUSTRY/industrial storage

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- RECREATION AND CULTURE/music facility
- RECREATION AND CULTURE/theater
- RECREATION AND CULTURE/sports facility
- COMMERCE/business
- COMMERCE/restaurant

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

CONTRIBUTING:

No Style

NONCONTRIBUTING:

Modern Movement

Other: Zig-Zag Moderne

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

CONTRIBUTING:

foundation: Reinforced Concrete Block

walls: Copper Steel Panels

roof: Asphalt, Copper Steel

other: Metal Framed Industrial Windows

NONCONTRIBUTING:

foundation: Reinforced Concrete Block

walls: Stucco

roof: Asphalt

Other: Metal Framed Industrial Windows

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Mitchell Camera Corporation Factory/Studio One Disco-Backlot Theatre building, known as The Factory, is one of the earliest reinforced concrete and steel buildings in West Hollywood. When completed in 1929, The Factory was celebrated as the “largest factory in the world manufacturing exclusively standard professional motion picture cameras” with approximately 26,000 square feet of factory floor space. The Factory building is the only known surviving example of a Truscon Steel Company building in West Hollywood and Southern California. The two-story (with basement) industrial building is a daylight factory designed and built by notable daylight factory, design-build company Truscon Steel Company using all Truscon materials and products.¹

The Factory building is located on Assessor’s Parcel Number 4336-009-007 in the City of West Hollywood. The lot is L-shaped. The former factory building and a noncontributing small, stucco building are sited on the north side of a single parcel fronting Robertson Avenue south of Santa Monica Boulevard. La Peer Drive runs along the west (rear) of the parcel. The former factory building has two street addresses, 665 North Robertson and 648 North La Peer Drive.²

The two buildings occupy approximately 75% of the entire of the parcel; the rest of the parcel is parking lot. The Factory building’s form is irregular with steel-copper panels and factory windows on all four elevations, a flat roof, and a factory-windowed monitor. The single-story (and basement) stucco building is a rectangular-shaped with a square, stucco rear addition built in 1940.

Narrative Description

The Factory building has a minimally pitched roof with a one-story, very low gabled monitor running the full length of the building, east to west. The eaves are slightly projecting. There are numerous air conditioner units on the roof. A metal band is riveted along the cornice line and

¹ American Cinematographer, “The Mitchell’s New Home,” 34.

² County of Los Angeles Assessor Records.

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runs around the entire building. The building, including monitor, is covered by decoratively pressed sidewall panels made of cooper and steel, and industrial steel sash windows.³

East façade

The east façade (Robertson Boulevard) contains two banks of industrial sash windows with sidewall panels above and below each bank. It has 10 bays. (See Figure 1 and Figure 2) The industrial sash windows alternate in a pattern of five lights high and three lights wide all fixed, and, five lights high and three lights wide with six panes pivoting. The sidewall panels are each 4' high and 2'8" wide.⁴ Each bay is two panels side by side, one window, panels two over two, one window, and, panels two over two.

The ground level basement is of reinforced concrete. There is one double metal fire door and a bank of four industrial sash windows of two lights high and three lights across with six panes pivoting. A 1939 Sanborn map shows the location of the fire door as original.

An attached industrial, metal staircase leads from the ground floor to the second floor. According to city permits, the staircase was added in 1971. A double glass door was added circa 2010 on the second floor. There was a single metal door prior. Above the double glass door, there is a steel panel measuring approximately 8' wide and 2'8" high. The original industrial sash windows on the second floor were replaced with industrial fixed windows in 2014-2015, and most recently in 2016. The monitor is covered by sidewall panels approximately 4' in length and 13'4" in height.⁵ An unattached concrete block half-wall runs along the sidewalk in front of the building and continues west, back toward the building. A multi-paned wooden door is in the opening of the half-wall at the sidewalk.

South façade

The lot's grade rises going east to west. The ground level basement is approximately 9' to 10' high at the east end and approximately 2' high at the west end. Three openings in the first floor and one in the second floor are entrances into the building.

The south façade contains two banks of industrial sash windows with sidewall panels above and below each bank. It is 60 bays long. The industrial sash windows alternate in a pattern of five lights high and three lights wide all fixed, and, five lights high and three lights wide with six panes pivoting. The sidewall panels are each 4' high and 2'8" wide. Each bay is two panels side by side, one window, panels two over two, one window, and, panels two over two.

³ "Truscon Permanent Buildings," accessed January 26, 2015, <https://archive.org/details/TrusconPermanentBuildingsStandardizedForGeneralIndustries>, 29-33.

⁴ Ibid, 29.

⁵ Ibid.

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The first floor has a bank of industrial sash windows alternating between five lights high and three across with six panes pivoting, and, five lights high and three across fixed. The sidewall panels are approximately 4' wide and 2'8" high. There are three steel panels approximately 4' wide and 7' high at the west end in the first floor. There is a single wood door, a single metal door, a large, sectional steel door with a metal awning, and a single commercial glass door that is the entrance to the commercial business that occupies most of the first floor interior. A few of the original industrial sash windows on the second floor were replaced with industrial, single pane, fixed windows in 2014-2015.

The sectional steel door does not appear on the last Sanborn map of the area (1961), however, the machinery operating it from the interior indicates it may be original Truscon engine/machinery.⁶

The second floor has a bank of industrial sash windows that alternate between a pattern of 2 three lights high and three across fixed, and, 3 three lights high and three across with six panes pivoting. The sidewall panels are approximately 4' wide and 5'4" high.

There is an attached industrial metal staircase that leads from the ground to the second floor. A wood, privacy fence encloses underneath the stairs. There is an attached industrial sprinkler system that appears to be original. Four air conditioning units sit on the building roof.

The monitor runs the full length of the building, east to west. The monitor has a bank of industrial steel sash windows that alternate between a pattern of three lights high and five lights wide with six panes pivoting, and three lights high and six lights wide with eight panes pivoting. Approximately ten original, industrial steel sash windows were replaced with industrial, double, fixed pane windows in 2015 and 2016.

A single floor, brick structure abuts the south façade at the eastern end. There are two small, wood structures that abut the south façade at the western end and middle.

West façade

The west façade (La Peer Drive) contains one bank of industrial sash windows with sidewall panels above and below the bank. It has 10 bays. The industrial sash windows alternate in a pattern of five lights high and three lights wide all fixed, and, five lights high and three lights wide with six panes pivoting. The sidewall panels are approximately 4' high and 2'8" wide. Each bay is panels two over two repeated three times, one window, and, panels two over two.

The ground level basement is approximately one foot high and made of reinforced concrete block. Two openings in the first floor are entrances into the building.

⁶ See CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0037.

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A double glass door and one single glass door appear to have been added between 1969 and 1978 according to historical photographs. It is likely the glass doors were added during the Studio One Disco-Backlot Theatre period of significance (1974-1993). A 1969 photograph shows a large, single door opening, which looks very similar to a 1929 interior photograph. (See Figure 3 and Figure 6) The large, single door opening appears to have been fitted with double glass doors and a single glass door between 1969 and 1978. A 1978 Studio One disco photograph shows the glass doors. (See Figure 4)

A Truscon Standard Steel Sliding Door appears to be from the Mitchell Camera Corporation period of significance (1929-1946) according to the 1939 Sanborn maps. The door is a single leaf, manually operated, horizontal, sliding door approximately 7' high and 6' with six lights, three over two above sidewall panels.⁷

The first floor contains three industrial sash windows that are three lights high and three lights wide all fixed. One pane has been replaced with a metal vent cover grill. A sidewall panel approximately 2' wide and 8' high is between the windows and the glass doors. A sidewall panel approximately 2' wide and 8' high and a sidewall panel approximately 4' wide and 8' high are between the glass doors and the sliding door.

A metal ladder is attached to the second floor with curved, metal handrails attached to the roof. The monitor is covered by sidewall panels approximately 4' in length and 13'4" in height.

A canopy approximately 10' wide projects over the building's glass doors to the sidewalk. The canopy is made of a metal frame with 4 metal support posts. A freestanding handrail goes from between the double and single glass doors and the sidewalk. The handrail is made of galvanized, metal pipe.

Privacy walls approximately 8' high run from each side of the glass doors diagonally to the sidewalk. A quarter-wall runs along the sidewalk from the privacy wall to the canopy posts. The walls are made of concrete block covered in decorative tile.

North Elevation

The north elevation is similar to the south façade with the lot's grade rising from east to west, 60 bays long, two banks of industrial sash windows with the same fenestration pattern, sidewall panels, low front gable roof and monitor. Three openings in the north elevation are entrances with single metal doors. Some second floor and monitor original industrial sash windows were replaced with industrial fixed windows in 2014-2015. At the approximate middle of the north elevation is a side wing that protrudes from the building.

⁷ "Truscon Permanent Buildings," accessed January 26, 2015, <https://archive.org/details/TrusconPermanentBuildingsStandardizedForGeneralIndustries>, 34.

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The side wing is similar to the larger rectangular building with two banks of industrial sash windows with a similar fenestration pattern, sidewall panels, low front gable roof and a monitor that runs from east to west. The east elevation of the side wing is mostly hidden behind a 1929 stucco structure and a later second floor addition, electrical boxes and utility lines, wooden fencing, and industrial steel stairs. The west elevation is partially hidden by partially attached, stucco structures with composite roofs added between 1942 to 1944 according to Sanborn maps and a wood sided structure with a wood door that seems to have been added after 1961 according to Sanborn maps. The north elevation contains an opening to the building on the second floor. It is a recessed double doorway. An attached metal staircase runs ground level to the second floor entrance. The staircase does not appear on the 1961 Sanborn map. A building permit refers to metal stairs being installed in May 1988 and a 1989 Studio One Disco event blueprint shows the stairs so it is likely the stair's addition is with in the Studio One Disco-Backlot Theatre period of significance.

Mitchell Camera Corporation added numerous outbuildings between 1942-1944 (See Map 3) according to Sanborn maps for woodworking, heat treating, painting, storage and a gatehouse that, except for the ones still standing, have been demolished in the ensuing years. Mitchell Camera Corporation left West Hollywood for a larger factory in Glendale, California in 1946.

The Factory Building – Interior

It is worth mentioning visible details in The Factory's 1929 interior that still exist: sawed end grain wood block flooring (set in concrete slabs), Truscon Stock Stash Daylight Partitions and the Truscon Center Span Trusses and Open Truss Steel Joists.⁸ (See Figure 5 and Figure 6)

Mitchell Camera Corporation office building

There is a single-story (and basement) stucco building fronting Robertson Boulevard adjacent to The Factory building's north elevation. It was designed and built by Truscon Steel Company in 1929. The building is made of reinforced concrete and steel according to Sanborn maps. The building has a flat roof, plain parapet and no coping.

The east façade has one opening that is an entrance to the building. The entrance is on the second story with a recessed porch and concrete stairs with a metal handrail and decorative metal poles attached to the floor and a recessed ceiling. The east façade is covered with a metal, textured skin. The 1929 façade had Zig-Zag Moderne decorative elements including pilasters with stepped capitals and a decorative relief course running below the parapet that may still exist under the skin.⁹ (See Figure 2) The skin was likely added after the period of significance.

⁸ "O-T Open Truss Steel Joists: A Product of Truscon," accessed February 12, 2015. <http://archive.org/details/o-tOpenTrussSteelJoistsAProductOfTruscon>.

⁹ City of West Hollywood, DPR, 1987.

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In 1940, Mitchell Camera Corporation built an addition behind the 1929 stucco building. It is a single-story stucco building, adjacent to The Factory building's north elevation. The 1940 addition connects to the 1929 noncontributing Mitchell Camera Corp office building. According to Sanborn maps, the 1940 addition abuts The Factory building's irregular projection. The 1940 addition has a flat roof, plain parapet, and no coping.

There are awnings, canopies, wooden fences, and concrete block walls fronting the north elevation of the 1929 noncontributing building and 1940 addition.

A vernacular wooden structure, with sliding windows was built on the roof of the 1940 addition sometime between 1946 and 1953 according to Sanborn maps. This was likely done outside the Mitchell Camera Corp period of significance (1929-1946). The quality of construction does not match the integrity of the other buildings. This building is a noncontributer.

The Factory Building – Alterations/Conditions

The building retains almost all of its original Truscon copper steel sidewall panels. And it retains most of its original Truscon industrial steel sash windows. All of the sidewall wall panels have been painted. Most of the windows have been painted. Some of the original glass panes have been removed and replaced. Some of the first floor's sidewall panels are dented due to cars bumping into them.

There are air conditioning units on The Factory building's roof. Various utility lines are attached to The Factory building.

The Factory, like all Truscon buildings, is earthquake proof.¹⁰ The building is mostly fire proof, except for the wooden floor that Mitchell Camera Corporation installed for its comfort and its vibration resistance.

Integrity

The building has been in continual use since its completion in 1929. After Mitchell Camera Corporation vacated in 1946, the building was used as a drug and cosmetics warehouse, members only nightclub, interior design offices and showroom, radio club and theater, various small shops, experimental theater, western themed restaurant, hardware store, cabaret nightclub, gay discotheque and the building continues to be used as a nightclub.

The building retains a high degree of integrity in terms of design and workmanship. Some things have changed on the building's facades but the defining features of the daylight factory - monitor

¹⁰ "Truscon Permanent Buildings," accessed January 26, 2015, <https://archive.org/details/TrusconPermanentBuildingsStandardizedForGeneralIndustries>.

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and large windows for natural light and ventilation, open interior - have all been retained. The building has lost some integrity of materials as some of the original industrial sash windows have been replaced and some of the copper and steel sidewall panels have been altered or bent. But the building is very large and is clad only in sidewall panels and windows, and the interior wood floor has been retained, so the building retains a high degree of integrity of materials.

The property retains integrity of location, feeling and association as an industrial property located in an area that is a mixture of commercial and industrial uses. The southwest side of West Hollywood has held the concentration of the city's industry and manufacturing since the late 1890's when a massive rail yard was constructed on south side of Santa Monica Blvd at San Vicente Blvd (where the Pacific Design Center is). In the late 1940's, furniture makers and interior designers moved their showrooms and light manufacturing into the area. The area is now known as the Design District.

The property shares a border with Design District and Historic Boystown. Boystown is generally the area around Santa Monica Blvd between La Cienega Boulevard and La Peer Drive. West Hollywood was a natural draw for gay and lesbian bars because the city was unincorporated until 1984, so the sheriff's raids and crackdowns on the bars were not as frequent as in the incorporated cities like Los Angeles and Hollywood. The bars were small, windowless places, mostly without signage. In the '60s and '70s, the old nightclubs on the Sunset Strip became famous for its live music especially folk and rock-and-roll. Free spirits, musicians, bohemians and LGBT moved into the surrounding neighborhoods. The area was given the nickname "Boy's Town." The west side of Santa Monica Blvd is still considered the most LGBT part of West Hollywood and is now being referred to as "Historic Boystown."

The Factory building still hosts gay dance events, and across the street from the property on the east side is the most popular LGBT bar in Los Angeles called The Abbey which is next to another LGBT bar and a LGBT restaurant.

The Factory and Previous Historical Analyses

In 1978, The Factory building was recognized by the West Hollywood Chamber of Commerce for its historic significance as the former Mitchell Camera Company factory, and for the historically significant building's contribution to the WHCC's plan to attract business to West Hollywood. Until 1984, West Hollywood was an unincorporated city; the WHCC was acting as the city's only local government when they held a celebrity hosted ceremony and placed a plaque in the sidewalk cement in front of The Factory building on Robertson Blvd honoring the building.¹¹

The City of West Hollywood has done two residential Historic Resources Surveys, in 1986-87 and 2008. Although both surveys concentrated on residential properties, both sited a few

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commercial structures the surveyors thought were of architectural note. The Factory building was cited on both surveys.^{12 13}

In 1987, the City of West Hollywood completed a DPR 523 form on The Factory building. The historic research consultants Johnson Heumann Research Associates found the building to be eligible for local listing and for listing on the National Register.¹⁴

In 1994/95, the City of West Hollywood's Department of Community Development filed an application for the nomination of the building at local level. The City's Cultural Heritage Advisory Board recommended that The Factory building not be designated as a Cultural Resource, and the City Council agreed. Although the resolution noted the building's exterior is largely intact, the City Council cited some dented exterior sidewall panels and interior alterations as reasons for denying the designation. The resolution also noted that the "design of the building is undistinguished and makes no contribution to the historical events that occurred at the property." However, at the time the resolution was written, the architect, builder and that the building was specifically designed and built for the Mitchell Camera Corporation was "unknown." The owner of the building was against the designation.¹⁵

In 2015, The Factory building was chosen as one of the National Trust For Historic Preservation's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places 2015.¹⁶

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- INVENTION
- INDUSTRY
- ENGINEERING
- COMMERCE
- SOCIAL HISTORY
- ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION
- PERFORMING ARTS
- _____
- _____

Period of Significance

1929-1993

Significant Dates

1929
1940
1987? (north exterior stairs)

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)
n/a

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

Truscon Steel Company

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Mitchell Camera factory/Studio One Disco and Backlot building is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A at the local level due to its pivotal association with the motion picture industry and LGBTQ civil rights and events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of the City of West Hollywood's political and social history. The Mitchell Camera Corporation factory/Studio One Disco and Backlot building (more commonly known as The Factory) was the site where the Mitchell Camera Corporation designed and manufactured technologically advanced motion picture cameras and related equipment that revolutionized the motion picture industry by introducing features to cameras that changed the way films were made. The camera movement designed at The Factory became the sole basis for motion picture camera design until digital motion picture cameras were introduced. The Factory was also the site of Studio One disco and Backlot Theatre where gay men socialized in an open and celebratory environment that had cutting-edge sound and light systems, and a dance floor that held well over a 1,000 dancers every night along with the Backlot Theatre with music and comedy performances by unknowns and established stars like Patti LaBelle, Joan Rivers and Chita Rivera. Founded by Beverly Hills optometrist Scott Forbes, Studio One and the Backlot helped bridge the cultural gap between gay and straight communities by its prominence and popularity. In the early days of the AIDS crisis, Forbes donated the use of Studio One and the Backlot to host many fundraisers including one of the nation's first AIDS fundraisers put on by newly formed AIDS Project Los Angeles and hosted by Joan Rivers in 1984, no other celebrities would participate. The period of significance is 1929-1993. The property meets the requirements of Criteria Consideration G.

Criteria Consideration G: Exceptional Significance, Studio One LGBT History

Studio One is exceptionally significant for its association in recent LGBT history. The historic context of Studio One disco and Backlot (Criteria A) has already been the subject of significant scholarly evaluation by academic and contemporary researchers in the field of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Studies. The historical significance of Studio One disco and Backlot is derived for its place in the evolution of LGBTQ civil rights and the development of modern West Hollywood. The gay bar was the main social and political hub of the LGBTQ community. Studio One disco took the gay bar from small, anonymous, dark, windowless spaces to a huge, famous, first-class discotheque that rivaled all other discotheques, including heterosexual ones, at the time. The existence and the gay community's embrace of Studio One disco was pivotal in the effort to normalize LGBTQ existence in the dominant

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mainstream/heterosexual society. The City of West Hollywood is currently conducting a historical survey of commercial properties. In their preliminary examination, the historic preservation consultants contracted to do the survey, GPA Consulting, assigned "The Factory/Mitchell Camera Company/Studio One" the status code "3S"

appearing eligible for National Register of Historic Places as an individual property through survey evaluation.¹⁷

Studio One disco and Backlot meet the requirements of Criteria Consideration G, exceptional significance. Its importance has been well established in the context of the LGBTQ Civil Rights Movement and the development of West Hollywood. The Los Angeles Conservancy has made the potential demolition of The Factory building an "Urgent Important Issue" on their website.¹⁸ In a January 23, 2015 letter containing Notice of Preparation of Draft Environmental Impact comments, written by Adrian Scott Fine, Director of Advocacy, Mr. Fine called Studio One disco "a transformative discotheque within West Hollywood's gay community." And said, "the club nonetheless stood out as an important anchor in West Hollywood's gay community, hosting numerous philanthropic events and establishing a handful of traditions, such as "Gay Day" at local amusement parks that continue today." The letter concluded, "The Conservancy believes that the building qualifies as an historical resource for its associations with the motion picture industry and West Hollywood's pioneering gay community..."¹⁹

In 2015, the National Trust for Historic Preservation named The Factory building one of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places.²⁰ In their announcement, the National Trust for Historic Preservation called Studio One disco a "pioneering gay disco... associated with the gay rights movement throughout its history. When the AIDS epidemic hit in the early 1980s, for example, one of the nation's first major fundraisers took place at Studio One." The America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places list serves to spotlight important and threatened historic places across the country.²¹

¹⁷ GPA Consulting, City of West Hollywood Commercial Historic Resources Survey DRAFT, 56.

¹⁸ Los Angeles Conservancy, "The Factory." Accessed February 2016. <https://www.laconservancy.org/locations/factory>.

¹⁹ Fine, Adrian, "Letter: Notice of Preparation for the Robertson Lane Hotel Project." Accessed May 2015. <https://www.laconservancy.org/sites/default/files/files/issues/LA%20Conservancy%20Comments%20on%20NOP%2C%20Robertson%20Lane%20Hotel%20Project%2C%201.23.15.pdf>.

²⁰ National Trust for Historic Preservation, "11 Most Endangered Historic Places: The Factory." Accessed June 2015. www.savingplaces.org/places/the-factory#.V0No0SMrJuU.

²¹ Heffern, "11 Most Endangered Round-Up." Accessed June 27, 2015. <https://savingplaces.org/stories/weekend-reads-11-most-endangered-round-up-featuring-gizmodo-the-advocate-and-more#.V0OXDfkrKM8>.

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Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Criteria A: Mitchell Camera Corporation

Mitchell Camera Corporation factory building is a significant remnant of an era when the motion picture industry was booming in West Hollywood and Hollywood, California in the 1920s-1940s, generating a need for a large factory to design and manufacture technologically-advanced motion picture cameras and related equipment for the studios.²² Mitchell Camera Corporation occupied The Factory building from 1929-1946.

Due to the development of motion pictures with sound/talkies in the late 1920s, the demand for quiet-running cameras was in high demand by the studios and theatergoers alike. The Mitchell Camera Corporation designed and manufactured the, almost, silent-running NC (News Camera) and the silent-running BNC (Blimped News Camera) at the Mitchell Camera Corporation factory building in West Hollywood, CA. By 1946, 85% of all motion pictures shown in theaters worldwide were filmed with Mitchell cameras that were made at the Mitchell Camera Corporation factory building.²³

George A. Mitchell began his career in Los Angeles in 1911 as an optics expert and mechanic; he was trained in the U.S. Army Signal Corp and later in Universal Studios' camera maintenance shop. At Universal Studios, he became acquainted with many cameramen in the industry whose technical problems he resolved and he also created custom camera accessories according to their needs. This allowed Mitchell intimate exposure to the inner workings of the motion picture camera and the concerns of the cameraman.²⁴

In 1919, Mitchell, the "master mechanic," and Henry Boeger were both working in a camera repair and modification shop in Hollywood called the National Motion Picture Repair Company. Mitchell and Boeger's first jobs at National were repairing and adapting the most utilized cameras in Hollywood at the time, the Bell & Howell, the Pathe, and the Debie Parvo for studios and independent cameramen. Mitchell and Boeger took ownership of the company, which they renamed the Mitchell Camera Corporation.^{25 26}

²² Roberts, "The Mitchell Camera: The Machine and Its Makers," 141.

²³ Mitchell Camera Corp, "Mitchell 16mm Professional," 16.

²⁴ Raimondo-Souto, *Motion Picture Photography*, 55.

²⁵ Raimondo-Souto, 55.

²⁶ Hoke, "Mitchell Camera Nears Majority," 495.

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Mitchell and Boeger as chief machinist and general superintendent headed the new Mitchell Camera Corporation. They set about building a new camera that would incorporate some of the basic concepts of the then popular Bell & Howell Standard, but improved with, inventor and

cameraman, John E. Leonard's new adjustable curtain or rack over device, film moving mechanism or motion, and adjustable iris or variable shutter. These features became the hallmark of early Mitchell cameras. In 1919, Mitchell Camera Corp purchased Leonard's patents. In 1921 Mitchell Camera Corp created and marketed the Mitchell Standard camera.²⁷

The first film shot with the Mitchell Standard was Mary Pickford's *The Love Light* (1921). The result was better than anticipated and soon Hollywood master cinematographers such as Charles Rosher (Mary Pickford films, *Sunrise*), Arthur C. Miller (*The Perils of Pauline*, *How Green Is Your Valley*), and Tony Gaudio (*Hell's Angels*, *Little Caesar*) purchased their own Mitchell Standards.²⁸

International Photographer magazine conducted a test on the Mitchell Standard - "As a test for endurance [Mitchell] put a camera on a milling machine, running it at 24 pictures a second continuously for five weeks, equivalent of two to three years use. During the run the camera was well taken of and oiled once or twice a day. At the end of five weeks we compared measurements (made after the test) with those made at the beginning and were unable to detect any wear."²⁹

By 1923, Mitchell Camera Corp had sales representatives in Los Angeles, New York and San Francisco. A backlog of orders for the Mitchell Standard forced Mitchell manufacturing into a 72-hour work week. At this time there were thirty Mitchell Standards in use in the Hollywood studios, making Mitchell Camera Corp and Bell & Howell the standard cameras used in studios through the late silent film period. Mitchell Camera Corp announced that their current manufacturing building had become too small and could not accommodate the company's growth so they would be constructing a larger facility in the near future.³⁰

Theatre attendance was in a steady growth pattern since 1921. In the mid-1900s, there were about 5,000 theatres in the US; at the beginning of 1930 there were 22,624, representing an average growth of about 740 theatres per year. By the mid-1920s, a decision by Warner Brothers and Fox to introduce synchronized sound and amplification systems in their theaters forced all the major studios to confront the need for new sound and motion picture technology.³¹

²⁷ Leonard, Various Patents, 1921.

²⁸ Raimondo-Souto, 55.

²⁹ Jonson, "Effect Maintenance in Quieting Cameras," 166.

³⁰ American Cinematographer, "Mitchell Increases Production Program," 22.

³¹ Raimondo-Souto, 298.

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The first sound equipment was installed in theaters in late 1926. The overwhelming success of *The Jazz Singer* ushered in a phenomenal rise in audience attendance. The wiring of theaters for sound motion pictures progressed rapidly and by 1929, there were approximately 9,000 theaters out of 26,000 wired for sound in the United States. There were approximately 2,000 theatres wired for sound in Europe.³²

By August 1930, the attendance to theatres was 115 million admissions every week; this number meant that the entire population of the United States attended the motion picture theater every seven days. It was no longer considered a luxury, but a necessary form of recreation for the masses.

According to International Photographer, by 1930 the total investment in the motion picture industry was \$2.5 billion in the US alone; in Europe it was estimated at \$1 billion. And it was estimated that 75% of theatres in the United States would soon be wired for sound motion pictures/talkies.³³

However, even with these rising numbers in revenue and attendance, there was still a cloud of doubt over the future of sound motion pictures/talkies. International Photographer opined that the current sound films were just “a combination of unsatisfactory photography with unsatisfactory sound effects, which even the best story cannot efface.” And by December 1930 it was known that out of the approximately 26,000 theaters in the US, 10,000 were forced to close because they were not wired for sound and consequently could not compete with theaters that were wired for sound.³⁴

Movie producers turned to motion picture equipment manufacturers and their professional associations to an unprecedented degree. To solve the small-scale problems of sound, studios relied more heavily on their in-house engineers, draftsmen, and machinists. But the race for quality sound motion pictures put even greater demand on outside companies and caused a great expansion of the technical manufacturing and service sector.³⁵

Santa Monica Boulevard as it runs through the westside of Hollywood and the City of West Hollywood was one of the main arteries of technical service and manufacturing companies – on the westside of Hollywood, Kodak established the Eastman Service Building in 1929 and added a processing plant in 1930 (currently slated for demolition); DuPont built a laboratory and manufacturing plant in West Hollywood in 1929; Mole-Richardson lighting manufacturing company moved to a new location one block south of West Hollywood in 1928 and built an addition a year later (demolished); Fearless Camera had a showroom and offices in West Hollywood in 1932 (demolished). And in 1929, Mitchell Camera Corp built a new factory in

³² Irby, “Recent and Future Economic Changes in the Motion Picture Field,” 34-35.

³³ Irby, 34-35.

³⁴ Criticus, “Industry Must Look Truth in Face,” 18.

³⁵ Bordwell and Staiger, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*, 299.

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West Hollywood which was double the size of their previous location in Hollywood.³⁶ It is one of the last remaining factory buildings originally associated with the technological innovation and manufacturing side of the Hollywood movie making industry and with the light industrial origins of modern West Hollywood.

Mitchell Camera Corp broke ground on their new factory on January 21, 1929. They hired the Youngstown, Ohio-based, design-build firm Truscon Steel Company to design and build a

factory and office building at 665 North Robertson Boulevard in West Hollywood, CA.³⁷ This area of West Hollywood at the time was a made up of mostly single-story, industrial buildings with a few small, residential structures; one city-block east of the Pacific Electric Railway Company's Sherman/West Hollywood massive rail yards, shops and car barns.³⁸ In attendance at the groundbreaking ceremony were the West Hollywood Chamber of Commerce President and Secretary, two engineers from the Truscon Steel Company along with Mitchell and Boeger. (See Figure 7)

The Factory building was designed with function dictating its form, a Kahn Daylight Factory hallmark. Julius Kahn, a structural engineer, founded Truscon Steel Company in 1903 using the materials and products (most importantly the Kahn Bar) he had perfected while working with Albert Kahn, the foremost American industrial architect of his day. The Kahns perfected the Daylight Factory construction and design, which became known as the Kahn Daylight Factory. The Kahns collaborated on many automobile factory plants such as Ford and Packard.³⁹ The design of The Factory building gave key consideration to the comfort and full efficiency of the workmen- large factory windows for maximum natural light and ventilation and large, uninterrupted factory floor. Mitchell also had installed the sawed end grain wood block floor to reduce floor vibration, and a motor at every workstation, eliminating hanging cables and belts. And with having the building designed with a metal and glass skin on a steel frame made the building earthquake and fireproof. The Factory building alone cost \$60,000 (\$823,902 in 2015).⁴⁰

International Photographer proclaimed, "Hollywood can well be proud of this plant as it will be the largest factory in the world manufacturing exclusively standard professional motion picture cameras."⁴¹ American Cinematography and International Photographer magazines ran photos on their back covers of the progression of the factory's construction until it was complete. (See Figure 1, Figure 5, Figure 6) A 1934 Mitchell Camera Corp catalog (See Figure 8) shows that the first floor of the factory was for camera manufacturing, while the second floor was devoted to the accessory department.

³⁶ Davis, "Film Equipment Production Centered Here," D1, D3.

³⁷ American Cinematographer, "The Mitchell's New Home," 34.

³⁸ Sanborn Fire Insurance Atlas, Los Angeles 1906-Jan 1950, Vol 20, 1926, Sheet 2048.

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⁴¹ The International Photographer, "New Mitchell Factory."

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By the time the Mitchell Camera Corp factory and offices were complete, the Academy of Motion Picture Sciences had gotten involved in the film industry's problems with development and standardization. After prolonged consideration of the transitional period between silent films and talkies, it was agreed, in 1930, that it all came down to three major problems— silencing the arc lamp, silencing the camera movement, and constructing soundproof set material.⁴²

Before the days of talking pictures, no one gave a thought to the loud noise of the camera. According to International Photographer, “when the sound man first came into the picture

business, he almost created a panic with his demands to do this and you can't do that...No one expected to hear the producer say: ‘Never mind the picture; we want the sound.’” No one expected the time when the cinematographer would be in sound booths behind glass, be forced to limit or discard his lighting equipment (because they would buzz), or work with a camera blimp to dampen the noise which made focusing and general movement of the camera cumbersome.⁴³

At an American Society of Cinematographers meeting in 1929, the cinematographers and sound engineers in attendance were asked, what would you consider an ideal condition for achieving perfect photography/for making a perfect voice record? The cinematographers answered “an ideal photographic condition exists when we can place our lights and cameras at any desired point, or work without any restrictions whatever.” The sound engineers answered, “an ideal location for making a perfect vocal record would be in the middle of the Mojave desert, unhampered by cameras, walls or any other disturbing elements.”⁴⁴

The major camera manufacturers, including Bell & Howell, Mitchell Camera Corp and Fearless Camera took on the task of creating a silent-running camera. Bell & Howell was quick to come up with “silent” cameras. Bell & Howell announced their Standard Sound Camera, which had to stay at least ten feet away from any microphone; Fearless came out with the New Fearless Silent Camera in 1930, which also had to remain at least ten feet away from any microphone. Both of these cameras still required a blimp (a large suitcase-like device that fit over the camera) in order for the camera to be close to the actors and action. Mitchell Camera Corp also made changes to their existing Mitchell Standard to make it quieter by changing metal gears to Bakelite gears, and taking out ball bearings wherever possible. American Cinematographer reported that RKO Studios was using the improved Mitchell Standard camera out in the open, not in a camera booth as was previously required.⁴⁵

At this time, Mitchell Camera Corp was manufacturing and aggressively marketing their new 70mm Mitchell-Grandeur (aka Fox-Grandeur) camera. The cameras were originally built for Fox Film, in Fox Film's attempt to corner the market on wide-screen films. Fox Film ordered fifty cameras. By January 1931, Mitchell Camera Corp had substantially completed sixteen cameras

⁴² Bordwell and Staiger, 299.

⁴³ Clark, “Before and After Sound,” 34, 36.

⁴⁴ American Cinematographer, “Sound Men and Cinematographers Discuss Their Mutual Problems,” 8, 39.

⁴⁵ American Cinematographer, “Taking the Click Out of Cameras,” 22.

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and had thirty-four more in various stages of completion when the Hearst Company bought Fox Film, which forced Mitchell Camera Corp to sell the finished cameras to other studios.

According to a consequent lawsuit between Mitchell Camera Corp and Fox-Hearst Company, two 70mm Mitchell-Grandeurs were sold to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, one went to Feature Productions, and four were sold to Fox Film but it is rumored that Fox Film had close to eight Mitchell-Grandeurs.⁴⁶ The films shot on the Mitchell-Grandeur were Fox's *The Fox Follies*,

Happy Days, *Song O' My Heart*, John Wayne's first film *The Big Trail*, and MGM's *Billy the Kid*.⁴⁷

By 1931, Mitchell Camera Corp created a new, experimental camera called the Mitchell NC (News Camera), also known as the Mitchell Sound Camera. The Mitchell NC was officially released in 1932. The new intermittent mechanism of the NC eliminated gear meshing and employed eccentrics and sliding surfaces, an ingenious way to avoid some of the noise from the mechanism. The construction of this movement demanded extreme tolerances of the parts, which were machined and lapped to .0001 inch and polished to a .0005 inch tolerance in the register pins.⁴⁸ Mitchell cameras were machined with finer tolerances than the most expensive Swiss watch but were built like a tank.

Ira B. Hoke, camera operator and technician, wrote this about the Mitchell NC – “considering the multitude of noise-contributing factors necessary to the construction of this type of machine, the builders have been extraordinarily successful in their undertaking. From the cameraman's standpoint the new Mitchell is ideal. To the sound man it will offer no obstacle to perfect recording, and the producer will find that time sacred by the use of this modern photographic equipment will quickly repay the initial outlay.”⁴⁹

The Mitchell NC included a noiseless movement, a hand dissolve (instead of the automatic shutter), a miniature reference shutter, a buckle trip and the improved monitoring viewfinder conceived at the end of the twenties with upright image and built-in mattes but eliminated the floating iris system, very little used after the end of the silent films. But its most valued feature was its near silent operation at 35dB.⁵⁰ (10dB is the threshold for hearing, 20dB is a whisper, and 30-35dB is twice as loud as a whisper.)

William Stull of American Cinematographer said of the new Mitchell NC – “it was clear that other camera companies were only making alterations to an inherently noisy mechanism but it

⁴⁶ “Mitchell Camera Corp. v. Fox Film Corp.,” accessed March 9, 2015.

<http://social.stanford.edu/opinion/mitchellcameracorpvfoxfilmcorp24998>.

⁴⁷ Mitchell Camera Corp Ad, “Mitchell Wide Film Cameras,” American Cinematographer back cover.

⁴⁸ Roberts, 144.

⁴⁹ Hoke, “Mitchell Silences Sound Camera,” 12.

⁵⁰ American Cinematographer, “Cameraman Want Silence,” 22.

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was Mitchell Camera who built a completely new device, one that marked a great step forward in cinematographic engineering and practice.”⁵¹ In *American Cinematographer*, Mitchell Camera Corp advertised the NC as a “camera designed for studio use...an entirely new camera built to the high standard of Mitchell products...it has new features not previously offered in a professional motion picture camera, and has been quieted so that the use of a heavy blimp is not necessary.”⁵² The Mitchell Camera factory in West Hollywood made approximately 150 Mitchell NCs from 1932 to 1938.⁵³

International Photographer proclaimed that, “times have changed. Now the cinematographer can go back to the methods that he used before sound. Hard lights are again being used and his camera is being released from its cell. Scenes which were called impossible then are now being shot without trouble.”⁵⁴

The Mitchell NC was soon the preferred camera of most Hollywood studios, newsreel and short film companies and film producers. Orders for the Mitchell NC also poured in from London, Berlin, Calcutta, Bombay, Tokyo, Buenos Aires, Mexico City, Manila, and Moscow. Mitchell cameras were more expensive than many other brands on the world market, but its particular design features and outstanding workmanship made it worth the higher price.

However, the NC model still required the use of a blimp for extreme close-ups. Harold Rosson (*Wizard of Oz*), one of the first cinematographers to use the experimental Mitchell NC, said “this camera is satisfactorily silent for most work except extreme close-ups, or scenes recorded at a very low volume-level.” Most studio camera departments made their own blimps. The use of a blimp was a limitation and a time-consuming operation for the camera crew; framing and focus checking, changing lenses, footage control, and adjusting the shutter could only be done through the blimp’s opening.

Master cinematographer Gregg Toland’s (*Wuthering Heights*, *Grapes of Wrath*, *Citizen Kane*) use of the Mitchell NC received accolades for his treatment of close-ups in the film *Les Miserable*. *American Cinematographer* called it “a revelation in artistic conception and courage” for a previously impossible endeavor because of noisy cameras.⁵⁵ Toland was known for his surprisingly original and ingenious take on the mechanical side of his profession so George A. Mitchell enlisted Toland’s help in conceiving a truly silent studio camera. Toland worked with the engineers at the Mitchell Camera Corp factory to develop a camera prototype with Mitchell NC’s features but completely silent.⁵⁶ In 1934, after several trials, the new Mitchell BNC (Blimped/Blimpless New Camera), also known as the Studio Model, was introduced.

⁵¹ Stull, “The Silent Mitchell Camera,” 22.

⁵² Mitchell Camera Corp Ad, “Announcing the New Mitchell Silenced Cameras,” *American Cinematographer* back cover.

⁵³ Hoke, “Mitchell Camera Nears Majority,” 496.

⁵⁴ Clark, 34.

⁵⁵ Toland, “Intensive Preparation Underlies Toland’s Achievements,” 247.

⁵⁶ Raimondo-Souto, 144.

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The Mitchell BNC was lighter than an NC with a blimp, 120lbs versus 173lbs (permitting a greater freedom and flexibility of camera choreography), and the movement's operating noise level dropped to just 21 dB, a whisper.⁵⁷ International Photographer said of the Mitchell BNC, "convenient foolproof operation...no blimp is necessary, hence, there's no shooting through glass and all controls of the camera are on the outside."⁵⁸ Prolific cinematographer, L. William O'Connell, said in *American Cinematographer*, "they're simply such a perfect instrument for the work at hand that I never have to give the camera thought. It's there – it does its work perfectly – so perfectly I'm never conscious of its presence."⁵⁹

The major Hollywood studios purchased or rented the Mitchell BNC – Samuel Goldwyn Studios bought the first two cameras made; United Artists rented a Mitchell BNC for Gregg Toland to shoot *Wuthering Heights* for which he won an Academy Award for Cinematography; RKO rented the Mitchell BNC for Toland to shoot *Citizen Kane*; Warner Brothers purchased ten Mitchell BNCs.⁶⁰ (See Figure 9)

Mitchell Camera Corp's new vice-president, movie producer and motion picture pioneer, Charles H. Christie, cultivated a world-market for Mitchell cameras. By 1935, Mitchell Camera Corp opened agencies in Sydney, London, Bombay, Rome, and Osaka.⁶¹

In a series of advertisements, cinematographers praised the Mitchell BNC – Ernest Haller (*Jezebel*, *Gone With the Wind*, *Mildred Pierce*, *Rebel Without a Cause*): "Everything a cinematographer could want for the finest photography is embodied in the Mitchell Studio Camera"; Sol Polito, (*The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex*, *Sergeant York*, *Now Voyager*) "I have been using Mitchell Cameras since 1920 and in my opinion the new Mitchell Studio Camera is perfect"; Arthur Edeson (*All Quiet on the Western Front*, *The Maltese Falcon*, *Casablanca*), "Silent—convenient—dependable, the Mitchell Studio Camera answers today's exacting demands"; Charles B. Lang (*A Farewell to Arms*, *Sabrina*, *Some Like it Hot*), "In the studio and on location the speed and the convenience of the Mitchell studio camera made photographing 'Sundown' doubly a pleasure."⁶²

"Describing the Mitchell Motion Picture Camera: The Camera That Advances with the Industry" is how Mitchell Camera Corp described their cameras in their 1934 catalog. At that time their "roll call" of Mitchell camera users included –

Charles Chaplin Studios
Columbia Pictures Corp

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Corporation
Monogram Pictures

⁵⁷ Ibid, 144.

⁵⁸ The International Photographer, "Cinematographer," 9.

⁵⁹ Stull, "Mitchell Blimpless Cameras Really Silent," 167.

⁶⁰ Raimondo-Souto, 144-145.

⁶¹ The International Photographer, "After a World's Market," 3.

⁶² Mitchell Camera Corp Ads, "Satisfied Mitchell Camera Users," various back covers.

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Educational Studios, Inc	Paramount Productions, Inc
Fox Film Corp	R K O – Pathe Studios
Bryan Foy Studios	R K O – Radio Studios
General Service Studios Inc	Hal E. Roach Studios
Samuel Goldwyn, Inc, Ltd	Mack Sennett, Inc
International Film Studios	Twentieth Century Pictures, Inc
Harold Lloyd Company	United Artists Studio Corporation
Majestic Productions	Universal Pictures Corporation
Mascot Pictures Corp	Warner Bros. Productions Corporation

Their “roll call” continued to list other studios, general service departments, including Eastman Kodak Company, R C A – Victor Co, and the United States Navy and the United States Army, and foreign service departments around the world.⁶³

Orson Welles’ *Citizen Kane* was released in 1941. American Cinematographer said, “it is the first production in which dialogue, sound, music and true motion picture technique are welded together to form a genuinely complete unity.”⁶⁴ Gregg Toland, as cinematographer, said the Mitchell BNC allowed him to experiment with extreme depths of field or “deep-focus cinematography,” camera angles, lighting that produced high-contrast tonality, and long takes. Along with new developments in film and lenses, it was with the Mitchell BNC that Toland “begins to evolve a radically new cinematographic style that develops to its full maturity in *Citizen Kane*.”⁶⁵ (See Figure 9)

LIFE magazine did a nine page spread on Orson Welles and *Citizen Kane*. *LIFE* magazine said this about the working relationship between Orson Welles and Gregg Toland –

Gregg Toland, ace Hollywood cameraman who accomplished the technical brilliance of *Citizen Kane*, tells how willingly Welles seized upon every new suggestion. During the 27 weeks of shooting, Welles spent countless hours with him, planning, plotting, experimenting with inexhaustible patience for new camera angles, new compositions, new light effects, new settings that would make for power and economy, for emotional intensity and utter realism.⁶⁶

LIFE magazine in the last seven pages of the article, illustrated Toland’s new techniques he perfected with the Mitchell BNC, including “pan focus,” frame composition where Toland dressed the entire frame for a shot or lit only a portion of the frame in order to connote a certain

⁶³ Mitchell Camera Corp, *Mitchell Motion Picture Cameras*, 4-5.

⁶⁴ American Cinematographer, “Photography of the Month,” 222.

⁶⁵ Carringer, 73.

⁶⁶ Life Magazine, “Orson Welles,” 108.

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mood, creating a low ceiling by Toland shooting from a hole in the floor to create the mood, the tight grouping of big figures in the foreground and sharp focusing on action in the background, remarkable depth of field where it was marveled that “scenes sometimes traversed two 100-ft. sound stages,” and using special lens coating to cut light flares in the projection room scene. A seven page spread focusing on camera techniques of the cinematographer was unheard of before *Citizen Kane*. One page is even devoted to Toland’s tricks with light like using natural candlelight in a scene from Bette Davis’ film *Little Foxes*.⁶⁷

From a 1941 *LIFE* magazine article entitled *Citizen Kane: In his first film Orson Welles breaks all Hollywood’s taboos* – “Director Welles and Cameraman Gregg Toland do brilliantly with a camera everything Hollywood has always said you couldn’t do. They shoot into bright lights,

they shoot into the dark and against low ceilings, till every scene comes with the impact of something never seen before.”⁶⁸

In 1945, *LIFE* magazine did a nine page spread of filmmaking. This time it centered on the process of “movie making” – the set, the take, camera, lights, lab, sound, and the film vault. A photo of the Mitchell BNC takes up most of the page with a camera operator behind its viewfinder under the “camera” section; the significance of this focus on the Mitchell BNC illustrates the importance of this machine and its impact on filmmaking.

The text calls the camera “the most important piece of apparatus in Hollywood. The whole great big motion-picture industry exists solely for the purpose of paying court to the black-hooded machine shown above.”

The article continues –

This is the latest and best model camera. It costs about \$10,000 and is made in West Hollywood, Calif. By the Mitchell Camera Co. Warner Bros. has nine others just like it which are kept in an air-conditioned vault. Film runs through at 90 feet per minute, must nevertheless be stopped about once a second so that it may be exposed frame by frame. This calls for a great number of smoothly operating gears and sprockets finished to 1/10,000 of an inch. The most astonishing thing about the whole electrically run machine is that it operates in total silence, for if it whirred or clicked in any way the noise would be picked up and recorded along with the actors’ voices.⁶⁹

According to Toland in *American Cinematographer*, *Citizen Kane* was “the starting-point of some new ideas in both the technique and the art of cinematography.”⁷⁰ But even before *Citizen*

⁶⁷ Ibid, 110-116.

⁶⁸ *LIFE* Magazine, “Movie of the Week: Citizen Kane,” 53.

⁶⁹ *LIFE* Magazine, “Movie Making,” 68-77.

⁷⁰ Toland, “Realism For ‘Citizen Kane,’” 54.

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Kane, Toland was experimenting with the Mitchell BNC on John Ford's film *The Long Voyage Home*.⁷¹

The capabilities of the Mitchell BNC enabled the development of a new artist – the cinematographer. The Mitchell BNC made the craft of the cinematographer easier so that he could focus on the artistry that the camera and his eye provided. The cinematographer painted a picture with lights and shadows; the Mitchell Camera recorded the picture exactly as the cinematographer painted it.⁷² By 1939, there were 19 Mitchell BNCs made and used by all the major studios; there was a total of at least 30 Mitchell BNCs made at the Mitchell factory in West Hollywood. (See Figure 9)

In the run up to World War II, part of design and production focus at the Mitchell Camera Corp factory began to shift toward the war effort. Even before the US officially became involved in

World War II, Mitchell Standard cameras and Mitchell NCs were being used to film Marine Corps, Navy, and Air Force training films.⁷³ (The Mitchell Standard was also called the “High Speed” camera because it could operate up to 128 frames per second; its precision was consistent and predictable. During and post-World War II, the US government called it the “GC.”)⁷⁴ Photographic Unit officers were called into active duty, including Gregg Toland and director John Ford.⁷⁵ Mitchell Camera Corp had developed and manufactured the chronograph “GC” camera which led to the development of specialized “government cameras” used in World War II, including an aerial tracking camera, a triangulation camera, and a split magazine camera.⁷⁶ Mitchell cameras were in the nose cones of the B-25 Bomber airplanes; a Mitchell camera filmed the first daylight bombing raid over Germany.⁷⁷ A Mitchell BNC that was sent to the Soviet Union during World War II also shot the notable Russian film *Ivan the Terrible* (1945). A Mitchell Standard camera was used to film the test “dummy bombs” and, more notably, the Trinity Site atomic bomb test in 1945, as part of the Manhattan Project.

On July 16, 1945, the photographer, Berlyn Brixner, sat behind a Mitchell Standard (made at the West Hollywood factory) to film the world's first nuclear explosion. Before the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Brixner was dispatched to Washington, D.C. to deliver the 35mm motion-picture negative films to the Manhattan Project director, expressly for use in newsreels.⁷⁸

The Mitchell Camera Corp was also heavily involved in the next groundbreaking filmmaking event after sound – color. A Mitchell camera movement was in the early Technicolor three strip cameras; in the beginning Mitchell Camera Corp was also manufacturing the cameras for

⁷¹ Carringer, 74-75.

⁷² Mitchell Camera Corp Ad, “The Expert Cameraman...,” *The International Photographer*, September 1937, 15.

⁷³ Stull, “Hollywood's Own Film Unit Volunteers to Film the Navy,” 166-167.

⁷⁴ Roberts, 146-147.

⁷⁵ Stull, 166.

⁷⁶ George Worrall interview, Johnson Heumann Research Assoc, DPR notes, 1987.

⁷⁷ Joe Dunton interview, Kate Eggert, 2015.

⁷⁸ Berlyn Brixner's interview, Manhattan Project Voices, February 1992.

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Technicolor. *Gone with the Wind* and *Wizard of Oz* were filmed with Technicolor cameras containing Mitchell camera movements and manufactured by Mitchell Camera Corp.⁷⁹

Mitchell Camera Corp also developed new camera devices and attachments at the West Hollywood factory. They manufactured universal magnifying view finders, including an inverted image view finder, erect image view finder, erect image view finder with built-in mattes, view finder support, and adapters and brackets for various sizes of photographic lenses. (The Mitchell view finder was first designed with cinematographer Tony Gaudio and Bausch and Lomb in 1922.)

Other items designed and manufactured at the West Hollywood factory included the standard tripod base, rolling tripod with the height of the camera controlled by single crank, baby tripod, still camera tripod, friction tilt and panorama, low mount or tilthead adapter, quick release friction head, an improved camera motor and motor adaptor, buckle proof magazine, dummy camera and projection lamp, gear hobber, gear box and extension shaft, electric trip switch, matte

cutting device, variable diffuser, Mitchell camera carrying case, Mitchell magazine carrying case, Mitchell accessory carrying case, Mitchell Sound Recorder, Mitchell Background Projector.⁸⁰

Mitchell Camera Corp received an Academy Award for Technical Achievement in 1939, 1966 and 1968. George A. Mitchell received an Academy Honorary Award in 1952 by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.⁸¹

Mitchell Camera Corp left the West Hollywood factory building in 1946. They moved into a bigger factory building in Glendale, CA. At that time, they had over 200 employees. Mitchell Camera Corp had approximately 150 Mitchell NCs from 1932 to 1938. And by 1940, there were more than 20 Mitchell BNCs in use in Hollywood and internationally.

Since its introduction in 1932, the Mitchell NC movement became the standard design from which later Mitchell movements evolved. The Mitchell NC movement was used in Mitchell camera models NC, BNC, BNCR, and 205-R; a miniaturized NC-type movement was used in the compact types of Mitchell 35-mm cameras, models R35, Mark I, Mark II, S35R, S35RB, S35RC, Mark II, and in Mitchell 16-mm cameras.⁸²

According to Leo Enticknap in his book *Moving Image Technology: From Zoetrope to Digital*, “basically updated and heavily modified versions of the 1934 Mitchell BNC, and the 1937 Arriflex, represent the final stage in the development of (camera movement) fundamentals before the industry goes digital (in the 1990s).” In the mid-1960s, the first cameras produced by

⁷⁹ The Editor (The International Photographer), “A Cinema World Wonder,” 84.

⁸⁰ Mitchell Camera Corporation Ads, various in American Cinematographer and The International Photographer, 1929-1946.

⁸¹

⁸² Roberts, 144.

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Panavision were retrofitted Mitchell BNC cameras. All standard 35mm cameras made by Panavision to this day are based on the Mitchell movement.⁸³

Mitchell Camera Corp moved from Glendale to a factory in Sun Valley, California sometime between 1970 and 1975. In 1979, Mitchell Camera Corp stopped all manufacturing and closed the Sun Valley factory.

“And, of course, in film acting you have to work up a relationship with Mitch – you know, the movie camera – it had this nameplate, General Mitchell Camera. That’s who you’re acting with – bouncing your emotions off of – and every morning I’d say, ‘Good morning, Mitch.’ And I’d sit and rap with him for a bit. He’s like a very direct friend you can’t put off. He has no sympathies. When you lie, he embarrasses you in front of the whole world – 40 feet high.” – Television and film actor, Harris Yulin.⁸⁴

Criteria A: Studio One

The area when Mitchell Camera Corporation built The Factory in 1929 was largely residential, with commercial and manufacturing centered on Melrose Avenue, Santa Monica Boulevard, and the Pacific Electric rail yards on San Vicente Boulevard.⁸⁵ When Studio One moved to the neighborhood, the area largely changed to almost all commercial/manufacturing businesses. When Eames built their design store on Beverly Boulevard for Herman Miller in 1945, the area changed from manufacturing and commercial to largely design manufacturing and design commercial businesses. During the day in the 1970s, the area was quietly bustling with blue-collar workers and design studios. Today, the area has transformed from largely blue-collar to largely specialty design manufacturing and studios.

The Factory stands out as being one of the last remaining large, industrial buildings left from the manufacturing days of the 1920s-40s in that area, and even at that time The Factory stood out as being one of the only factories of its kind in West Hollywood.⁸⁶ The Factory had already been made an important celebrity destination in the mid-1960s when it was the membership-only, high-profile club called “The Factory.”⁸⁷ (And it actually still is one of the hottest clubs in Los Angeles, hosting day parties and events for A-list celebrities and athletes.)

Studio One Origin

⁸³ Enticknap, *Moving Image Technology*, 44.

⁸⁴ Yulin, “Harris Yulin,” 72.

⁸⁵ Gierach, *Images of America: West Hollywood*, 20, 25.

⁸⁶ American Cinematographer, “The Mitchell’s New Home,” 34.

⁸⁷ Faris, “‘Factory’ Once Private Show Biz Club, Doing a New Thing Now,” WS1.

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Studio One and the Backlot Theatre was the idea of Beverly Hills optometrist Scott Forbes. It started in 1973 when the building was known as “The Factory,” a celebrity membership-only

club started by Ron Buck and attended by the likes of Samy Davis Jr. and Frank Sinatra; it was commonly known as the “Rat Pack” hangout. Forbes convinced the owner to rent “The Factory” during its closed day, Sunday. It was invitation only, advertised as being very exclusive, and was called the “Odyssey Club.” (This is not to be confused with Odyssey1, another gay disco which opened up on Beverly Boulevard in 1976 and was later intentionally set on fire in 1985 and consequently demolished.) The “Odyssey Club” regularly saw 1000 dancers, had live bands, and pool tables. When “The Factory” celebrity membership club went under, Paradise Ballroom took over the lease but because of their poor management, Forbes soon had to stop his “Odyssey Club” nights. After that, Forbes tried to secure the lease and he finally did in February 1974.⁸⁸

“[Scott] wanted to get involved with it because of the gay movement. He wanted to create something special, something unique; he saw an opportunity in The Factory. He saw small, little clubs and thought that opening up that big club would be an opportunity. And it was a smashing

hit. Before he knew it, he was asking to take over the whole club” – Richard Sweigart, bartender at Studio One and personal friend of Scott Forbes.⁸⁹

Carol Taylor-DiPietro, a future business partner and best friend of Forbes, said that much of Studio One’s success was born out of Forbes’ love of the audio/visual (AV). Forbes was adamant on learning the future of AV. When they went to AV conventions together, Taylor-DiPietro called him “a kid in a candy store.” Forbes was actually the first to install flat screen televisions in his club, at least fifteen years before they were available to the public.

Scott Forbes was a charismatic east coaster from the town of Framingham, Massachusetts. He had tremendous love and pride for his family, and he was especially proud of his father who worked for Sears his entire life.⁹⁰ Forbes started his studies at USC at the young age of 17, and eventually earned a degree in optometry. His practice was in Beverly Hills. His most famous client included Elton John, but he soon left optometry completely and pursued Studio One.⁹¹ Even in the height of Studio One, the most popular disco in the United States and surrounded by celebrities, Forbes was down-to-earth and remained modest, usually donning blue jeans and a white undershirt and had a simple, California ranch-style house just above the Sunset Strip.⁹²

Police vs. Sheriffs

⁸⁸ Galligan, “The Sweet Smell of Success at Studio One.”

⁸⁹ Richard Sweigart interview, Kate Eggert, September 5, 2015.

⁹⁰ Carol Taylor-DiPietro interview, Kate Eggert, October 3, 2015.

⁹¹ Faderman and Timmonds, *Gay L.A.*, 234.

⁹² Taylor-DiPietro interview, October 3, 2015.

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From as far back as when West Hollywood was called the Cahuenga Valley and later Sherman, the area took advantage of being located in an unincorporated part of Los Angeles County, with its loose laws, Wild West tendency, and out of the jurisdiction of the harsh Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD). In the 1920s, the area attracted speakeasies, illicit casinos, mobsters, and Hollywood clientele who wanted to take advantage of those loose laws. The area called West Hollywood became the playground between Beverly Hills and Hollywood. It had drawn gay men

for the same reason and continued to draw them in through the years.⁹³ Starting in the 1920s, and flourishing well beyond Prohibition era, West Hollywood had gay and lesbian bars and performances spaces predominantly along Sunset Boulevard and a few on Santa Monica Boulevard.⁹⁴ ⁹⁵ By the 1950s and by the 1960s West Hollywood was also attracting hippies, rock-n-rollers and later Russian Jews fleeing Soviet oppression.⁹⁶

The LAPD, which operated in the City of Los Angeles, was notorious for raids and gay bashing, and general humiliation of gay folk – ranging from “hog-tying” to outright beatings and murders. At the time when Studio One opened, Ed Davis was the Chief of the LAPD. Under Davis, the

LAPD and its vice squad were known for active policing against gays. Zealous officers were purported to have dangled youth over a cliff to try to make them reveal names of a pedophile ring.⁹⁷ Countless articles during Chief Davis’ time with the LAPD were written with titles like – “The Power Politics of Ed Davis: A Cop Who Would Be King,” “LAPD’s ‘Crazy Ed’ Davis Shoots for California Governor,” “In Cops’ Eyes Gay Community Is a Threat,” “The Meanest Police Chief.” Davis was the police chief from 1969 to 1978.

In 1970, Morris Kight, co-founder of the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) in Los Angeles, helped organize a march down Hollywood Boulevard to commemorate the one year anniversary of the Stone Wall Riots in New York City. In order to have the parade, they needed a permit from the City of Los Angeles. At a consequent hearing, Reverend Troy Perry, co-organizer of the parade, had words with Chief Davis. Davis reportedly said to Perry – “Did you know that homosexuality is illegal in the State of California?” Perry responded “No sir, it is not.” Davis then said “Well, I want to tell you something. As far as I’m concerned, granting a parade permit to a group of homosexuals to parade down Hollywood Boulevard would be the same as giving a permit to a group of thieves and robbers.” The permit was granted, with the condition that the organizers would post bonds and pay police fees, which was first partially dismissed with the help of the ACLU, and entirely dismissed by the California Supreme Court. Due to continued LAPD harassment and urban development, the Hollywood Boulevard parade that was now called “LA

⁹³ Gierach, xx.

⁹⁴ Turnbull, Martin, “Hollywood Places.” Accessed August 2015. <http://www.martinturnbull.com/hollywood-places/>.

⁹⁵ Uszler, Chris, “‘Rightfully Proud’ Gay & Lesbian Los Angeles: The Early Years,” L10-11.

⁹⁶ Gierach, xx.

⁹⁷ Thorstad, “Court Sends Boy Lover to Prison,” 1.

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PRIDE” moved to West Hollywood’s Santa Monica Boulevard (in the Boy’s Town area) in 1979, where it still resides 36 years later.^{98 99}

(It should be noted here that the origin of West Hollywood’s “Boy’s Town” name – the stretch of Santa Monica Boulevard between La Cienega Boulevard to La Peer Drive – was meant to be derogatory toward gay men. It was a term straights used to put down gay men who lived or frequented the area. The term “Boy’s Town” was used throughout the 1900s to represent a religious or non-religious institution, which helped “wayward” and orphaned boys. By the 1950s, there were at least three Boy’s Towns in the Los Angeles and San Fernando Valley area.^{100 101} The derogatory origin was likely given to the area in the 1960s because of Santa Monica Boulevard’s stretch of gay bars and businesses and its residents in that area. Even today, some still believe it to be derogatory. There was a movement in 2011 to call the area “Historic Boystown,” in effect reappropriating the term and solidifying its importance in LGBT history.)^{102 103}

Police Chief Davis put forth the idea that gay people could give their gay germs to others, infecting them with homosexuality. In a 1975 letter to the president of the Christopher Street West Parade, LAPD Chief Davis wrote: “As you no doubt expected, I am declining your invitation to participate in the celebration of ‘GAY PRIDE WEEK’ ...I would much rather celebrate ‘GAY CONVERSION WEEK.’” Under the tenure of Davis, the vice squad (a specialized squad of undercover cops enforcing moral laws) targeted gays, lesbians, leather folk, prostitutes, and drug dealers. Above all, Davis considered it his duty to cleanse the gay out of Los Angeles. Such behavior earned him the nickname ‘Crazy Ed’ amongst LGBTs.¹⁰⁴

One of the most famous raids was at the popular bathhouse on Melrose Avenue called Mark IV in 1976. The LAPD planned the raid months beforehand. Loaded with 107 officers and television news cameras, the LAPD (Chief Ed Davis included) charged into the bathhouse as it was holding a fundraising, mock-slave auction for the Gay Community Services Center. 40 gay men were arrested and charged with violating an 1899 California law against slavery. The whole operation cost the city an estimated \$150,000 (\$634,000 in 2015); the headline the next morning was “Police Free Gay Slaves.”¹⁰⁵

⁹⁸ GPA Consulting, “Survey LA: LGBT Historic Context Statement,” 25.

⁹⁹ Christopher Street West, “La Pride History,” Accessed November 2015. <http://www.lapride.org/history.php>.

¹⁰⁰ 91 Ainsworth, “Renaissance Art Aids Boys School: Manufacture of Christmas Wreaths Modeled After Della Robbia Works Keeps Youth Busy,” A1.

¹⁰¹ Los Angeles Times, “Candidate for Benefit Ball Queen Chosen,” CS6.

¹⁰² Mills, “‘Historic Boystown’ Gets City Council Support.” Accessed November 2015. <http://patch.com/california/westhollywood/historic-boystown-gets-city-council-support>.

¹⁰³ Frontiers Media, “Boystown For Everybody.” Accessed November 2015. <https://www.frontiersmedia.com/channel-special-reports/2011/05/23/boystown-for-everybody/>.

¹⁰⁴ Campbell, “An Emancipation – Or – How the L.A.P.D. Freed the Slaves.” Accessed August 2016. <https://boundtogether.wordpress.com/2008/12/27/an-emancipation-or-how-the-lapd-freed-the-slaves/>

¹⁰⁵ Attias, “Police Free Gay Slaves” Accessed November 2015. <http://www.csun.edu/~hfspc002/PoliceFreeGaySlaves.html>

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Even before Chief Davis, the LAPD was notorious for raiding gay bars. This was primarily done under LAPD Chief William Parker (1950-1966). Parker relentlessly entrapped gay men, raided gay bars, and criminalized homosexuality. For example, there was Cooper's Doughnuts in 1958, the site of the first known instance of transgender persons resisting arbitrary police arrest; Black Cat Riots in 1967, a gay bar in Silver Lake and the site of the first large protest against police harassment.¹⁰⁶

Scott Forbes – “Fortunately, we’re in the county, which does make a difference. The police department works for us instead of against us. We have Sheriff Peter Pitchess instead of Chief Ed Davis. If I were in the city I don’t know what I’d do.”¹⁰⁷ Even with being in the county though Forbes knew the threat of gay bashing and so he directed a lot of money into security, having at least seven people on the doors and floors every night.¹⁰⁸ Forbes, along with many gay bar and gay business owners, had a good relationship with the Los Angeles County Sheriffs.

Los Angeles LGBTQ History, Pre-1974, Before Studio One

Being gay was illegal in California when Forbes opened Studio One. It was only in 1962 that the first state rejected its felony sodomy law, which punished LGBTs with imprisonment for up to 10 years and labeled them as “sexual psychopaths.” California repealed its law in 1976;¹⁰⁹ two

years after Forbes opened Studio One. In 2003, the United States Supreme Court invalidated sodomy laws in the remaining 14 states by a vote of 6-3.

Before Studio One existed, hole-in-the-wall gay bars existed in many clusters around Los Angeles, including Santa Monica Boulevard, La Cienega Boulevard, Beverly Boulevard, and Melrose Avenue in West Hollywood. These existing gay bars harkened the suppression and in-the-closet quietness and shame of the pre-1960s. Most of these buildings were small, unadorned, had no windows, or very small windows with the intention to hide what was going on inside. Most of the bars that do remain from those days (in West Hollywood) are now completely open; walls have been changed to panes of glass and open French doors, outside seating, promoting and selling gay, instead of hiding it.

Twin Peaks Tavern in San Francisco is believed to be the first gay bar in the nation to feature full-length, open plate glass windows that let its patrons look out, and more importantly, the public look in. In 1972, when Mary Ellen Cunha and Peggy Forster threw open the doors and uncovered the windows at Twin Peaks Tavern on the corner of Castro and Market streets in San Francisco, they did not know they were making history. Lesbian owners, Cunha and Forster, though said that they were not intending on making a big political statement: They simply “wanted to look out.”

¹⁰⁶ GPA Consulting, “Survey L.A.,” 28-29.

¹⁰⁷ Galligan, “The Sweet Smell of Success at Studio One.”

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ California Center for Research and Education in Government, “California Journal: AB 489-Ca-Consenting Adults Act,” 1975.

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But because those outside could also look in – and state regulators and police were still targeting gay establishments for anything they could – Cunha and Forster instated a "no-touch" rule that established Twin Peaks as more of a social club than a pickup spot.¹¹⁰

Los Angeles played a critical role in the gay liberation movement in the United States. Before World War II, most LGBTs were isolated from one another but this soon changed during and after war when LGBTs from all over the country met each other through their service in the military and wartime industries. After the war, many LGBTs chose to stay in Los Angeles. (Since the 19th century, California has been a beacon for LGBTs and “outlaws.”) It was easier to be “different” in Los Angeles, and even though homophobia still existed it paled in comparison to other cities and small towns in the U.S.¹¹¹

In the documentary *L.A., A Queer History*, author Craig Loftin said this: “San Francisco, LA, and New York, which were the major port cities, the major places where you staged and gathered the soldiers before sending them off, the places where people would have their shore leaves, and maybe the first time go into a bar with other gay people. A lot of people experienced that during the war. And then after the war, they thought to themselves ‘well, that’s where I want to live now.’ And so LA, a lot of gay people thought ‘Oh, there’s a place for me here that certainly didn’t exist in my small home town back in Nebraska.’”

During and after World War II “people left their biological families for the first time and they’re able to live on an identity that they couldn’t live out in their hometowns. And so it created a community that needed spaces,” said author Dr. Marie Cartier.¹¹²

Post war, and into the 1950s, the gay liberation movement was forming in people’s homes and in nondescript buildings in large cities like Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New York. A very small percentage of LGBTs were deciding and forming what would become a gay revolution. Still thought of as “an abomination” and mentally ill in the eyes of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* of the American Psychiatric Association, most LGBTs viewed themselves as flawed and kept their feelings of attraction inside. It is during this time that that small percentage who were willing to organize, protest, or to show themselves in some public way did so in the form of magazines like Edythe Eyde’s *Vice Versa* and ONE Incorporated’s *ONE magazine*.

The movement gained steam by the mid-1960s due to political and social unrest brought on by the Vietnam War, the continued American Civil Rights Movement, the Feminist Movement, and the straight sexual revolution. During this time, sexual and gender norms hinted at being more fluid and the challenged the conservative ways of American government and social thoughts. These “norms” were now being challenged.

¹¹⁰ Lagos, “Twin Peaks Tavern.” Accessed September 2015. <http://www.sfgate.com/politics/article/Twin-Peaks-Tavern-gay-bar-historic-landmark-4208442.php>.

¹¹¹ GPA Consulting, 9-10, 22.

¹¹² *L.A., A Queer History*. Directed by Gregorio Davila.

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By the late 1960s LGBTs became more visible and identified themselves as a minority group which was now empowered by a more public and political stage.¹¹³ Leading up to this point was the riot of transgendered persons at Cooper's Doughnuts in downtown Los Angeles, the Black Cat riots in Silver Lake, and the denouement of the Stonewall Riots in Greenwich Village, in which LGBTs all resisted ongoing police harassment.

As a group that was still harassed and marginalized, LGBTs now in visual numbers excited dynamic change in protests, marches, and public celebration. The 1970s, with the help of disco, was the gay sexual revolution. Many LGBTs were either protesting, inciting political and social change or they were celebrating a new found identity in discos and in the streets of West Hollywood, the Castro, or Greenwich Village. While this was an awakening period for LGBTs across the country it is important to note that while big cities were seeing change, the majority of small-town America saw this change very slowly. By the 1970s, the LGBT Movement expanded the civil rights of LGBT people by becoming more institutionalized and using the legal system and electoral process.¹¹⁴

"Gays and lesbians lived *lives* in bars and so created the beginning of gay and lesbian civil rights because they claimed public space by occupying urban bars and walking the streets, many times as open homosexuals....¹¹⁵ The bar culture would explode with activism in the ensuing decade with cries of "out of the bars and into the streets."¹¹⁶

In Dr. Marie Cartier's book, *Baby, You Are My Religion*, she examines the role of bars had on the formation of a gay person's identity and the adoption of spaces like bars, which would consequently become sacred to LGBTs, much like churches for the religious.

Within the bar it was possible for a homosexual to envision a future where in order to be free of sin she or he did not need to become someone else. She or he could be birthed into acceptance of his or her present self, and this self would have a community. With very few exceptions, the bar was the only place where this process could happen.¹¹⁷

We cannot transform space into place unless we begin with space helping to shape our personal identity and then community. In the final stage of transformative place, the place that we inhabit helps us, the community gathered within it, to go forth and make history with our lives.... The gay bar then *did* provide that place where they might actually experience this first stage of inhabitation of space – that of creating personal identity, in which they might identify the actual Self.¹¹⁸

¹¹³ GPA Consulting, 22.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Cartier, *Baby, You Are My Religion*, 119.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 89.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 180.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 193.

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The collection of essays in *Queers in Space: Communities, Public Places, Sites of Resistance* also examines the spaces LGBTs have inhabited, are currently inhabiting, and will inhabit in the future.

An erotic marginality leads to an internalized and environmental alienation, and this constitutes the core, the queerness, the queasy antipodean, of “queer space.” Such synergies provide key clues to the nature of the extremes of the queer space gradients – exceptional starkness replicated in warehouse aesthetics, contrasted with exceptional richness and complexity rivalling the decorum of royal courts.¹¹⁹

Some of the first queer spaces were formed through communal responses to sites of resistance to homophobic repression. In one sense, queer space is always a response to homophobia. A Queer site is a singular point of expression, exchange, sexuality, or resistance in the landscape that counters loss of use and habitation because of social changes and events rooted in homophobia. The binary notion of ghetto/nonghetto gives way to subtle maps of pleasure, threat, isolation, opportunity, and communality.¹²⁰

The dynamic geography of dyke and gay bashing and murders has had a huge impact on the mental maps of most people who are sexual minorities. Sometimes it takes a great deal of extra thought and energy to minimize the possibilities of being targeted. These internalized defensive maps have an influence on where we choose to go and live and on the subsequent physical forms of our neighborhoods and communities. Police

surveillance and repression, which go back to the early use of urban homosexual sites, have reinforced strategies of avoidance.¹²¹

While LGBT bar culture attempted to remain hidden, there was the rise of rock n’ roll in the late 1960s. Less than ten blocks away from the future Studio One, rock n’ roll was taking over the westside of the Sunset Strip. The rise of rock n’ roll meant it was not necessary to have a dance partner in order to dance. This was especially important to LGBTs since they were not allowed to openly touch each other, let alone dance together.¹²²

Then Came Studio One

Studio One became a marker between the pre-1960s bars and the gay bars we know today. Studio One was the tinder for this cultural change. The time was right and Forbes knew it. The 1960s gay bars were the tinder, Studio One was the spark.

¹¹⁹ Ingram et al., *Queers in Space*, 29-30.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 43.

¹²¹ Ibid, 45.

¹²² Ibid, 88.

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When looking at the bars of the time juxtaposed with Forbes' idea of Studio One, it is like looking at a blown up version of the pre-1970s bars. The small gay bar was unadorned, windowless, non-descript; The Factory was enormous and with lines of gay men down the block, they made no attempts to hide, essentially saying "here we are and you know what we're going to do in here."

When asked how Forbes described the coming opening of Studio One, Gary Mortimer, Backlot Theatre bartender, said "It was huge place, he wanted a dance floor, he wanted it to be gay and it was going to be disco, we were going to do lots of dancing."¹²³ When Forbes signed the lease, he looked at The Factory and imagined giving "what all the kids in Hollywood wanted" and that was something reminiscent of a Hollywood studio. "I looked at the lights and rafters and said 'I'll call it Studio One.'" The disco was actually going to be called "Tootsie's Orchid Lounge," but Forbes' name of Studio One stuck.¹²⁴

Forbes went to the gay bars in the area and would watch men bartenders for days, even weeks, before he would approach them with a job offer. "I worked at all these other clubs around town and he was looking for people to work for him and he told me he used to watch me.... He came to me one day and said 'I'm opening this club over in West Hollywood called Studio One and it's going to be a big disco and I want you to work for me.'" Mortimer visited The Factory, saw the remodeling, what was to become the huge dance floor, and then entered where the Backlot Theatre would be and "I said 'I'll work for you but I want the Backlot.' And he said 'you got it.'"

Forbes hired his managers and bartenders with this technique. "I know Scott was only one of the owners. I don't know who had the most money involved but Scott wanted his name to be everywhere, like he was the big guy who owned Studio One and all the others were behind the scene...He was very good, He knew what he wanted...Scott had a lot of people around him who knew what they were doing. God bless him, he'd take the credit for it," said Mortimer.¹²⁵

"The whole concept is mine," said Forbes in a 1976 interview, "the designing, the architectural engineering, the drafting, the licensing-I did on my own, so it's really me."¹²⁶

It should be noted that around the same time Forbes was doing his "Odyssey Club" night at The Factory, on the other side of the country, "Le Jardin" in Manhattan was spinning disco in the basement of a shabby hotel called the Diplomat. It was heavily influenced by a private gay club called Tenth Floor. Truman Capote said of Le Jardin - "it has these art deco couches all along the room, these palm fronds dropping down everywhere, and out on the dancefloor, this terrible

¹²³ Gary Mortimer interview, Kate Eggert, September 2, 2015.

¹²⁴ Galligan, "The Sweet Smell of Success at Studio One."

¹²⁵ Gary Mortimer interview, September 2, 2015.

¹²⁶ Galligan, "The Sweet Smell of Success at Studio One."

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churning, the whole place churning, like a buttermilk machine.”¹²⁷ (Studio 54, probably the most talked about disco out of that era was actually opened nearly four years after Studio One. Studio One served as the blueprint for future successful gay bars and discos, and straight discos like New York’s Studio 54.)

About Studio One disco and the Backlot Theatre

Studio One had six investors – Vivian Walker, an artist, decorated the premises; Leonard Grant did the entertainment; Dino Lopez, Ernest Caruthers and Michael Solomon did the social aspect; and John Adams was the General Manager. When asked if they had any say in the running of Studio One, Forbes’ answer was “no.”¹²⁸

Studio One and the Backlot Theatre took up the entire second floor of The Factory. There were two main entrances into the clubs. The entrance to the Backlot Theatre was off of Robertson Boulevard; the entrance to Studio One was off of La Peer Drive. Robertson had and still has more pedestrian traffic than La Peer so it likely was Forbes’ thinking to have celebrities enter Robertson to go into the Backlot, while the gays could be discrete and enter the La Peer entrance to go to Studio One. The 1970s was still a time when gay bars had discrete entrances, often on side streets or alleys, and always through nondescript doors; the look of the gay bar (and gay baths) was to blend into the surroundings. Whether it was intentional or not, the La Peer entrance offered gays some privacy if they needed it. (See Figure 11 and Figure 12)

There were regularly 1,000 dancers at Studio One at one time, but it is reported that it always went over capacity to about 1,700 dancers.¹²⁹ (See Figure 13) It was open seven days a week. Most of the bartenders were Playgirl centerfolds, and outfitted in short basketball shorts. From

the beginning, Billboard Magazine named Studio One the best disco in Southern California¹³⁰, the best disco in the United States and wrote updates on their DJs, set lists, renovations, and the annual Disco Music Awards. Studio One had two to three DJs (Manny Slali, Mike Lewis, and Paul Dougan)¹³¹ on staff and a guest DJ night, and two technicians (Bill Langenheim) operating the light system all night by hand, ultimately creating a dramatic and elaborate light show.¹³² (In 1979, it was rumored that the lighting and sound systems were worth half a million dollars.)¹³³

Forbes invested in the latest sound systems, and light, laser and strobe light systems, mirror balls and mirrors, and a neon Pegasus (the Studio One logo) that hung from the factory truss beams. After six months of construction and investing \$100,000 (\$423,000 in 2015) into the club, Studio One opened its doors in May 1974.¹³⁴ (See Figure 14)

¹²⁷ Brewster, *Last Night a DJ Saved My Life*, 178.

¹²⁸ Galligan, “The Sweet Smell of Success at Studio One.”

¹²⁹

¹³⁰ Faderman and Timmonds, 235.

¹³¹ Hunt, “Disco DJ,” F14.

¹³² Solomon, “Disco L.A.: Behind the Scene,” 14.

¹³³ Baird, “It’s Exciting...Sexy in Disco Whirled,” CS4.

¹³⁴ Galligan, “The Sweet Smell of Success at Studio One.”

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Studio One was an overnight success. It quickly became the place to be and the place to be seen, and the hottest club around the country. Lines to get in were consistently down the block to Santa Monica Boulevard and then a couple blocks down. Studio One became a money machine and became a temple of amplified sound and masculine vanity.¹³⁵ “Studio One wasn’t big enough, that’s how big it was,” said Sweigart.¹³⁶

When entering the Studio One doors off of La Peer Drive, the room that served as the box office, record store, and check-in had on its back wall all throughout the night photos from nights before. Studio One staff photographers were filmmaker Pat Rocco, and Rose De Castro.¹³⁷ It was remarkable to have photos of men dancing together, posing, and celebrating sexuality displayed so openly since this was still a time when most LGBTs were afraid of having their picture taken, in fear it would “out” them to someone who they didn’t know.

The Times Were Changing

“The ultimate sound system pounds out the beat. Whistles blow, tambourines pick up the beat, shirts come off, poppers are thrust into noses, and outside the whole damn building looks like it’s throbbing.”¹³⁸ – *In Touch* magazine, 1978.

Gary Mortimor said this about Studio One’s opening night –

The place was HUGE and FILLED with some gorgeous young men. It was exciting to be there and work that first night, and just see how happy everyone was...to have this “new” disco just for us gay men. The music, the laughter, the making out, the poppers...I’m sure

all the guys coming in were amazed to see such a large dance floor, that one LONG bar, the DJ playing all that great disco music, and they must have felt like they were in heaven! It was THE place to be and the opening night was very exciting. I know Scott [Forbes] was on top of the world seeing just how successful this club, ‘his club,’ was...that first night really was exciting and electric. I was part of that history and I believe I (along with many others) helped make it a huge success!¹³⁹

Lloyd Coleman’s first time at Studio One was in 1978. He was raised a Mormon. He later became the talent scout and Executive Producer of the Backlot Theatre from 1986-1992 –

I was living two lives. One person by day, and another by night... It was a real ego boost to a lot of people like me who’d walk in there and be chased around, but more than any of that, it was the first time I ever went anywhere where I felt like a normal person. Like I

¹³⁵ Faderman and Timmonds, 235.

¹³⁶ Richard Sweigart interview, September 5, 2015.

¹³⁷ Taylor-DiPietro interview, October 3, 2015.

¹³⁸ *In Touch* Magazine, “People: Scott Forbes,” 35.

¹³⁹ Gary Mortimer interview, September 2, 2015.

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wasn't an evil person for being the way I was.... It was a whole different era. Studio One was the first place that made it normal and exciting and also inviting.¹⁴⁰

Randall Neece in his memoir *Gone Today, Here Tomorrow* said this about his first gay bar experience: Studio One –

...he grabbed my hand and led me into the crowd of hundreds of gyrating men dancing together while Gloria Gaynor sang 'Never Can Say Good-bye,' I knew I wasn't in Kansas anymore. I had never felt so free; *so normal!* I wanted this party to go on forever...I finally felt like a normal person that night, but I also experienced for the first time in my life what it was like to have someone 'check me out.' Whenever I looked in the mirror, all I ever saw staring back was a lily-white, freckle-faced boy with a sunburn. But there I was last night, surrounded by hundreds of sexy men, and some were smiling at *me*. I awoke the next morning thinking maybe the night before had only been a dream, but my hangover told me otherwise.¹⁴¹

Grant Smith, a regular at Studio One –

"Studio One" was the money, power and prestige behind gay rights in the late 70's in Los Angeles, when the struggle was real. It was about money, and "power in Numbers." Back then, people thought there were just a few fairies and fags floating around, no one to be concerned about. The importance of the big clubs like Studio One and the Gay Pride Parades was about the show of numbers...there wasn't just 2 or 3 of us around, but THOUSANDS or HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS. That took people by surprise. No it's not just a handful of fruits, but a lot of people, some of whom you love and care for. The

message resounded with the numbers, and still does today. It is still crucial today that you stand up and be counted for what you believe in. We had no fear in the 70's.¹⁴²

Disco, DJs, Promoters and the Power of the Gay Dollar

The phenomenon of disco in gay culture was recognized almost immediately after Studio One opened. Discos were natural outgrowths of gay bars since dancing to tunes off the jukebox was always popular in gay bars.

Disco presided over an era of dramatic social change. As war raged in Vietnam and an oil crisis and deep economic recession brought further misery, it provided a soundtrack of escapism. After the Stonewall rebellion, gay Americans felt able to turn up the volume on

¹⁴⁰ Lloyd Coleman interview, Kate Eggert, October 20, 2015.

¹⁴¹ Neece, *Gone Today, Here Tomorrow*,” 34.

¹⁴² Smith. Facebook. February 3, 2015. Studio One Disco Nightclub - West Hollywood.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/68745887988/permalink/10153493408872989/>.

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their existence, and despite the rioting and let-downs of the post-civil rights period, black people were also enjoying the benefits of greater equality. The majority also felt a release – legal abortion, antibiotics, and the Pill meant attitudes to sex had changed; it was for enjoyment, not procreation. It was clear that the youth growing up in the 1960s would be very different than their parents.

Disco could still vividly recall the Summer of Love a few years before...Disco not only reflected these changes, in creating a new and vital sub-culture – one which was eventually coopted by the mainstream – disco also, in a very real sense, helped to further them.

Musically, disco was revolutionary to an astounding degree. It was at the heart of some of the most radical innovation to date in the way music is envisaged, created and consumed. It changed clubs almost beyond recognition, it affected radio dramatically, and it had an important effect on the balance of power in the music industry between independent labels and the majors. The songs were constructed specially for the dancefloor and records were being treated as DJ's tools rather than just representations of a live performance, there arrived a new conception of what popular music could be. Disco was the revolution. Disco was freedom, togetherness, love. Disco was dirty, spiritual, thrilling, powerful. Disco was secret, underground, dangerous. It was non-blond, queer, hungry. It was emancipation.¹⁴³ – *Last Night a DJ Saved My Life*.

During the disco era, the DJ “became a star, a god to his dancefloor.”¹⁴⁴ It was in this era that the DJ learned mixing techniques, and the industry recognized that the DJ was the person to *create* music, rather than just play it. “Without a doubt, disco heralded the arrival of a new figure: the DJ as high priest.”¹⁴⁵ With the gay bar already being a safe and holy place, Studio One became the nightly confessional.

The DJs were predominantly gay, so much so record companies had to hire promotional people who would be able “to speak their language.” They were called the “homo promos” and were the communicators from the DJ to the record company.¹⁴⁶

Studio One resident DJ Manny Slali, who like most DJs do now, looked at the crowd “as a malleable unit whose mood he can control.... You have to build it up and keep it at a high level. You do that by playing the right records at the right time...I try to create a party atmosphere so that when people walk in and see all that energy they get excited and want to be part of it.”¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ Brewster, 136-137.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 137.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 174.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 180.

¹⁴⁷ Hunt, “Disco DJ,” F14.

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Forbes regularly hired DJs who were named Billboard Magazine's top DJs. Studio One became a valuable resource for record companies and record producers.¹⁴⁸ They needed Studio One to promote their new artist or an artist's latest single; they needed a place to try out their music and the gay clientele was the perfect clientele to do it with.¹⁴⁹

Music industry promoters did this by supplying records to the DJ, or in many cases a surprise visit by the artist themselves like Donna Summer, Sylvester, and The Village People, who were regulars.¹⁵⁰ To the left of the Studio One dance floor was a small stage, there they would perform their latest hit; it happened two to three times a week, and well over 1000 singers with hits in the industry performed on that small stage. "Scott did a lot to launch people's music career. Their name got out because they played Studio One or the Backlot," said Richard Sweigart.¹⁵¹

If an artist was to drop a single, release a clothing line or makeup line, their publicist would send them to Studio One or the Backlot Theatre to be seen and photographed. Both Studio One and the Backlot Theatre were the place to see and the place to be seen. Studio One was the beginning of the "gay dollar" – if a product or a person had the gay stamp of approval, it was almost always a sure win. The gay community stamp of approval and being seen at Studio One (the most successful place of that community) became an important part of the formula to its success.

"The gay community that kept the place hopping every single night, they were the buyers of all this stuff. They were the buyers of the records, the fashion, they were the moviegoers, they even called them at the time 'D.I.N.K.S' – double income no kids." – L. Coleman.¹⁵²

The 1970s had its share of crises. Gas shortages plagued the decade when the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) embargoed oil shipped to the United States, and later when gas prices fluctuated dramatically due to the Iranian Revolution, and it was surmised that the oil companies were feigning an oil crisis that consequently caused gas rationing. The

people who could afford to go out every night were LGBTs, since most did not have a family to support.

In 1976, the national magazine – *Forbes* – reported that Studio One "turns over 7000 homosexual customers a week and grosses over a million annually." (1 million dollars in 1976 is equivalent to 4.2 million in 2015.)¹⁵³ By 1977, Studio One became, according to *Vogue*, one of the 10 "in" spots of the jet set.¹⁵⁴ At Studio One and the Backlot Theatre, older Hollywood stars

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149 Lloyd Coleman interview, October 20, 2015.

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151 Richard Sweigart interview, September 5, 2015.

152 Lloyd Coleman interview, October 20, 2015.

153 Forbes, "Discomania," *Forbes Magazine*. 49.

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like Rock Hudson, Orson Welles, and Bette Davis would rub elbows with the new star generation, David Bowie, Grace Jones, Sylvester, and Donna Summer.

(It is important to note here that Forbes, Vogue, Billboard, all very mainstream magazines, were reporting on and promoting the gay disco Studio One at a time when it was still illegal to be gay in most states. It was only in 1962 that the first state rejected its felony sodomy law, which punished LGBTs with imprisonment for up to 10 years and labeled them as “sexual psychopaths.” California repealed its law in 1976; two years after Forbes opened Studio One.)

Studio One Was a Business

Forbes made it very public that he would vow to stay in West Hollywood, specifically at The Factory. (Many disco owners were cashing out after a year in business.) In a 1976 interview, Forbes declared “we’re going to be here forever! I’m glad, because I think Los Angeles needs an institution.” He goes on to talk about Studio One’s success in the gay community – “The town knows the club’s going to be here, so we keep building instead of fading away. They respect the longevity of that...This will sound egotistical to say, but it’s because I know what I’m doing.”¹⁵⁵

Forbes ran Studio One as a business and took care of his employees. They were paid higher than most California bar workers, had health insurance, partial dental, and even credit loans. In 1976, Forbes had two managers, a full-time accountant, a full-time secretary and dozens of bartenders and bar-backs bankrolled. Forbes wanted his workers to feel that at any time their concerns and questions were given the proper attention and service they deserved. By 1978, he had sixteen bartenders, twelve bar-boys, fifteen security persons, and ten kitchen personnel.¹⁵⁶ “We have 84 employees, and that’s the largest single operation employment in West Hollywood,” said Forbes.¹⁵⁷

In a 1978 article, Forbes disclosed that he bought out two of his business partners, and had plans of opening a new bar, restaurant, and clothing shop, all in one complex, called “Boys Town.” He was also rumored to have taken over the 3rd Street bath house.¹⁵⁸

Studio One was widely regarded as the number one dance spot, straight or gay. It was featured on national television; and it was dubbed by many newspapers and magazines as the most exciting disco in the country. Scott Forbes became a legend and was called “the disco king.”¹⁵⁹ To the media, Forbes often spoke of Studio One in tones of political pride: “Studio One was designed, planned, and conceived for gay people, gay male people. Any straight people here are guests of the gay community.”¹⁶⁰

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It was very clear from the beginning that Studio One was a success, and looked at as being a success model for both gay businesses and straight businesses. Forbes was routinely consulted on how to operate straight discos. When looking to start his own disco, Henry Berger went to Studio One and was very impressed with the “experience.” The 1978 Los Angeles Times writer asked him to elaborate on what “experience” meant, so he compared the difference between gay discos and straight discos, saying that one had “to have a better knowledge of light and sound. [Gays] are more aware of it. You know the gays originated high amplification. They’re the trendsetters. The straights follow suit.” He also discussed the “electricity” found in gay bars and discos and that more straights were realizing “that the best night places in town are the gay bars...they’re just more interesting, more fun, more electric. People are a lot looser. Not sexually, but less inhibited.” He also admitted that gay discos were attractive to straight women because of the “meat market” mentality at straight discos; a phenomenon that is applicable today.

The Los Angeles Times obviously sought out a straight man for his opinion on gay bars and discos, consequently stereotyping gays into a type, but the article painted these gay establishments as positive, fun, and trendsetting; all propelling the image of gay men as acceptable.¹⁶¹

From the crowds Studio One drew in on a daily basis, Forbes obviously hit on the gay community’s vital need for a space like this. It is said that clientele was 90% gay males between the age of 21 and 35. Even if there was a slow night (weekdays, excluding Thursday and Friday), the attendance would be well above 500. By 1979, there were approximately 1000 “members” of Studio One, which when the card was presented offered free entrance or discounts on special nights.¹⁶²

“It was the 70s...before AIDS hit.” – Gary Mortimer.¹⁶³

Hollywood Invades Studio One and the Backlot

The overwhelming success of Studio One, the breadth of its influence soon brought in television and film studios asking to rent the space, including *The Sonny and Cher Show*, the Village People’s *Discoland: Where the Music Never Stops*, *Alexander: The Other Side of Dawn*,

Stephanie Mill’s disco classic *Last Night* and *Tantalizingly Hot*, rock music TV specials, and segments for movies of the week.

Studio One and the Backlot Theatre were rented for film releases and big studio parties. In 1975, Columbia Pictures rented Studio One for Elton John’s *Tommy* premiere. “They wanted an unusual place for a party,” said Forbes. Producer Alan Carr (*Grease*, *Grease 2*) said the event was “a return to glamour.” By midnight, Elton John, and other celebrities like Ann-Margaret,

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Paul and Linda McCartney, Lucille Ball, Tatum O'Neal were dining in the Backlot Theatre and Studio One was teeming with "rent-a freaks" hired by Columbia Pictures – bearded men dressed as leather-studded motorcycle women, cellophane jumpsuits, and a female impersonator in the character of Mae West, all while television cameras were "staring on."

In a Los Angeles Times article, a young man was interviewed, and had an interesting take on the night, calling it a "sociological event." "It's not easy being gay," he kept repeating. "Not today, the way everyone is trying to get in on the act. Just look at this crowd. They're so thrilled by all their pretended decadence. There are guys here tonight with their girlfriends or wives or, worse, their agents. You think they're cruising you? You just pass them tomorrow, at the 9200 Building or at an Academy screening, they'll pretend they've never seen you." He finished with saying "Damn it, but I've had it up to here with all this chic. These folks are all just slumming."¹⁶⁴

Universal Studios took over the club in July 1976 for the premiere of *A Chorus Line*. Chasen's, legendary Hollywood hang-out and restaurant, catered the event. Celebrities like Robert Wagner, Natalie Wood, Henry Winkler, Liza Minnelli, playwright and screenwriter Neil Simon, and many others attended.¹⁶⁵

It was a tight rope that Forbes had to straddle – keeping the disco and theatre gay and not letting straight people take over the place. In the beginning, Forbes was strict on keeping the acts at the Backlot Theatre gay and to only solicit reviews from in-house gay papers, which quickly received criticism from newspapers calling it "discriminating" against straights.¹⁶⁶

When asked how straights reacted when coming to a gay establishment, Leonard Grant, early Manager of the Backlot Theatre said "For the majority, I'm certain [straights] have never seen gay people at play. We don't encourage them to see them at play. We don't encourage them into the disco. As a matter of fact, we *discourage*."¹⁶⁷

In a 1976 interview with The Advocate, Forbes openly said that the biggest problem with running Studio One was keeping it gay –

Our biggest problem is keeping Studio One gay. Straights want to come here, but they can't, because if they do, the gays won't feel at home.... Let someone who's straight and into that straight element open a straight Studio One. The only straight element we entice are the ones we think are compatible with the gays and that's theatre people.¹⁶⁸

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“Scott didn’t want it to be overtaken,” said Carol Taylor-DiPietro, “One of the ways we kept it gay was by enforcing the “no open-toe” shoe policy. He told people the policy was for safety reasons (because of possible broken glass), but it was really intended to keep straight women out. Most women’s shoes were open-toe at the time. It worked,” she laughed. “Guys learned not to bring their lady friends to Studio One.”¹⁶⁹

By 1976, Forbes could have easily opened Studio Ones across the country, but chose not to because of the personal attention to the one that made it so spectacular, and known all across the country, and world.¹⁷⁰ Studio One was actually one of the first discos in the country.

“The biggest names in the business rub elbows with the shirtless, sweating gay crowd any night of the week. Celebrities compete for the best tables in the Backlot cabaret.... The nitery is so popular for acts performing or trying out their acts pre-Las Vegas that the local trades and press review regularly. It has transcended the label of a ‘gay’ nitespot and has become one of the spots to be in Los Angeles.”¹⁷¹

The Backlot Theatre and the Return of the Night Club

The Backlot Theatre (or better known as “the Backlot” or “the Backlot room”) was a cabaret-style theatre which had a dinner and a show. Since there was not a lot of money singing in cabarets, most performers were relatively unknown. This was the case at the Backlot, but very quickly every performer in town wanted to play there.

With the advent of rock ‘n’ roll culture out of the 1960s, cabaret performers found themselves without a venue and in a genre that was out of fashion. It was not until the Continental Baths in the late 1960s that cabaret was rebirthed as a gay phenomenon and necessity. Continental Baths opened in the basement of the Ansonia Hotel in New York City; it featured a disco room, a cabaret lounge, and the baths, all advertised as being reminiscent of “the glory of ancient Rome.” Countless singers performed at the baths, many of which would then frequently perform at the Backlot, including Bette Midler (AKA Bathhouse Betty), Jim Bailey, Natalie Cole, Wayland Flowers, Rosalyn Kind, Melba Moore, Jane Olivor, Rip Taylor, and Liz Torres. Continental Baths closed in 1975 due to too many straights at the baths.

The group that provided the strongest initial support for cabaret was the gay male audience (dubbed the ‘K-Y circuit,’ a name leant from the bathhouse performances). It is not accidental that in all respects cabaret is everything rock ‘n’ roll was not. Rock ‘n’ roll generally is a mass-audience genre whereas cabaret promotes exclusivity and intimacy, concepts already embraced by gay culture. This intimacy encouraged a sense of adventure in both performer and audience and because of the subcultural status in society, gays tended (and still do) to look for, and create,

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entertainment that appeals to specialized tastes (ie, camp) or that is generally obscure or undiscovered.

“The only reason they came into Studio One is that there’s no other place to go. Where else are they going to go – the Playboy club?” – Liz Torres on performing at the Backlot.

Initially Forbes kept the acts gay, like female impersonators Charles Pierce and Craig Russell. Forbes initially turned down Chita Rivera because he thought she would attract a straight audience. His experience with straight audiences at Studio One meant one drink and six hours of dancing.

Choreographer Ron Field was the one turned down but after Forbes explained his reasoning, he understood. “Whether you like his policy or not, it is the only gay discotheque that has survived more than just the fad rush in the world. Gay clubs open up and they’re a fad for a year in New York, or anywhere else. The next one that’s bigger, has more lights or a better sound system, all the guys then go there. But because of Scott’s policy, because of protecting his clientele, I think that’s why Studio One has remained successful. I think the gay guys should have a place where they can go, where they’re not ogled and stared at, that they can feel is *their* place.”

Forbes soon gave into Leonard Grant and booked Chita Rivera. Liza Minnelli bought out the room. “You’ve never seen so many movie stars in one place except if you were at an awards show.... As far as I’m concerned, [Chita Rivera] put the place on the map. Once people heard that, every celebrity in town was there, more people would want to see her show,” said Mortimer.

Leonard Grant agreed – “Chita Rivera started it all with her act. She drew such incredible celebrity crowds. I think we had more names here on her opening night than they did at the Academy Awards. The first four tables at her opening were Fred Astaire, Gene Kelly, Burt Reynolds, and Liza Minnelli.” Other celebrities included Shirley MacLaine, Henry Winkler, Lucille Ball, and Samy Davis Jr.

After Chita Rivera, the Backlot became a mecca for night club performers like Bernadette Peters, Joan Rivers, Phyllis Diller, Peggy Lee, Joshua Logan, Geraldine Fitzgerald, Julie Budd, Rosalyn Kind, Sally Kellerman, Madame and Wayland Flowers, Barbara Cook, female impersonators Charles Pierce and Jim Bailey, Eartha Kitt, Melba Moore, Kaye Stevens, Kaye Ballard, Judy Kaye, Gotham, Rip Taylor, Pudgy, Craig Russell, Stephanie Mills, The Harlettes, Dolores Gray, Ruth Olay, Helen Schneider, Marni Nixon, Maxene Andrews, Marcia Lewis, Deutsch and Ross,

Ann Dee, Ren Woods, Phyllis Newman, Morgana King, Lesly Ann-Warren, Ron Dennis, Kim Milford, Betty Rhodes, Nancy Dussault and Karen Morrow, Jane Olivor, Donna McKechnie, and Linda Hopkins are among some of the names. Each performer’s run at the Backlot was extensively written up in the LA Times and continued to be into the 1990s.

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“As the Backlot’s fame increased so did other night clubs around the country,” said Grant. The rise of night clubs is credited to the success of the Backlot; the performers finally had another “circuit” to play. Grant would soon create his own large version of the Backlot, called “Les Tramp.” “[The Backlot] itself has probably become the most famous cabaret room in the country. A performer who wants to go on the cabaret circuit, must play Studio One. It’s kind of a proving ground. Once you’re a success at Studio One, you can be booked almost anywhere else,” said Forbes.

1977 LA Times article on Bernadette Peters: “After her hour show has been polished at Studio One [the Backlot] and pared in half to that opening act spot, Peters should have an act that will please Las Vegas audiences.”

Performers played at the Backlot “A: because they love the room and they love the audience. B: because this is Hollywood and they are seen by the right people – exposure to the television and movie industry.... The purpose really was to create an entity – a thing – a happening. A place where the gay community could go and have a nice dinner, see a nice show.... After the Backlot Theatre opened, celebrities started coming here and the press started coming here and the press started picking up on it and we were soon getting national publicity” – Scott Forbes.

Celebrities like Charles Nelson Reilly, Vickie Sue Robinson, Diana Ross, Elton John, Barbara Streisand, Rock Hudson, Elizabeth Taylor-DiPietro, Liza Minnelli (who frequented both Studio One and the Backlot), John Travolta, Tom Sellick, and Alan Carr were regulars at the Backlot. Among the countless celebrities in the Backlot audience any day of the week, were also television and film producers. According to Sweigart, “so many it was ridiculous.”

The Backlot would host two shows a night (dinner and cocktail) from Monday through Saturday. The Backlot had a full kitchen and began serving dinner as early as 7pm. In the 1980s, the Backlot would have weekend brunches, and start serving dinner in the early evening.

Either a known performer booked the Backlot for two weeks or there would be a “celebrity-endorsed” unknown performer who would play for a week. During those weeks, Monday would be reserved for a performer who was introduced by a celebrity, making the new performer “celebrity-endorsed.” Monday was the “showcase” night, the audience was reserved for press, producers, and agents. Orson Welles hosted, Bette Davis endorsed Geraldine Ford, Jimmy Stewart introduced Joshua Logan, Lawrence Welk introduced Tanya Welk, Barbara Streisand introduced her sister Rosalyn Kind, John Travolta and Marilu Henner introduced Ellen March. Then based on the celebrity endorser and guaranteed press written about the performer, the rest of the week would be booked, seats selling out as fast as a half hour.

Regardless of the performance, the Backlot had a regular spot in the Los Angeles Times promoting who was performing.

The Advocate reported on Rosalyn Kind’s show –

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8:45: big, black cars start to roll in.... Seated. 9:06: Could it be that just one table away sits the real Barbara Streisand? Confirmed. More whispers and excited giggles all around the room. 9:35: Rosalyn emerges and the music-making begins. They are sisters, all right. The material, timing and musical arrangements are all top-notch.

When film director Josh Logan (*South Pacific*, *Paint Your Wagon*) did his show at the Backlot, he received a standing ovation from Merle Oberon, Jimmy Stewart, Virginia Mayo, Lucy Arnez, Mrs. Jack Benny, Tony Orlando, and film director Billy Wilder.

Studio One and the Charges of Discrimination

Even in a time that promoted peace and love, Forbes insisted on having strict rules at the door. Reportedly, to keep out non-white men, he asked the door people to ask for three IDs from African-Americans, Latinos and even then they were denied entrance. It was said that the over 100 employees who worked at Studio One and the Backlot were all white men. As a result an ad hoc group was formed called the Women and Men of the Community Seeking An End to Racism and Sexism, but soon changed their name to The Gay Community Mobilization Committee (GCMC), a coalition of gay groups and individuals. Women too were denied entrance. Studio One did this by enforcing their no-open-toe shoes policy, which they said was for insurance reasons. Women wearing open-toed shoes were prone to bruised and bloody toes and Forbes saw it as an insurance nightmare.

After initially receiving no response from Forbes, the GCMC launched a community-wide boycott of the disco. They set up picket lines and leafleted potential patrons stating their three demands: one admission policy for *all* people, allow GCMC to monitor the door and make sure Studio One was not discriminating, and to post a sign that if someone was discriminated to call the printed phone number.

“As a result of intense anti-gayness in our society there are few institutions for gay people. But, we go to these bars to dance and to be in a gay place not to suffer more oppression. This added oppression is the experience of blacks, latinos, and gay women at the Studio One.”

By April 1976, the boycott gained momentum, with several gay student groups preparing to join the picket line, which prompted Forbes to attend a GCMC meeting and agreed to their terms. But Forbes soon reneged on that agreement and got the attention of the Los Angeles Times.

In June 1976, the Los Angeles Times wrote their piece: *Studio One Hit With Charges Of Racism, Sexist Discrimination*. It was said that Studio One would fill a quota system of blacks, latinos,

and lesbians and would not go over a certain limit. Reporter Dave Johnson from the Los Angeles Times went to see for himself: “White males were continuously motioned along as others were delayed at the door...Eight white men passed the door without incident. A black man and woman were asked for extra ID and turned away. Three more white men were whisked by the door.”

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“It was always built as a place for gay men to be gay men, and only the owners who deemed to be cute enough could do it, and California was full of them...the visual of when you went there was GQ meets the surf, and doormen discouraged people who weren’t really good looking or exceptionally good looking to enter. Hence the lines.” – L. Coleman.

There was a follow-up article in the Los Angeles Times. It started with: “To enter a discotheque is to step into a metaphor for urban America. The moment we pass beyond the gatekeeper’s careful inspection and through the well-guarded doors.”

Forbes insisted that Studio One had a “uniform,” strict ID policy, which also denied entrance to intoxicated people, and people who smelled bad. Forbes did not help matters when he talked to the Los Angeles Times and told the reporter that the club never had any problem with the police, inferring that keeping blacks, latinos, lesbians, and straights out of the club, kept the club safe. He continued to say that when they initially opened, straight black men were coming to pick up the women in the club, which he stated “was the problem with any straight club...the bad element came.” When questioned on the “bad element” he apparently snapped and shouted “straight people” and went on to explain that straight people did not go to discos too much, and for that reason would get rowdy and aggressive, whereas gays were at discos like Studio One every night.

There was a lack of support of the boycott from established gay groups, like the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC). In fact, Reverend James Sandmire denounced the boycott during one of his sermons. Even as early as 1976, Forbes had leant his name, money, and space to several gay groups – something which would soon become synonymous with the name Studio One. Forbes at the time was on the Board of the Directors at the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center (what is now called the Los Angeles LGBT Center, the world’s largest provider of programs and services to LGBT people).

The Key to the Longevity of Studio One

Forbes used the profits of Studio One to redo the interiors and update the sound and light systems. He did this every year, and sometimes twice a year. By July 1976, Forbes was changing the interiors for a third time. He was excited about changing it up for the community and to keep it constantly fresh and hip, even though everyone knew of it and would have gone regardless. In 1976 Forbes redid the sound system, imbedded an in-the-wall fish tank, had plush carpets in the front lobby, embedded flashing lights in the floor and gyrating lights in the rafters.

“Not satisfied with having the best sound system this side of anywhere, more in-depth speakers were added all over the place, and hundreds of gorgeous bodies writhed to the disco tempos of the latest hits. You could feel every bass note clear through every fibre of your body, and the pulsating rhythms made you want to dance...Faces were smiling, shirts were removed to reveal glistening, muscled bodies; tight, revealing jeans and melon-buns abounded! Studio One has got

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it all together, now, more so than ever. It'll be worth your while to pay them a visit. You'll get hooked on the place, and love every minute of it!"

In a 1978 interview with Pat Rocco, Forbes stated that more than 10,000 people a week went to Studio One. During the week, it was 90-95% male and on the weekend it was about 85% male. Forbes admitted to spending \$40,000 on updating the lighting, sound, and décor.

In a 1979 interview with *Billboard* magazine, Forbes admits that the key to the longevity of Studio One is its attention to renovation. Annually, Studio One underwent a major remodeling every May and a midyear remodeling every December, and always updated the sound and light systems. In 1979, it was written up in *Billboard* that Studio One signed a six-year lease.

While the gays were having fun at Studio One, Forbes was using it to infiltrate himself, the brand of Studio One into mainstream culture, and consequently pushing gay culture into the mainstream.

"I think that the biggest thrill that I get out of Studio One is knowing that the Gay Community has something to be very proud of, Studio One is the most popular night club, or discoteque, or showroom in the entire country, and everyone knows it's Gay. I think it's quite an accomplishment to have a place that's so well known and so respected by non-gay people. To have all these celebrities coming constantly to what is known as a Gay club shows we've come to a point where we're not looked down upon by the non-gay community" – Forbes.

Halloween at Studio One

Studio One's Halloween parties were the pre-cursor to the annual Halloween Carnival in West Hollywood on Santa Monica Boulevard. Starting in 1974, Studio One hosted the biggest and most outrageous Halloween parties West Hollywood had seen to date. In 1977, more than 2000 guests began converging under crystal chandeliers in huge red-and-white-striped tents set up in the parking lot. Wayland Flowers opened the event, calling it the "gays' Hanukkah." Liz Torres said the Studio One festivities were like New Year's Eve, and added "I play all the holy days."

It was said that faceless Darth Vader rubbed elbows with mustached Marie Antoinette, a painting of a chapless Renaissance boy in a frame, visitors from the planet Uranus fraternized with peacocks and butterflies. Trophies and cash prizes were given and judged by Forbes, designer Bob Mackay, decorator Phyllis Morris, Liz Torres, Sheldon Andelson (co-owner of the popular 8709 bathhouse), and Alan Carr. Carr summed it up by saying "All the Hollywood glamour in the 70s is happening here at Studio One."

This was a time when the motion picture industry would test out their costumes for science fiction films, like *Alien*. The costumes were outrageous, meticulous, and all of the Halloween festivities centered around Studio One.

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Forbes hosted dozens of events that would block off the surrounding parking lots. All of La Peer Drive, Robertson Boulevard, and parts of Santa Monica Boulevard would close down only because of the amount of people either waiting in line to get into Studio One or the event inadvertently becoming a circuit party in the streets. West Hollywood park across the street would also serve as spillage when Studio One reached capacity.

“A weekend in West Hollywood was something to look forward to every single week based on what was going on at Studio One. It was at the helm of all the excitement.” – L Coleman.

By the mid-1980s, Studio One’s annual Halloween parties became so huge that Forbes soon rented out the Beverly Wilshire Hotel. Charter buses traveled back-and-forth between the two venues every twenty minutes and served champagne onboard. This was also the time when the AIDS crisis had hit its peak. For that reason Richard Sweigart said Forbes was doing this to prove a point. “The clubs were branching out. They were trying to appease a larger audience, trying to bring in more people to the gay circuit, saying ‘we’re okay, we’re not going to bite you. You don’t have to worry, have fun,’” said Sweigart.

Breaking Down Barriers At Disneyland

In 1977, Forbes met Carol Taylor-DiPietro at a dinner/meeting at Sheldon Andelson’s house. The gathering was a Community Advisory Board meeting of the Los Angeles Gay Community Services Center (Los Angeles LGBT Center). Both Forbes and Taylor-DiPietro were Board members. (Forbes, at one point, was the Director.) Others in attendance were Morris Kight, Troy Perry, Ivy Bottini, Teresa de Cresenzo, Lilene Fifield, and Don Moreland. It was actually the first time all these gay leaders were brought together for the first time as a Board. (Scott Forbes continued to be a major donor to the Los Angeles Gay Community Center, the first and only organization of its kind at the time.) (See Figure 15)

At the meeting, Taylor-DiPietro told Forbes that she worked at Disneyland and had seen many types of groups “rent” Disneyland for private party events and often imagined an all gay event at Disneyland. Taylor-DiPietro had worked in Fantasyland for four years – “I could almost always spot gay groups enjoying the park, so I imagined how great it would be to have a night set up exclusively for gays.” Forbes loved the idea. The next day Taylor-DiPietro contacted Disneyland, not telling them she worked there. Forbes and Taylor-DiPietro then met with Disney representatives. Forbes said their group was the Los Angeles Tavern Guild, to make it appear that the event was for employees of Los Angeles restaurants and bars. The Los Angeles Tavern Guild was a real entity. Forbes was the president and it was made up of several gay bars in the Los Angeles area.

Tickets were sold at Studio One, as well as many other gay bars all over Southern California and the Bay Area. Tickets sold for \$5.75 and included unlimited use of all attractions, bands, shows, and live entertainment. Bars that sold tickets retained fifty cents per ticket in order to compensate

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them for their efforts, as well as the loss of income on the night of the event. Most bars actually closed for the night and hired buses to transport their employees and regulars to Disneyland.

Disney, as with all private party events, designed the event flyers. They pictured Minnie and Mickey arm-in-arm and Mickey in a Tomorrowland costume with Space Mountain in the background. Both headlines read “The Tavern Guild of Los Angeles and Studio One...Family Fun Party at Disneyland/Private Party at Disneyland.”

Forbes and Taylor-DiPietro signed the contract before word got out that the event was being promoted exclusively at gay and lesbian bars and restaurants, and before Disneyland got calls requesting tickets for ‘Gay Night.’ Forbes paid the standard pre-event required payments, including \$38,000 due a week before the event date (equivalent to \$143, 685 in 2015).

Days before the event, Forbes and Taylor-DiPietro were nervous that Disney would cancel. Disneyland executives visited Taylor-DiPietro where she was working in the park and said they just wanted to meet her. “I wasn’t what they expected,” Taylor-DiPietro said. Taylor-DiPietro was a petite 5’1” fresh-cut, red-head. The executives also had a reporter from the Associated Press call her in the early morning, presumably to catch her off-guard; the reporter asked her questions like “can only gays attend this event?”

Rumors did go around of the event. Disneyland told Forbes and Taylor-DiPietro that if it was leaked to the press, the event would be cancelled. Forbes would explain this to the gay papers that did call and most were compliant. Disney stressed that the event was intended for employees only, not customers of the establishments and that tickets should not be sold in bars. Forbes complied and told a reporter from The Advocate, “The tickets have a picture of Mickey Mouse, a symbol of purity on them, so I can understand that Disneyland wouldn’t want to see them sold alongside a screwdriver.”

In order to avoid any potential problems, Forbes and Taylor-DiPietro created a code of behavior flyer, which included “no drags” and attire of “clean nature with no lewd saying or pictures.” They also warned to not bring narcotics or alcohol, and that no distribution of leaflets or pamphlets would be allowed. The planning of the event was impeccable and covered all bases.

“[On the 5 freeway] there were cars of smiling gays and lesbians who acknowledged each other with a wave or a raised fist.” People flew in from San Francisco. Despite the 40-50 picketers who showed up, Disneyland’s doors opened at 7:35pm. They opened early due to the crowds who started showing up at 5pm. The event was an huge success.

Over 15,000 gays and lesbians made history that night on May 24, 1978. It was the first time so many gays and lesbians shared one space for a gay private party. The Herald-Examiner called it “an extraordinary evening on anybody’s scale, perhaps a landmark event.”

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“This is the Gay Woodstock,” one partygoer said. The Herald-Examiner said “the evening was an astonishing celebration of a simple new fact that shows no sign of going away despite conservative backlash: the majority of gays in the late 70s are out of the closet and have no intention of going back (or being shoved back) in.”

Photographs were rare in the gay community. Cameras, in general, were not taken into gay bars or gay parties for fear of being outed. Even by the person developing the film. It was an unspoken rule not to bring a camera into a gay bar or event. This Disneyland event was partially responsible for sparking a change in that fear. Gay papers, including The Advocate and Data-Boy, and non-gay papers like the Herald-Examiner and the San Francisco Examiner ran full page spreads made entirely of photos – gay men swinging their legs up on the Carousel, men kissing on the Space Mountain ride, laughing men in the Mad Hatter’s tea cups, lesbians arm and arm walking down Main Street, and lots of holding hands and fun embracing. (See Figure 16) (Pat Rocco was the photographer for this event.) These photographs even made it on future flyers for the next events Taylor-DiPietro and Forbes would put on at other theme parks.

“This could not have happened a few years ago...I’ve been to Disneyland a hundred times. I don’t care about the rides. I had to be here to see this. Not long ago a lot of people would have been afraid somebody would take their picture or tell their parents. Now nobody cares about either of those things happening” – partygoer, Gary Stewart.

“God, it’s such a good feeling. It’s like we’ve finally been accepted as real people by a place I always thought was about as reactionary as you can get. Maybe this is the turning point,” said one partygoer.

All around the park, there were bands and performances by Disney characters. Most got raucous applause or standing ovations which were said to surprise the performers, but the most popular was said to be when Mickey Mouse led the audience through the Mickey Mouse Club song, especially when Mickey said, “Forever let us hold our banner high, high, high, high!”

Expecting a rally in response to Anita Bryant’s widely-publicized campaign against gays, a partygoer expressed her concern that gays and lesbian were too “apathetic to politics” – “I haven’t seen anybody even wearing a button signifying a strong position for Gay Rights. Oh well...maybe just that we’re all here is positive enough. This may make it easier for some of us to be brave when we know so many people are potential victims of the same repression.”

Disneyland, with its long history of being conservative and being located in conservative Orange County, did however instill some paranoia with some partygoers. Some even thought it was a

plot. One man reportedly cautiously walked through the front gate and remarked “Anita Bryant has rented a crop duster and she’s going to spray the Magic Queendom with deadly paraquat.”

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Anita Bryant, a famous singer at the time, was also the spokesperson for the Florida Citrus Commission. In Dade County, Florida, Anita Bryant and her "Save Our Children" campaign was successful in repealing an anti-discrimination ordinance, which prohibited discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Bryant called the ordinance a way to recruit children to be homosexual: "What these people really want, hidden behind obscure legal phrases, is the legal right to propose to our children that theirs is an acceptable alternate way of life." Bryant continued her campaign to California with a conservative state legislator from Orange County, California: John Briggs. Proposition 6, or better known as "The Briggs Initiative," would have banned gays and lesbians from working in California public schools. It was fought by openly gay San Francisco Politian Harvey Milk, who garnered help from California Governor Ronald Reagan and President Jimmy Carter to defeat the proposition.

It was reported that the Disneyland workers were congenial and others said they loved working that night. One employee said to the crowd, "You all are welcome here anytime," after making tips in twenty minutes that one would normally make on one good night.

Pat Rocco called it "a night that will be fondly remembered in gay history...same-sex couples walked hand in hand and arm in arm, feeling the freedom to be themselves as gay men and lesbians.... All elements considered, the GAY NIGHT AT DISNEYLAND proved to be a positive step forward for all humankind."

"The fact that we did a 'gay night' at all and that it came off without problems speaks for itself," said Forbes, "It's great P.R. – showing them that we're not all a bunch of screamers."

Profits from the "Gay Night at Disneyland" were donated to the Los Angeles Gay Community Services Center (later called the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center, and finally the Los Angeles LGBT Center) for much needed repairs and remodeling of their Highland Avenue location. The profits totaled \$11,614 (equivalent to \$43,915 in 2015).

Aside from an argument between a Disney maintenance man and a gay man, the night went smoothly. There were no arrests. "They really expected our party to have a lot of problems. They were expecting to have at least as many arrests as their most problematic annual private party-attended by employees of the US Postal Service," said Taylor-DiPietro.

But the night was not without consequences. The event cost Taylor-DiPietro her job with Disneyland. After learning she was the driving force behind the event, Taylor-DiPietro received a call from her supervisor the next morning telling her not to come back to work. However, two days later, the Disney legal department found out she was let go and promptly re-hired her in fear of a lawsuit. But it was not long before Taylor-DiPietro quit and went to work with Forbes full time.

Disneyland spokesman Frank Whitely stated that Disney did not treat this event any differently than any other event, there was no extra security and the night "was handled coolly." Whitely admitted that they were not fully aware that this was a private party for gays and lesbians, and

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when asked if it could become an annual event, he said “I’ll have to give you a ‘No comment’ on that one.”

The day after the Disneyland event, Taylor-DiPietro was on the phone with Magic Mountain booking the next gay event. (Disney still does not endorse the current “Gay Days,” which started at Disneyland in the early 1990s.) Theme parks heard about the event and its financial success at Disneyland and did not need any convincing of doing an openly gay event. At both Magic Mountain and Knott’s Berry Farm, an advertising plane company contacted local gay establishments to promote their business to this large exclusive audience. The plane owner offered the event organizers the opportunity to use his platform for their own message. The first LED message in the sky read, “Welcome to Gay Night at Magic Mountain,” and was signed “Scott and Carol.”

Forbes and Taylor-DiPietro created the company Fun Productions. Their next event was at Magic Mountain four months later. The event brought in over 20,000 gays and lesbians. Tickets were \$7 and \$11, which included a concert performance by Sylvester, the male “queen of disco.” “Most of the employees said our group was the liveliest, most entertaining group ever at Magic Mountain,” said Taylor-DiPietro.

Gay Night at Disneyland and Magic Mountain were the largest, private, “gay parties” ever held in the country at that time. By the next year, Forbes and Taylor-DiPietro topped that record with 25,000 gays and lesbians at Marriott’s Great America in the San Francisco Bay Area. Marriott’s Great America in Santa Clara, California was held on Friday May 4th, 1979. The flyer proudly read “From the people who brought you gay nights, 16,000 at Disneyland – 20,000 at Magic Mountain...Our Very Own Private Party.”

Almost immediately there was a controversy regarding Marriott’s discrimination against hiring gays. There was a threat of an event boycott, which prompted Marriott to publicly announce that the company “adopts an employment policy prohibiting discrimination against gays” and that they had no problem with hosting gay private parties. Marriott spokesperson, John Poimiroo, said later in an interview with the San Francisco Examiner that “we have no policy of discrimination against gays because of any particular reason. We prohibit and denounce any type of discrimination.”

Forbes and Taylor-DiPietro’s Gay Night at Marriott’s Great America put a spotlight on Marriott’s discrimination practices. And certainly the money that would be coming in from 25,000 gays and lesbians had an impact on Marriott’s decision to end their hiring discrimination of gays and lesbians. The dollar amount this event was guaranteed to bring in was \$200,000 (equivalent to \$700,000 in 2015). All 25,000 tickets were sold. This event was a very early

example of the “gay dollar” having the power to influence. (Businesses are said to be after the gay dollar when they target advertisements to gays expressly for their money and following.)

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Forbes and Taylor-DiPietro continued the Gay Night events for many years. Each was as successful as the last. Other theme parks included Knott's Berry Farm, Six Flags Marine World (where Grace Jones performed), and Lion Country Safari. Every event's profits went to a gay organization or establishment in the area of the event.

"The best time of my life. The best times of my life definitely were the years with Scott. That relationship changed my life." – Carol Taylor-DiPietro.

Putting the Early Studio One Disco and the Backlot Phenomenon in Historical Perspective

Five years before Forbes and Taylor-DiPietro's first Gay Nights, around the time Forbes started "the Odyssey Club" at The Factory building, there were several tragic events in the LGBT community –

On the evening of June 24, 1973, the Upstairs Lounge, a gay bar in French Quarter New Orleans, Louisiana, was deliberately set on fire. It was the single, largest massacre of gay people in American history. 32 people died as a result of the fire, either from being burned alive or smoke inhalation. It was said that New Orleans residents and passersby were elated at the death of these gay men. One man asked about the tragedy replied: "What tragedy? I don't know of any tragedy. Only some faggots got burned."

That same year, Troy Perry of the Metropolitan Community Church had three churches firebombed, including the "Mother Church" at 22nd Street and Union Avenue in Los Angeles. No one was ever charged for crimes.

But by the time Forbes opened Studio One, the gay sexual revolution was boiling, especially in Los Angeles. What started the simmering was the gay liberation movement of mid- to late 1960s, reflecting a consolidation of a LGBT group consciousness. As stated in the Survey Los Angeles LGBT Historic Context Statement –

The key manifestations of this new group awareness were an increasing level of group resistance to homophobia, a major expansion in the number and variety of permissive social spaces, and a substantial increase in the number of sexual identity based political and social organizations. The movement during this period was facilitated by the emergence of a vibrant local LGBT newspaper media including *The Advocate* and *The Lesbian Tide*.... The political and social upheaval during the mid-1960s attracted even more non-conformist and radicals to Los Angeles. The more liberal attitudes and

androgynous fashion during this period, allowed LGBT persons to be more visible and less different.

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Contrary to widespread belief that New York was the birth of the gay rights movement, it was actually Los Angeles that was the place of many firsts for the gay rights movement and a hotbed for political/social events and uprisings:

1947: During her secretarial work at RKO Studios, Edythe Eyde (pen name Lisa Ben), wrote **Vice Versa**, a magazine geared toward fellow lesbians. Her job at RKO Studios gave her privacy to work on 12 issues, and her boss encouraged her to just “to look busy.” Vice Versa paved the way for the numerous LGBT publications that would soon follow.

1950: **The Mattachine Society**, the first sustained American gay rights group, is formed in the home of Harry and Anita Hay. The society’s mission statement included that argument that homosexuality was not just a sexual orientation, it was a minority group with its own culture; and called to action a grassroots movement of gays to challenge anti-gay discrimination.

1952: A West Hollywood Mattachine chapter formed **ONE Incorporated**, an organization still dedicated to LGBT culture, education, and archives. ONE Incorporated also begins the publication of ONE Magazine, the second gay publication in the U.S.

1957: Dr. Evelyn Hooker’s research of her publication, *Journal of Projective Techniques*, is done in Los Angeles. The publication is possibly the earliest empirical study disputing the widespread psychiatric assumption that homosexuality is a mental illness.

1959: The first known instance in the LGBT community of gays and transgenders resisting arbitrary arrest at **Copper’s Doughnuts** while being harassed by the LAPD, throwing their coffee and food at the arresting officers.

1966: The **first gay car parade** of record occurs on Hollywood Blvd to protest the ban on homosexuals in the military. It was the first of five around the county.

1967: The **Black Cat Tavern** in Silver Lake was raided on New Year’s Eve and consequently sparked rioting (the protests were organized by P.R.I.D.E – Personal Rights in Defense and Education – the first use of the term “pride” that came to be associated with LGBT rights). Also is said to have inspired Richard Mitch to publish The Advocate.

1967: **The Advocate** was published in September 1967 as “The Los Angeles Advocate,” a local newsletter alerting gay men to police raids in Los Angeles gay bars.

1968: The first known “**gay-in**” took place at Griffith Park, inspired by the lunch counter sit-ins of the American Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s; the **Metropolitan Community Church** (MCC) is formally organized by Reverend Troy Perry, a Southern Pentecostal minister.

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Perry was one of the first ministers to argue for “scriptural justice” for the LGBT community.

1969: (New York City **Stonewall Riots**)

1970: **Christopher Street West Gay Pride Parade** down Hollywood Boulevard, commemorating the first anniversary of the Stonewall Riots. The march started at McCadden Place and Hollywood Boulevard. The parade moved to West Hollywood in 1979.

1971: **Gay Community Services Center (GCSC)** formed to provide shelter for homeless gays and lesbians; the GCSC soon offered a gay men’s STD clinic, which also offered individual and group counseling. The GCSC provided a variety of services to gays and lesbians, specifically ones who were neglected or mistreated by existing agencies, and consequently grew to be the largest LGBT organization in the country. (This is the same organization that Forbes and Taylor-DiPietro were board members, and the same organization that was the recipient of the Disneyland Gay Night profits.) The GCSC changed its name to the Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center in 1980 and Forbes hosted a fundraiser for them that year, charging \$50 ticket to see Tony Award-winning performer Donna McKechnie.

1971: **Gay Women’s Services Center (GWSC)** was the first organization in the U.S. incorporated as a social service agency exclusively for lesbians. The GWSC bailed lesbians out of jail, rescued lesbians from mental institutions, provided shelter for these women until they could “get back on their feet,” and held social gatherings every evening of the week.

1972/1973: Forbes rents out “The Factory” for his Sunday disco night called “**Odyssey Club,**” exclusively for gay men.

1974: Forbes opens **Studio One and the Backlot Theatre** at The Factory.

It is no doubt when looking at this timeline, at the achievements of the gay rights movement, that Forbes used this momentum to open up what would be the most famous disco in the country (and possibly the world). Times were changing and always the pioneer, he knew gay men needed a bigger venue.

Studio One amplified the mid-1970s in West Hollywood as the gay-version of the straight’s 1960s Summer of Love. Gays became emboldened, expressing their gay freedom not just after dark, but brazenly during the day – holding hands, flirting, and cruising along Santa Monica Boulevard. The area roughly between La Peer Drive and La Cienega Boulevard became known as “Boys Town,” (now known as “Boystown.”) Gay owned and operated businesses and gay-

targeted businesses lined that portion of Santa Monica Boulevard and its side streets and much of the surrounding area, all the way down to Crescent Heights Boulevard.

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By the mid-1970s, West Hollywood epitomized a new gay lifestyle – “one that promoted a brotherhood of pleasure as a statement of gay liberation.” “There was euphoria and hopefulness in West Hollywood...It was astonishing to find that, and to become part of it very quickly,” said Steve Schulte, the second Mayor of West Hollywood.

Gay communities had affected the urban culture: configuring a vision of queerness through mediation between commercial culture and urban geography.

Lillian Faderman and Stuart Timmon’s book, *Gay L.A.*, said this about gay consumerism and culture –

For a time, gay consumerism meant more than a conspicuous consumption: It was also something of a political act, it made the gay community more widely visible. Any business owned by gay people might present itself as a “gay business,” and to support it was to support the gay cause. But as the visible gay community expanded, the businesses that qualified for community support proliferated: Even straight-owned companies began to vie for gay favor in a marketed economy.... Gay men became the hot new demographic for corporate America once it was announced by business researchers not only that there were vast numbers of gays but also that the household income of gay males far exceeded the average in America.

The Last Days of Disco

“The last days of disco might have recalled the decadent fall of Rome, but the first days were filled with hope.” – *Last Night a DJ Saved My Life*.

The general masses loved disco, largely because of its association with decadence, cocaine, and sex. The film *Saturday Night Fever* epitomized the very height of disco in 1977, but by 1979 record producers and their labels had completely over-saturated the market with disco, and had left behind thousands of horrible songs in their wake. Artists or producers who knew nothing about disco (other than the restorative power it might exert on their careers) produced a huge number of bad records. It was business; they figured out how “to rip out its heart out and suck out every last drop of blood.”

Record companies, disco owners, and DJs were getting restless with disco – as each had push and pull over the other because disco was such a huge cash monster. Together with Billboard Magazine they held a conference at Studio One in 1979. DJs from around the country, including Francois Kervorkian, Manny Slali, Jim Burgess, Doug Riddick, John Luongo, Jon Randazzo, and Kevin Mills served on panels along record companies like Atlantic, Casablanca, and Warner Brothers and disco owners like Roy Thode from Ice Palace (New York City), Dick Collier from

Trocadero Transfer, Leslie Cohen from Sahara (New York City), Barry Gettman from Second Story (Philadelphia), Keith Langin from Backstreet (Atlanta), and of course Scott Forbes from Studio One who hosted the event.

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The event, as it was reported, was a series of panels on disco music, ranging from DJ demonstrations that turned more into arguments on how record companies were trying to get DJs to have a visual display of the record they were playing. Resident DJ of Studio One, Manny Slali said "it is not the DJ's job to sell records, that is the responsibility of the record company," which went over well with most in the audience except for record companies and some disco owners.

If it was not the record companies draining disco for all it was worth, it was the media. Forbes told the Los Angeles Times that he thought media was crucial for the disco explosion, and was now instrumental in its downfall. The media was relentlessly broadcasting that discos were dying, and so people started believing it. Also during a time of heightened gas prices, Forbes saw a 30% drop of attendance in late 1979.

Gay disco owners were asked about the new music trend of New Wave and Rock, and both Forbes and Circus disco owner Gene LaPietra had different opinions. LaPietra welcomed the new trend, but Forbes still saw disco as lucrative for the gays, especially now that the straights thought it was not fashionable anymore. Forbes admitted that the disco owners who jumped on the disco craze were likely to close down. Forbes though was a smart businessman and his Studio One would be one of the few to survive.

Bill Brewster, the author of *Last Night a DJ Saved My Life: The History of the Disc Jockey*, wrote about the coming hatred of disco and the direct association it had to gays –

By 1979, there was too much disco and people started to hate it. Many who had banked on it were high and dry and the backlash was swift and enduring. Suddenly everyone remembered that it was faggot music, that it 'sucked.' For the rock-headed straight masses it still had too many gay associations, and for the U.S. music business too many bad memories of extreme over-investment. Soon the phrase "disco is dead" was born, which echoed a lot of hate behind the music itself and the very people who started it.

The phrase, "disco is dead" or "disco sucks" can still be seen on t-shirts, and popular culture generators like the television show *The Simpsons* where Homer Simpson admitted getting down to 'Funkytown,' but in the end he too put a 'Disco Sucks' bumpersticker on his car.

In Chicago, radio DJ Steve Dahl hated disco so much he raised a 'disco destruction army' and mobilized it to attack disco wherever possible. His followers rallied around the overtly homophobic 'Disco Sucks' slogan and fought the evil faggot music by harassing DJs wherever it was played. 'Disco music is a disease. I call it disco dystrophy. The

people victimized by this killer disease walk around like zombies. We must do everything possible to stop the spread of this plague.'

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Once Dahl had quit from his radio station (which went all disco), he gave away one hundred tickets to a Village People concert, provided they brought marshmallows bearing the words 'Disco Sucks' to throw at the band. He topped this at a Chicago White Sox game in 1979. A joint promotion between Dahl's all-rock station WLUP and the Chicago White Sox, his 'disco demolition' rally involved giving fans a reduced admission to a double header baseball game, in exchange for depositing one disco record at the turnstile. More than 10,000 disco records were collected, and at half-time were blown up in a container at center field. "Middle America's anti-disco feeling couldn't have been made clearer as a violent crowd invasion ensued, with chanting protestors fighting, starting fires and digging up turf."

The rock generation saw it as the antithesis of all that was holy: no visible musicians, no 'real' stars, no 'live' performances. It was music based wholly on consumption, music with no aesthetic purpose, indeed with no purpose at all other than making your body twitch involuntarily.

All over the world, the disco menace was confronted; right-wing Americans denounced it as morally degrading and probably a form of communist mind control; communist countries banned it as decadent and capitalist. Perhaps the most bizarre expression of anti-disco sentiment came from Turkey, where scientists at the University of Ankara proved that listening to disco turned pigs deaf and made mice homosexual.

Given the depth of this backlash, it's hardly surprising that the story of popular music has been largely revised to disavow its debt to disco.

But while the straight and mainstream rejected and hated disco, the gays danced on. For Studio One's sixth anniversary party in 1980, disco artist Debbie Jacobs belted out "Don't You Want My Love," and later the Studio One stage saw Natalie Cole and the Skatt Brothers, "to prove Disco is still alive." The anniversary week started with "Levi Night" and ended with "White Night." (databoy) The whole week, the laser light show was curated by Laser Media. Other performers included Edwin Starr, Debbie Jacobs, Galvin Christopher, exotic dancers Graf and his snakes, and Csarina and Tatoo with Hans on the synthesizer, and Venito the sword juggler.

Studio One's anniversary parties were always extraordinary. In 1981, the usual anniversary week turned into the anniversary month, with theme parties throughout the month, including the new Red Night, Levi Night, White Night, and the new Black-and Blue Night, which were all serenaded by disco divas of the time.

Studio One's newsletter in July of 1981 advertised aerobic classes with live DJs; a rave review of Joan Rivers who appeared in the Backlot, along with the Los Angeles Gay Men's Chorus;

instructions on "wearing as little as possible" to the second annual "Heat Party;" a description of Scott Forbes' birthday party; a photo and text boasting that Studio One's volleyball team was

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first in the nation; Studio One's new "Sunday Champagne Brunch" from 11am to 4pm; and the Backlot new format, including live DJ music, and a restaurant open from 11am to 4pm.

Theme nights were becoming popular, including the certainly tongue-in-cheek event Heavy Metal I, II, and II, where guest star Divine was driven in on a motorcycle driven by Scott Forbes, and where adventurous guests could get tattoos that lasted for two weeks. There was also Thrust II – Orbiting, which was a space fantasy theme party, complete with musical performance by The Energy of Destination, and the club was decorated in futuristic designs. Tickets were sold at gay stores and bars in West Hollywood and Hollywood. Every other Friday was a special event especially decorated by Bob McClure and his crew, usually accompanied by T-dancers. Early Sunday evenings had the Gay Dating Game, based on the television show.

Theme nights were also a way to receive donations for the variety of charities and organizations that Forbes supported, including the Neimeier Memorial Reward Fund and the Los Angeles Gay Community Services Center. Although the benefit for the Neimeier Memorial Reward Fund was called the 'Macho Man Party' with a Village People lookalike contest, the actual fund was established "to post rewards for information leading to the arrest and conviction of persons who murder members of the gay community."

The annual Gay Pride Parade always had a Studio One float and/or performance. In 1981, Studio One provided the last float which was a double-decker bus where spectators caught a ride off the back, and as always there as a large party at Studio One after the parade.

In 1982, 80,000 LGBTs lined Santa Monica Boulevard for the annual parade. After cars passed with political figures like Ed Edelman, Zev Yaroslavsky, Herschel Rosenthal, and Howard Berman, the Studio One float followed bearing a large group of men and women dancing to disco hit, "We Are Family." It was followed by a pickup carrying the Studio One Troupers, a group of men dressed in women's clothing. West Hollywood resident and spectator, Tom Lech, said: "This is the most spectacular thing I've ever seen. The feeling is terrific here, to see a community of people together and believing what they believe in and expressing it. There's so much love here today, it's unreal."

Brewster writes that disco was the soundtrack to the gays' emancipation from years of invisibility...

a rallying call for togetherness and tolerance, it was also a Trojan horse by which important aspects of gay culture were pushed into mainstream acceptance. Because of this, when disco collapsed, it seemed like an attack on the freedoms that had been won – especially since the disco backlash was usually voiced with unmistakable homophobia.

This effrontery was compounded by all-out tragedy as another force emerged that would have an unprecedented impact on the gay community.

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If the disco movement was beaten down by rampant commerciality, it was laid to rest by AIDS. A story that began with the liberation symbolized at Stonewall ended with a virus with seemed at first to discriminate along exactly the same bigoted lines as society at large. In its early years, the as yet undiagnosed ‘gay cancer’ AIDS was first known as GRIDS: Gay Related Immune Deficiency Syndrome. Novelist David Leavitt described this period as ‘a time when the streets were filled with an almost palpable sense of mourning and panic.’

The Early Years of the AIDS Pandemic

AIDS ravaged the dance community hard. Many DJs succumbed to the virus, others lost their lives to drug overdoses. Whole independent record labels died too, including Megatone and Moby Dick. “It killed our customers, it killed our artists, it killed our founders. It was kind of a three or four year blur, and then everybody was gone,” said San Francisco disco DJ, John Hedges.

“You’d read a different obituary every week, you became afraid to open the paper. But what is weird is the shock you would get every time – I just saw him yesterday and he’s gone, it really felt like the end of everything. Nothing ever recovered from it and the parties were never quite what they had been before.” – Chris Njirich.

“Each time we lose a great artist or designer or choreographer or conductor [from AIDS], we are impoverished by it and we’re going to feel it for a long time.”

Roger McFarlane, executive director of New York AIDS charity Gay Men’s Health Crisis, reflected on the bittersweet memories: “We didn’t know we were dancing to the edge of our graves.”

Many doctors seeing the rise of STDs alone, felt compelled to warn gay men of sex but these men had escaped social injustices to practice this freedom. “Yet this strange mix of taboos and newfound freedom had created a social climate that was wonderfully tailored for aggressive little viruses.”

In 1980, the first cases of what would be called Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) were reported. Although the virus appeared much earlier than 1980, it was not until 1980 that researchers deduced that gay men were afflicted by it. Researchers called it a “mysterious outbreak of pneumonia,” that they thought was caused by a protozoan that only affected cancer and transplant patients who had a suppressed immune system. Soon it was reported that patients were developing *pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia, along with a rare form of skin cancer called Kaposi’s sarcoma; this virus would soon be called “the gay cancer.” Every three months,

researchers published findings, some in the right direction and others in the complete wrong direction, including the thought that “poppers” (inhalants) were causing the virus.

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The story of AIDS is the story of how years passed, while the government and medical and public health community idly stood by as the death toll rose. “People died while the Reagan administration officials ignored pleas from government scientists and did not allocate adequate funding for AIDS research until the epidemic had already spread throughout the country. People died while scientists did not at first devote appropriate attention to the epidemic because they perceived little prestige to be gained in studying a homosexual affliction.”

Before.

It was to be the word that would define the permanent demarcation in the lives of millions of Americans, particularly those citizens of the United States who were gay. There was life after the epidemic. And there were fond recollections of the times before.

Before and after. The epidemic would cleave lives in two, the way a great war or depression presents a commonly understood point of reference around which an entire society defines itself.

Before would encompass thousands of memories laden with nuance and nostalgia. Before meant innocence and excess, idealism and hubris. More than anything, this was the time before death. – *And the Band Played On*.

It was in 1981 at the University of California Los Angeles that Dr. Michael Gottlieb was seeing some of his patients come in with the same symptoms – swollen lymph nodes, prolonged fever, candida in mouth, rashes, low white blood cell count, deficient in T-helper lymphocytes, and elevated levels of cytomegalovirus (CMV) in the blood. Studies found that in most gay men, there was cytomegalovirus, a herpes virus that had been linked to cancer, and the Epstein-Barr virus, a microbe also linked to cancers.

By April 1981, in Los Angeles alone, there had been five reported cases in gay men, and already one death over a few months, which meant there was an epidemic. Gottlieb immediately contacted the New England Journal of Medicine to publish his findings but was frustrated that he would have to wait the normal amount of time and that his piece was not even guaranteed to get in the journal. 1981 was pre-internet; it was either television media or the New England Journal of Medicine as the only way to effectively publicize an outbreak. Gottlieb was successful in getting his and Dr. Joel Weisman’s findings in the Centers of Disease Control’s Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR).

The CDC after working with the gay community for a Hepatitis B vaccine feared that if the report tagged the outbreak too prominently as a gay epidemic than it would be harder to get federal assistance or funding. So any reference to gays was dropped and the headline simply read

“*Pneumocystis pneumonia* – Los Angeles.” The report was published in June of 1981. Most gay papers across the country reported on it but it was buried and looked at as a “medical oddity that

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was probably blown out of proportion by homophobes in both the scientific establishment and the media.” By this time though there were many doctors throughout the country perplexed by this new, mysterious virus.

One month later, in July 1981, the MMWR published “Kaposi’s Sarcoma and *Pneumocystis* Pneumonia Among Homosexual Men – New York City and California.” The MMWR announcement promptly received media attention for one day only, and then little to no attention was made to the findings until December of 1981. “Gay cancer” was the name given to the virus by mid-1981. The Los Angeles Times, The Associated Press, and The Sentinel and San Francisco Chronicle reported on the MMWR article.

Each month the cases grew exponentially. Only two months after the July report, there were 108 more cases nationwide and of those 43 were dead. In August, The Sentinel in San Francisco reported that “no one knows the extent of this potential danger, but laying it on the safe side for a few weeks cannot hurt,” and continued to report that it was only years ago that the government had poured millions of dollars into researching the cause of Legionnaire’s disease; a statement meant to be directed to the U.S. government, which had to date allocated no funds to research the mysterious virus.

In September 1981, the National Cancer Institute (NCI) held a Kaposi’s sarcoma and opportunistic infections conference with 50 leading clinicians at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). After this conference, it was assumed that the press would be extensively covering this new epidemic and that funding would fall into place; however, no media except gay papers were covering it and no substantial federal funding would be dispersed until late 1984. (From as early as 1981, federal funds were “allocated” but not actually dispersed to the CDC. In 1983, it was suggested that the CDC spend their money and risk a bailout by the government.) By October 1981, gay papers were calling the virus, the “gay plague.”

The NCI conference fueled Gottlieb’s suspicion that no one cared because it was homosexuals who were dying. Nobody came out and said it was all right for gays to drop dead; it was just that homosexuals didn’t seem to warrant the kind of urgent concern another set of victims would engender...there was little glory, fame, and funding to be had in this field; there wasn’t likely to be money or prestige as long as newspapers ignored the outbreak...all Michael Gottlieb could do was return to Los Angeles to preside over more deaths.

From the outset, AIDS was associated with a high level of stigma and discrimination. This prejudice arose in part because AIDS was linked to groups, such as gay men and intravenous drug users, who were already highly stigmatized, but also because evidence-based information about what was causing AIDS, and how it might be passed on, was in short supply.

There were soon reports that the virus once seemingly limited to gay men was also happening to drug addicts, babies, and straight people. While most of the scientists suspected that the virus

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was related to sexual contact and/or the transfer of contaminated blood, there was no definitive evidence to prove that these were the only routes of transmission.

By February 1982, 251 Americans contracted what was now called Gay-Related Immune Deficiency (GRID) across the country, and 99 of them had died.. The Wall Street Journal wrote an article on GRID but the focus was on the 23 infected heterosexuals, largely intravenous users who were among GRID patients.

With confirmation of bona fide heterosexuals, the story finally merited sixteen paragraphs deep in the largest circulation daily newspaper in the United States, under the headline: 'New Often-Fatal Illness in Homosexuals Turns Up in Women, Heterosexual Males.' The gay plague got covered only because it finally had struck people who counted, people who were not homosexuals.

The virus went through many acronyms, including ACIDS (Acquired Community Immune Deficiency Syndrome), CAIDS (Community Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome), and was finally called AIDS in mid-1982, an acronym that was sexually neutral. The CDC first used the term AIDS when it reported in the September MMWR that an average of 1-2 cases of AIDS were being diagnosed every day.

The American government completely ignored the AIDS epidemic. It was not until a 1982 press briefing in the White House that the Reagan administration uttered its first words about AIDS. A journalist asked the White House correspondent the following question: "Does the President have any reaction to the announcement – the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, that AIDS is now an epidemic and have over 600 cases?" The correspondent answered: "What's AIDS?"

By September 1982, there were 593 confirmed cases and the mortality rate was 41%. Most were gay men but now included heterosexual women and men with IV drug use. In 1982, the media officially called the virus an epidemic.

The Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center (GLCSC) was inundated with phone calls overnight. "People would call up so excited they could barely form sentences," said Thomas Nylund, Coordinator of the GLCSC. Because there was no known reason yet for the cause of the virus, Nylund heard people theorizing over the phone "that it was God's way of punishing homosexuals."

After intense social liberation and sexual liberation, gay men were now uttering the words "My mother was right" or "My minister was right." Gay men were shunned and back in the closet, and most who were not "out" to their family were shoved out of the closet.

The moral judgement, Nylund thought, was also thought by the medical and scientific community who had been slow to research a cure. The Los Angeles Times reported that the NCI

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had earmarked 2.2 million dollars to finance research but as of September 1982 had yet to allocate funds.

Media reports, Nylund believes, also have been biased and have unfairly implicated life style as the cause of Kaposi's. (Nylund said he heard a commentator on a New York television newscast ask a guest: 'Is the disease still confined to homosexual men, or has it become serious?')

Each week, headlines in gay papers across the country announced possible breakthroughs with the causes for AIDS, consequently causing mass confusion in the gay community. Richard Lebonte, clerk at the LGBT bookstore A Different Light, said: "No one knows whether it can be caused by staying at home and reading a lot or going to the bars every night." Equally mystified by the sickness, a 70 year old woman contracted Kaposi's sarcoma and reportedly asked "Does this mean I'm a homosexual?"

There was only one reason for the lack of [straight] media interest, and everybody in the task force knew it: the victims were homosexuals...they didn't want stories about gays and all those distasteful sexual habits littering their newspapers.

Studio One Disco and the Backlot React to the Crisis

AIDS was devastating to West Hollywood. By 1981, West Hollywood's population was approximately 40% LGBT, primarily gay men. People were scared to go out since they did not know how the sickness was communicated, for example drinking out of the same glasses. There was a panic. Specific sites, including the French Market Place in West Hollywood, served as meeting points for men to check in to see if others were still alive.

The very real fear though with AIDS was knowing that when diagnosed, the almost always prognosis was death. Gay people stopped going out and fear soon gripped the nation.

"When HIV became prevalent, it hit the clubs literally like bombs." – R. Sweigart.

By 1982, it was noticeable at the clubs. There were fewer people. Studio One's attendance went down. Men were either dying of AIDS or were too scared to go out. Gay men again became isolated. The Los Angeles Times in 1983 reported that attendance in gay clubs was down 20%. Many gay clubs closed and others tried to reinvent themselves like Studio One. Some of the small clubs were able to survive because the overhead was lower. Odyssey started to do an 18 or over night, and it took Forbes' bartender and friend, Richard Sweigart, to convince him to do the same.

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In 1983, it was reported by the Los Angeles Times that half of the AIDS victims came from the Hollywood/West Hollywood area. Health officials warned gay men “to be careful about traditional ‘pickup’ places like bathhouses and singles bars.”

The problem, according to homosexual leaders, is to reverse the attitude of people drawn to the Hollywood/West Hollywood area for its sexually free environment. The area is an enclave for thousands of gays, and a host of businesses cater to a homosexual clientele. There are six major bathhouses in the Hollywood area. Gay bars and restaurants are common, and many are frequented by straight people as well. Gay leaders say they fear that the AIDS panic will cause old barriers between the two communities to re-emerge.

While the government continued to fail to respond to the crisis, numerous groups around the country formed in efforts to raise money. Scientists and doctors were doing their own research with their own money as told by Randy Shilts in his book *And the Band Played On*. Some of the early groups or individuals to raise money, included Larry Kramer, who made a plea to anyone, including the rich gay community for money, to which he was almost always turned down. Other groups that formed were the Kaposi’s Sarcoma Research and Education Foundation in San Francisco, and the Gay Men’s Health Crisis (GMHC) in New York. In 1982, the GMHC distributed 50,000 free copies of their first newsletter to hospitals, doctors, clinics, and the Library of Congress.

“There was more of a rush to find out who was going to get for credit for discovering AIDS, more than there was for curing it. And then we had a president who really wanted to see all gay people die with the disease. That’s what people here – and a lot of people in this country – would say about Ronald Reagan...his refusal to address the crisis made the community feel his honest wish was that it would kill every gay person in America. That was a common hope expressed openly by a lot of people, powerful people.” – L. Coleman.

What was to become the AIDS Project Los Angeles (APLA), raised \$7000 at a Christmas benefit. APLA’s first client service was to have volunteers visit patients at their bedside, which was called “Home Health Assistance/Hospice Services,” later called the “Buddy Program.” The next program set up centered around housing needs, and then a dental clinic. APLA was looking at the long-term and looking to the necessity of everyday needs and how most of these men did not have anyone to care for them and family who had shunned them. By 1983, APLA was receiving 125 calls a day and most were from non-gays who had gay sex and were concerned about infecting friends and family. Ervin Munro, acting executive director of APLA, though did say that he did not think AIDS was a mass epidemic. (AIDS Haunts Gay Sex Life) He stated there was a mass panic and misinformation about what AIDS was, but erroneously concluded that it would not be a mass epidemic. AIDS was bigger than an epidemic, it was and still is a pandemic.

By the end of 1983, the confirmed numbers of AIDS cases were 3064 in the United States and of those 1291 had died.

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Since the beginning of the AIDS pandemic, almost 78 million people have been infected with the HIV virus and about 39 million people have died of HIV. At the end of 2013, it was estimated that 35 million people were living with HIV/AIDS worldwide; 1.5 million people died of AIDS-related illnesses worldwide in 2013.

From the beginning of the pandemic to 2014, 1.7 million Americans have been infected with HIV and more than 650,000 have died of AIDS. There is an estimated 50,000 new HIV infections each year in the US.

To date, HIV/AIDS is one of the most destructive global pandemics in history. In comparison, The Plague in the mid-14th century is believed to have taken 75 million lives, and up to 200 million; the 1918 Spanish Flu claimed approximately 40-50 million lives.

“It’s here and it’s occurring in the community. We just can’t close our eyes to it. We have to do what we can to help,” said Forbes. In response to whether gay businesses would turn their back on AIDS, he set the precedent and stated that “the responsible gay business owners would not turn their backs on the problem.”

Forbes offered Studio One and the Backlot numerous times for fundraising efforts. Several gay businesses donated money to AIDS research and hosted AIDS fundraisers but it was Studio One that offered one of the biggest venues. Studio One had fundraisers for AIDS hospice care and medications, and AIDS research as early as 1982. A fundraiser in 1983 brought in \$8000 for AIDS research.

One of the most famous fundraisers and one of the first major fundraisers was on March 11th, 1984. It was hosted by Joan Rivers, who at the time was the only celebrity willing to lend her name to help any cause having to do with AIDS. (See Figure 17) Rivers was an early pioneer when it came to helping AIDS victims, before Elizabeth Taylor, and before Princess Diana. Rivers could not get other celebrities to perform with her (even though the club had been routinely filled with them.) Rivers had already hosted a number of fundraisers for AIDS.

“There were people there literally with guns. There were death threats. It was very, very weird. But we did it, and that was the first AIDS benefit – the first major AIDS benefit probably – in the United States,” Rivers said. Both Forbes and Rivers hired security in response to death threat calls before the event.

When asked why she did the event, it was simple: “Friends of mine were very ill, and you could tell already there was going to be a lot of trouble,” she said. “Trouble,” she repeated, momentarily sounding wistful, as if reflecting on what has happened since then, “was coming down the pike.”

“Joan Rivers was, up until that point, the only person who ever did anything to raise money to help fight AIDS or help people with AIDS. There were no drugs, the only thing you could do is

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help them, comfort them during dying. It was all any of us could do...raise money for hospice....” – L. Coleman.

The poster made to promote the event at Studio One started with “The semi legend comes out of her closet for AIDS, come out of yours for a good cause.” The event was to raise money for APLA, Aid for AIDS, and Shanti Foundation Los Angeles. The tickets were \$25, \$15 for standing room. The poster continued: “Black tie (if you can afford it) or fancy duds, Meet and touch the semi legend immediately following each performance in the Backlot” (which was an additional \$20 donation.) The poster added: “P.S. The semi legend isn’t taking a nickel.... God love her.” Every time “semi” was mentioned it appeared as written in at the last minute, a usual quip in Rivers’ self-deprecating humor. There were two shows – 8pm and 11pm.

The audience was almost all composed of gay men since most straight people (including celebrities) did not want to be around gay people, fearing they would get sick from AIDS. Some celebrities donated money but often wanted to remain anonymous. The fundraiser raised \$45,000 (equivalent to \$104,309 in 2015). After that event, Studio One and the Backlot would hold AIDS fundraisers practically every weekend.

Scott Forbes Lobbies for Cityhood and Runs for the First City Council

In the midst of the growing AIDS crisis, residents and lobbyists in West Hollywood sought Cityhood. According to a document procured by the City of West Hollywood, it was the Los Angeles County’s moving of Don Eugenio Plummer’s century-old adobe home in Plummer Park in 1983 that fueled neighborhood anger and invigorated Ron Stone to fight for cityhood, who was known then as the “father of cityhood.”

Stone created the West Hollywood Incorporation Committee, and a major theme to emerge from the committee was the need of rent control in light of recent rising costs of living. The tenant advocacy group, Coalition for Economic Survival, was born out of this issue. This issue, in particular, united the LGBTs and the seniors. It was the West Hollywood Incorporation Committee that got Cityhood on the ballot in November of 1984.

Scott Forbes ran for City Council, along with 40 other candidates. (See Figure 18) His platform involved rent control, street crime, senior citizens, law enforcement, the Santa Monica Median Strip, land use and development, street maintenance, and a balanced budget. Forbes ran his campaign out of a small brick building on Santa Monica Boulevard and Studio One; Carol Taylor-DiPietro was his campaign manager.

What was already known about AIDS and the coming crisis was not a topic in the election. West Hollywood and its residents instead looked to the bigger picture of what cityhood could bring. The silence of AIDS in the election likely came down to politics and the candidates were concerned they would not get votes if they made AIDS a part of their platform.

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“During the election, we never discussed AIDS as the ‘resident/voters’ in West Hollywood were primarily Russian-Jewish and senior citizens,” said Taylor-DiPietro.

An October Los Angeles Times article entitled *West Hollywood Election Seen as Dawning of a Gay Camelot* proved this. In the midst of the AIDS crisis, on the dawn of cityhood, there was no mention of the AIDS in the article. Instead the article focused on the phenomenon that “no one seems concerned that an incorporated West Hollywood may become the nation’s first city run by homosexuals.” It boasted the areas trendy restaurants, rock clubs, recording studios, cheap housing for artists, and the estimated 100 gay-owned bars along Santa Monica Boulevard.

Robert Craig, head of the West Hollywood Incorporating Committee said that “there is excitement that something is happening here.” Craig is also person who caused a media storm when he said these words, which served as a call to all LGBTs: “I would suggest that if you are gay, Camelot is on the horizon.”

A wealthy West Hollywood property owner, opposed to cityhood, was rumored to be associated with a telephone survey, which contained questions “to raise fears that the new city would be dominated by gays and financially unstable.” He formed an “anti-incorporation campaign group,” and names associated with the group were hard to research.

Steve Weltman, chairman of Citizens for Cityhood, received a survey call and once he realized the anti-cityhood slant, he began to take notes. “He asked me, ‘If cityhood were to lead to gay control of the city, would you vote for cityhood?’ and then he asked, ‘Do you believe if gays control the city, there will be an influx of gays from all over the country?’”

By September 1984, the Los Angeles Times reported that the wealthy property owner had given money to two candidates – Hundal and Siegal. Forbes had only raised \$4000 by the deadline but he dipped into his own finances to fund his campaign. Taylor-DiPietro said he could have won, but she could never get him away from Studio One and the Backlot. Since it was the end of the year, he was especially focused on the Studio One Halloween party. Taylor-DiPietro did manage to get him to a senior facility, which was a big success because he was charismatic, handsome, and Jewish. “The ladies thought he was gorgeous,” Taylor-DiPietro said. (Soon to be Councilmember Steve Schulte actually tried to get Taylor-DiPietro on his campaign.)

On the same day that West Hollywood became a city and elected its first Councilmembers, the rest of the country voted for a second term of Ronald Reagan. West Hollywood was so split from the rest of the country, the Cityhood vote captured national attention. The results were heard by LGBTs in West Hollywood and LGBTs all over the country. Close to half of the 42 candidates running were openly gay or lesbian; the selected council included two gay men, one lesbian, a senior woman, and Jewish woman – a snapshot of West Hollywood’s residents. Forbes finished in the middle of the candidate pack.

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“When we first incorporated, people viewed us as a novelty because we were the first city with a LGBT majority on the City Council,” said City Councilmember John Heilman.

The first City Council meeting was held at Fiesta Hall in Plummer Park on November 26, 1984. At the first meeting, an anti-discrimination ordinance was passed, stating that anyone who discriminated against homosexuals – in jobs, housing, or public accommodations – faced a \$500 fine. In the same year, West Hollywood also adopted a Domestic Partnership Ordinance, providing equal rights for domestic couples in the City of West Hollywood, and a Rent Stabilization Ordinance.

“The developments seemed all the more sensational for bucking the conservative Reaganite tide that had swept the country,” journalist Ken Ellingwood reported.

West Hollywood was disproportionately impacted by HIV and AIDS; it was the first city to fund services for most of the local organizations in the mid-1980s in the early response to the AIDS crisis. By the late 1980s, West Hollywood and surrounding neighborhoods had more AIDS cases than New York or San Francisco. By 1990, AIDS had killed at least 1000 West Hollywood residents, including city incorporation leader, Ron Stone.

Today, the City of West Hollywood continues to provide funding to support HIV and AIDS education, prevention, and medical services. Every year since 1985, West Hollywood hosts AIDS Walk Los Angeles. The money raised goes to APLA, the same organization that had one of their first fundraisers at Studio One. AIDS Walk Los Angeles, to date, has raised nearly \$75 million.

Studio One Attendance Down Because of AIDS, Backlot Theatre Sees New Life

Lloyd Coleman managed and set up what was to become another very successful time for the Backlot. Coleman eventually formed Rocket Entertainment Group and spearheaded, with the talent pool from the Backlot, AIDS fundraisers and raised much of the funding ultimately used to fund what was to become the American Foundation for AIDS Research (amfAR), a leading organization in HIV and AIDS research.

After going to Studio One in the late 1970s, Coleman found himself in a unique position where Forbes allowed him to set up “showcase” nights called “Monday Night Live” in the mid-1980s. Coleman wanted to take advantage of the name of Studio One/the Backlot and the rolodex of celebrities that Forbes knew. It was Coleman’s job to find up-and-coming talent that no one else in the country could find. The only requirement to get in the show is that you had to have incredible talent. Where it would cost “nobody” performers thousands of dollars to put on their own showcase, Studio One/the Backlot gave them rehearsal space and time, a paid band, a guaranteed audience, and a following for free.

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Every "Monday Night Live" was hosted by a celebrity, which would draw in the audience to a talent ordinarily not seen. Some of the celebrities who hosted or headlined those nights included Charles Nelson Reilly, Rosie O'Donnell, Andrew Stevens, Barry Williams, Roseanne Barr, Barbara Streisand, Jane Olivor, Julie Budd, Martha Raye, Sally Kellerman, and an endless list of celebrities on every level. It was common to see celebrities in the audiences, and some even would do impromptu performances. The crowds quickly grew to standing room only. Gay regulars were in the audience, along with industry people and press who were invited to write or talk about "Monday Night Live." Then the rest of the week, from Tuesday through Saturday, the Backlot booked the week out of the artist(s) who performed.

The showcases became so popular that the talent television show *Star Search* would send talent scouts and literally pick talent out of the showcase to be on *Star Search*. Talents like Rosie O'Donnell, Roseanne Barr, and Sandra Bernhard made regular appearances and at the "Monday Night Live" showcases. No one at the time was paying attention to female comics and there was "no better audience for female comics than gay boys," said Coleman.

When the attendance was going down at Studio One because of AIDS, the Backlot became more important to Studio One's survival. Gay bars had to be creative to keep attendance going. Thankfully there was the television show, *Dynasty*, that kept Studio One packed on Wednesday nights. Nearly every gay bar hosted their own *Dynasty* night. At the time, Forbes had two eight-foot televisions and five 19-inch televisions at Studio One and when *Dynasty* became a hit, he was asked repeatedly to show *Dynasty*. Before long, every Wednesday night, there would be 1000 people at the club watching *Dynasty* (although the Los Angeles Times only reported 350).

Dynasty had one of the first gay characters on prime-time television. Steven Daniel Carrington, a character who struggled with being gay and the conflict it created with his family. "It's like a cult," Forbes said "like The Rocky Horror Picture Show." The night was so popular that the cast of *Dynasty* would regularly appear at Studio One when the episode was airing.

In 1985, Studio One's lease was up. The club had gone from the most popular gay disco and celebrity hangout on the west coast to a business that was struggling to keep the doors open because of the AIDS crisis. Many times Forbes considered selling Studio One, especially when the building's owner doubled Forbes' rent, a gesture many took as a way to get the gay club out of the building. Substantial rent increases was something the building owner did more than once during the AIDS crisis.

In early 1986, Elizabeth Taylor was doing a press conference at the Bel Age Hotel (now The London) in West Hollywood regarding Rock Hudson's death with AIDS. Taylor proclaimed that she would go wherever and do whatever it took to raise money to conquer the disease. Coleman worked at the Bel Age and while the cameras were rolling and photos were taken, he went up to Taylor and asked if she would do an AIDS benefit with his group. She replied "I'll do anything you want."

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“Our group in Studio One, we became the first group to take all these people, and celebrity in film and everything and raise money to fight AIDS in every way possible. And amfAR was born with this tight little community in entertainment.” – L. Coleman.

Coleman and his group from the Backlot took Elizabeth Taylor to Scottsdale, Arizona. Bob Hope emceed the event, and several of Ronald Reagan’s celebrity friends donated their Arabian horses to be auctioned, which were only donated because the owners were avoiding paying taxes on them. After being told the auction would bring in mere dimes, the event brought in a total of \$800,000 (\$600,000 going to the local Arizona AIDS fund).

This and consequent events caused a rift between Joan Rivers and Elizabeth Taylor because until this time, Joan Rivers was the only celebrity fundraising for AIDS. It was not long after the horse auction that Elizabeth Taylor soon received most credit for AIDS fundraising. However, even Taylor found it hard to rally celebrities for the cause whether it be in donations or appearances. “I realized...that this town—of all towns—was basically homophobic, even though without homosexuals there would be no Hollywood, no show business! Yet the industry was turning its back on what it considered a gay disease,” said Taylor.

“It was a good time and a bad time. It was a horrible time actually. It was a different funeral every weekend. That was the saddest part... but the show went on and people still went up and when all is said and reported about the history of this time, there was a building that housed it all. Every benefit was at Studio One. Every event regarding AIDS was at Studio One.” – L. Coleman.

Eventually, the large majority of funds raised for AIDS came from within the entertainment industry. The government continued not to fund any research or provide any funding for care so it came down to a select few individuals and quickly-formed organizations to carry the weight. The hospitals were notorious by then for either leaving AIDS patients on the streets or secluding them to a decrepit wing of a hospital with horrible conditions. “You think mold at the VA hospitals was bad?” asked Coleman.

“So many people were frightened and doing so little about it and doing so little, that the silence was thunderous. And the only way to stop that is to speak out.” – Elizabeth Taylor.

Every weekend and during the week, there was some type of AIDS fundraiser at Studio One or the Backlot. The following were ones written up in the local papers – 1987, Tuesday night fundraiser with Sharon McNight; 1988, 10-hour dance marathon to benefit the following groups – Greater LA AIDS Hospice Foundation, Shanti Foundation, Minority AIDS Project, and Mobilization Against AIDS which raised nearly \$100,000; 1988, Studio One hosted artists, scientists, and celebrities at the “kick-off reception” of “Art Against Aids” at the Pacific Design Center and “following fling,” which was rumored to raise 1.5 million dollars; 1988, Concours d’Elegance ‘88 for Aid for AIDS hosted and sponsored by Studio One, also in support by the City of West Hollywood, Scott Forbes, Mark Taper Forum, The Comedy Store, Phyllis Morris,

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and Nathan Goller; 1989, Joan Rivers AIDS benefit for the Chris Brownlee Hospice; and countless more through the years.

“Scott was really well respected in the community because of his events for fundraising for whether or not it was gay youth, homeless, or whether or not it was for AIDS, or research, or to help buy food for people who were at home because they couldn’t get assistance, or help out with financing for medications,” said Sweigart.

While working an in-house fundraiser, most Studio One and Backlot Theatre workers chose to have their pay donated to the cause. “We saw how it was affecting our community. I don’t think very many people did that. I’ve never seen that kind of commitment. There was a very considerate side to Studio One to help the community – while they were taking money at the door, they were actually giving it back – at the same time allowing a community of people being together by saying it was okay to be who you are,” said Sweigart.

18 and Over Nights and a Farewell to Studio One

It was in 1985/1986 that Richard Sweigart convinced Forbes to try an 18 and over night. Sweigart had seen the attendance start to go down in 1983 because of the fear of AIDS, then a bump in attendance during the Los Angeles Summer Olympics in 1984. Sweigart said it soon dropped again but made a comeback when it was certain that the City of West Hollywood would incorporate into a city; the city became a brighter beacon for the young LGBTs. Through the next year, the attendance dipped and swelled. It was not until 1985/1986 when the 18 and over nights began that Studio One was back at capacity during those nights.

Odyssey 1, the gay disco on Beverly Boulevard in West Hollywood, was extremely popular as they were 18 and over; so much it was cutting into Studio One’s profits. Forbes, the steadfast business man, tried the 18 and over nights at Studio One on Monday and Studio One again was at capacity. After six months, he added Thursday nights, and soon Sunday nights. It was the disco generation who were scared of getting sick, but it was the young generation who naively filled the void and packed Studio One once again.

Forbes made a lot of money from those nights. So much that he would raffle items (usually only reserved for Halloween) like Honda scooters every night. From the money made during the 18 and over nights, Forbes was able to buy out all his partners, the ones who had not died from AIDS.

Studio One and the Backlot Theatre continued to play a big part in fundraising for AIDS research and hospice help. It also continued to be one of the most influential discos in California and the nation in how it gave a stage to the gay liberation movement, the AIDS crisis, and the beginning of the post-AIDS identity of gay men.

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Forbes closed Studio One in 1993. He went on to run a travel business with his partner and was on the West Hollywood's Business License Commission for many years.

Forbes died at the young age of 57 in 2002 from complications due to elective surgery. In lieu of flowers at his funeral, the family asked people to give donations to the West Hollywood Sheriff's Station Fund.

Bill Miles, Forbes' life partner, told the Los Angeles Times for an obituary article that Forbes designed the club to fill a void in the community: "Scott thought it right that gays have a place to go that was a dynamic spot, a place of prominence in the community." The Times called Forbes "a leading figure in the social history of West Hollywood."

The Factory building continues today as one of the premiere spots in Los Angeles.

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<https://www.laconservancy.org/sites/default/files/files/issues/LA%20Conservancy%20Comments%20on%20NOP%2C%20Robertson%20Lane%20Hotel%20Project%2C%201.23.15.pdf>.

GPA, City of West Hollywood Commercial Historic Resources Survey, DRAFT April 1, 2016, 56.

Heffern, Sarah, "11 Most Endangered Round-Up, Featuring Gizmodo, the Advocate, and More," *National Trust for Historic Preservation: PreservationNation blog*, June 26, 2015. Accessed June 27, 2015. <https://savingplaces.org/stories/weekend-reads-11-most-endangered-round-up-featuring-gizmodo-the-advocate-and-more#.V0OXDfkrKM8>.

Mitchell Camera Corporation Factory/Studio
One Disco-Backlot Theatre
Name of Property

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Johnson Heumann Research Associates (HRG), "City of West Hollywood: Historic Resources Survey 1986 – 1987," 1987.

Los Angeles Conservancy, "The Factory," 2015. Accessed February 2016.
<https://www.laconservancy.org/locations/factory>.

National Trust for Historic Preservation, "11 Most Endangered Historic Places: The Factory," June 2015. Accessed June 2015. www.savingplaces.org/places/the-factory#.V0No0SMrJuU.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: SCCIC Fullerton

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): 19-176819 Form prepared 12/1987

Mitchell Camera Corporation Factory/Studio
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10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property .95

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 34.082556 | Longitude: -118.386539 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|-------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 11 | Easting: 372 170 | Northing: 377 970 |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The primary building occupies the full footprint of lot 8, lot 38, and approximately 1/10 of lot 7 and lot 39. The primary building occupies a small portion of lot 7 (east edge) and lot 39 (west edge). The secondary building occupies half of the full footprint of lot 7. Lots 36, 37, and most of 39 have no buildings. They are parking lots. Assessor Parcel No. 4339-009-007.

Mitchell Camera Corporation Factory/Studio
One Disco-Backlot Theatre
Name of Property

Los Angeles CA
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Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The proposed boundary of the property is the original boundary of the original parcel currently occupied by the building. ?

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Kate Eggert and Krisy K Gosney
organization: West Hollywood Heritage Project
street & number: 1274 N. Crescent Heights Blvd, Apt 214
city or town: West Hollywood state: CA zip code: 90046
e-mail: kateblaine@gmail.com, kgosney@sbcglobal.net,
westhollywoodheritageproject@gmail.com
telephone: 323-481-4167
date: March 24, 2016

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property:

Mitchell Camera Corporation Factory/Studio
One Disco-Backlot Theatre
Name of Property

Los Angeles CA
County and State

City or Vicinity:

County:

State:

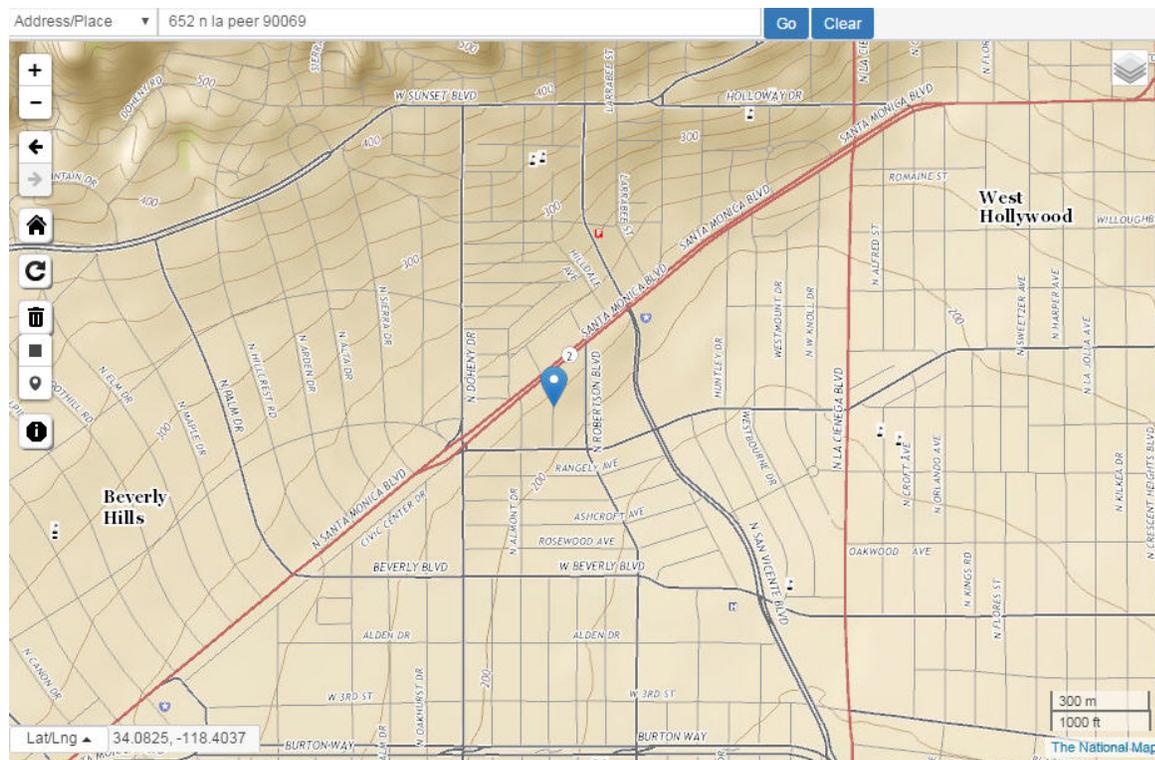
Photographer:

Date Photographed:

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of ____.

Map 1



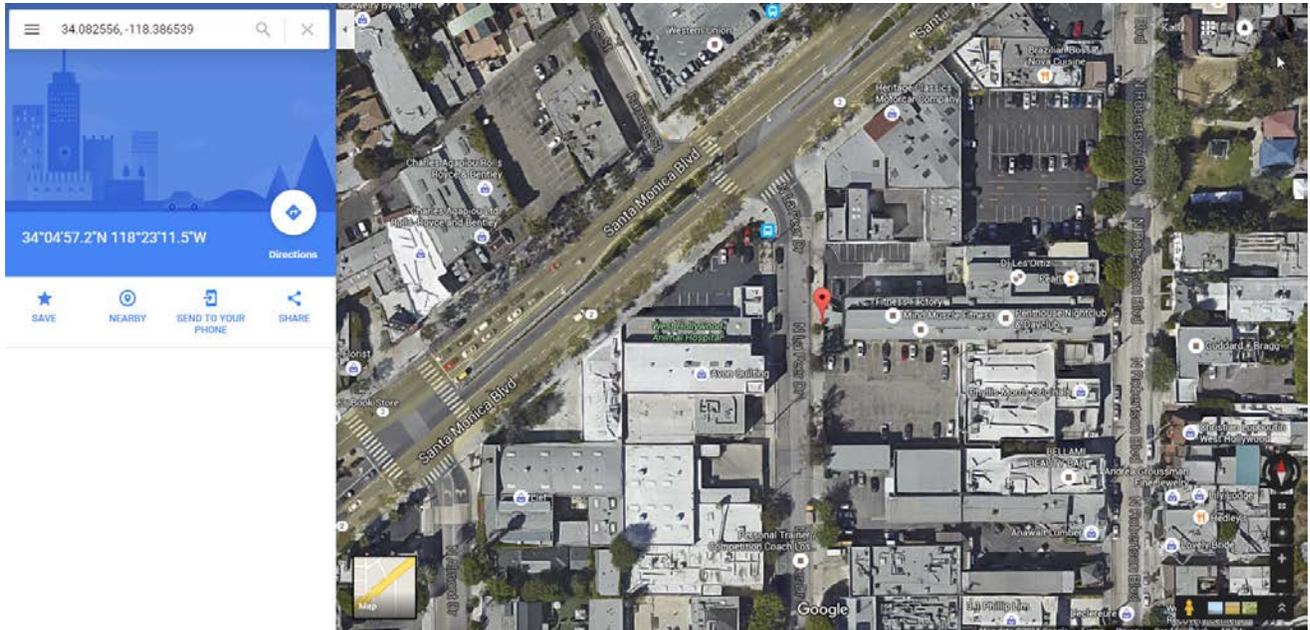
Mitchell Camera Corporation Factory/Studio
One Disco-Backlot Theatre

Los Angeles CA

Name of Property

County and State

Map 2



Map 3



1929 Structure - Mitchell Camera Corporation Factory/Studio One Disco - Backlot Theatre

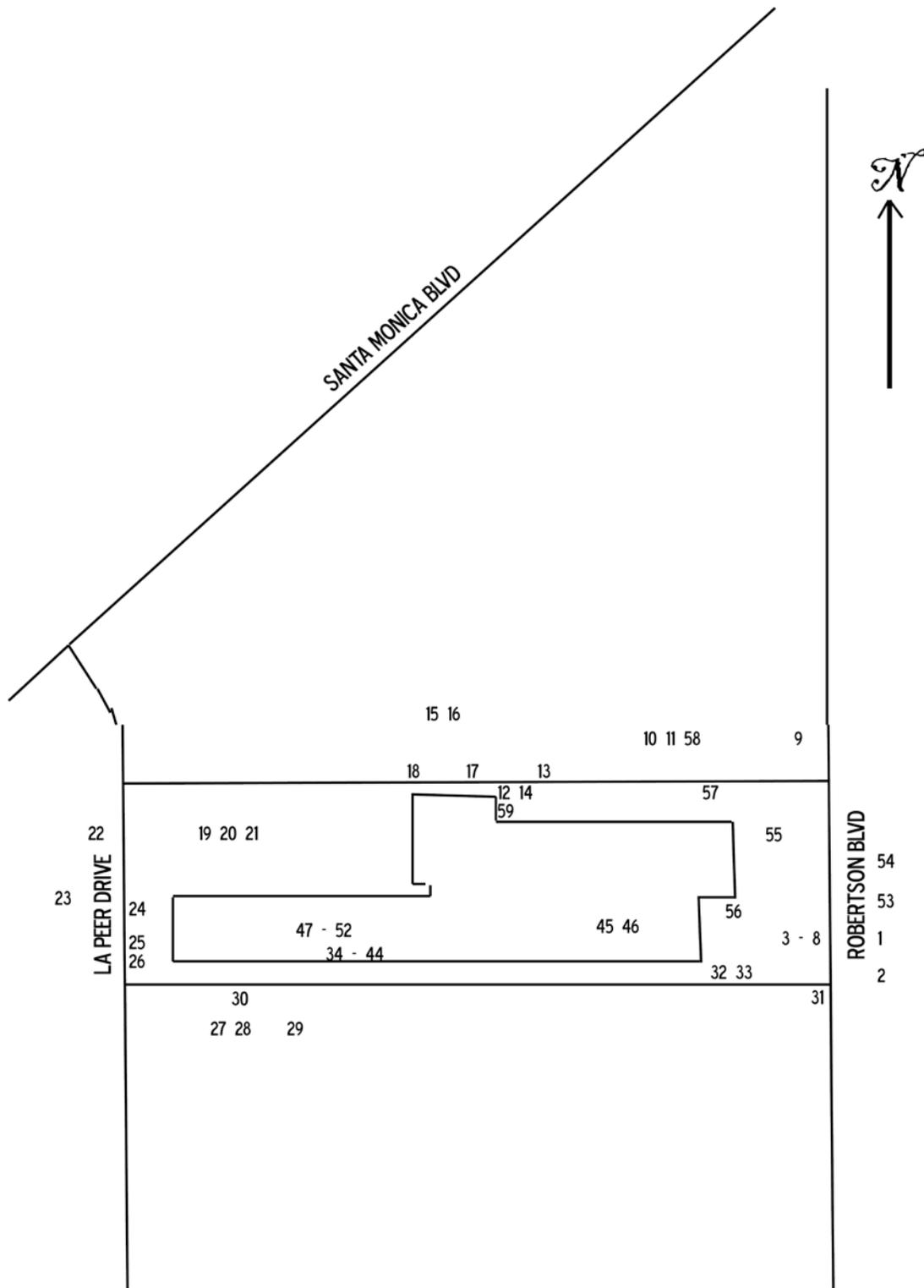
Altered 1929 structure - Mitchell Camera Corporation offices

1940 structure - Mitchell Camera Corporation drafting room

Pre-1946 structure - Mitchell Camera Corporation storage

Mitchell Camera Corporation Factory/Studio
One Disco-Backlot Theatre
Name of Property

Los Angeles CA
County and State



Mitchell Camera Corporation Factory/Studio
One Disco-Backlot Theatre
Name of Property

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Photograph Log Page

Name of Property: Mitchell Camera Corporation, Studio One
City or Vicinity: West Hollywood
County: Los Angeles
State: CA
Name of Photographer: Hunter Kerhart (Photos 0001-0003, 0009, 0012-0014, 0019-0022, 0028, 0030-0031), Kate Eggert
Date of Photographs: 4/28/2015, 5/24/2015
Location of Original Digital Files: 665 North Robertson Boulevard, 652 La Peer Drive
Number of Photographs: 59

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0001
East façade, camera facing west

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0002
South elevation (left) and east façade (right), camera facing west-northwest

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0003
Upper half of east façade, camera facing west

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0004
Lower half of east façade, camera facing west

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0005
East façade, camera facing up and west

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0006
Basement of east façade, camera facing northwest

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0007
Basement of east façade detail, camera facing northwest

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0008
Staircase from basement level on east façade, camera facing west-southwest

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0009
North elevation (left) and east elevation of irregular projection and north elevation of irregular projection and continued north elevation (right), camera facing north-northwest

Mitchell Camera Corporation Factory/Studio
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CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0010

North elevation (left) and east elevation of irregular projection (right), camera facing north-northeast

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0011

North elevation (left) and east elevation of irregular projection and north elevation of irregular projection (right), camera facing north

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0012

North elevation, camera facing northeast

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0013

North elevation (left) and east elevation of irregular projection and north elevation of irregular projection (right), camera facing southwest

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0014

East façade detail, camera facing southwest

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0015

North elevation (left) and north elevation of irregular projection and north elevation continued (right), camera facing south

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0016

North elevation (left) and north elevation of irregular projection and north elevation continued (right), camera facing south

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0017

North elevation of irregular projection (left) and north elevation (right), camera facing southwest

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0018

North elevation of irregular projection (left) and north elevation (right), camera facing south-southeast

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0019

East elevation of irregular projection (left) and north elevation (right), camera facing east

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0020

East elevation of irregular projection (left) and north elevation (right), camera facing east-southeast

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0021

East elevation of irregular projection (left) and north elevation (right), camera facing east-southeast

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CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0022

East elevation of irregular projection and north elevation (left) and east façade, camera facing east-southeast

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0023

West elevation of irregular projection (left) and west façade, camera facing east

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0024

West façade detail, camera facing east-southeast

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0025

West façade detail, camera facing east

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0026

West façade detail (left) and south elevation (right), camera facing east-northeast

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0027

South elevation, camera facing north

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0028

South elevation, camera facing north-northeast

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0029

South elevation, camera facing north-northeast

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0030

South elevation detail, camera facing north

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0031

South elevation (left) and east façade (right), camera facing north-northwest

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0032

Neighboring building (left) and south elevation and east façade (right), camera facing west

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0033

Neighboring building (left) and basement level of south elevation (right), camera facing west

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0034

Interior 1st floor ceiling steel joists and open truss steel joists, camera facing upward and west

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0035

Interior 1st floor ceiling steel joists and open truss steel joists and steel sash windows, camera facing upward and west-northwest

Mitchell Camera Corporation Factory/Studio
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CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0036

Interior 1st floor ceiling open truss steel joist detail and steel sash windows, camera facing upward and west

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0037

Interior 1st floor steel sash windows (left) and open truss steel joist and motorized sectional steel door, camera facing south-southwest

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0038

Interior 1st floor steel sash windows detail, camera facing south

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0039

Interior 1st floor reinforced concrete block and copper steel sidewall panels and steel sash windows, camera facing south

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0040

Interior 1st floor reinforced concrete block and copper steel sidewall panels and steel sash windows detail, camera facing west-southwest

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0041

Interior 1st floor steel column and base detail and floor made of sawed wood blocks set in concrete slabs detail, camera facing west-northwest

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0042

Interior 1st floor concrete block wall (left) and partition of steel sash windows and reinforced plaster (right), camera facing west, northwest

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0043

Interior 1st floor detail of sawed wood blocks set in concrete slabs, camera facing downward

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0044

Interior 1st floor detail of sawed wood blocks set in concrete slabs, camera facing downward

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0045

Interior 2nd floor (formerly The Backlot) open truss steel joists and monitor, camera facing west

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0046

Interior 2nd floor (formerly The Backlot) open truss steel joists and monitor detail, camera facing upward and west

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0047

Interior 2nd floor (formerly Studio One) center span trusses (horizontal) and open truss steel joists and monitor (vertical), camera facing west

Mitchell Camera Corporation Factory/Studio
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CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0048

Interior 2nd floor (formerly Studio One) center span trusses (horizontal) and open truss steel joists and monitor (vertical), camera facing east

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0049

Interior 2nd floor (formerly Studio One) open truss steel joists and monitor with soundproof material (left) and center span truss (right), camera facing upward and north

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0050

Interior 2nd floor made of sawed wood blocks set in concrete slabs detail, camera facing downward

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0051

Interior 2nd floor made of sawed wood blocks set in concrete slabs and Mitchell Camera Corporation electric motor station bases, camera facing downward

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0052

Interior 2nd floor made of sawed wood blocks set in concrete slabs and Mitchell Camera Corporation electric motor station base detail, camera facing downward

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0053

East façade of primary and secondary building, camera facing west

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0054

East façade of secondary building, camera facing west

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0055

East façade of secondary building detail of recessed porch, camera facing west-northwest

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0056

South elevation of secondary building (left) and east façade detail of metal panel on stucco surface (right), camera facing north-northwest

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0057

North elevation of secondary building, camera facing south

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0058

North elevation of primary and secondary building, camera facing south

CA_Los Angeles County_The Factory_0059

North elevation detail of secondary building (left) and east elevation of primary buildings detail (right), camera facing south-southwest

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The Factory photographed at the L Peer Drive entrance, 1969. (Photo courtesy of Bobby Cole)

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Sawed end grain wood block flooring (set in concrete slabs) was a special request by Mitchell so their workers would be comfortable on their feet, 1929. (Photo courtesy of International Photographer)

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Seen here are exposed trusses and joists. Note the white enamel paint on the monitor, which reflected light down to the workers. The many windows offered ventilation and could be opened by a "Truscon Mechanical Operator." 1929. (Photo courtesy of International Photographer)

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Gay Night at Disneyland, May 24, 1978. Photo spread likely from Data-Boy. (Photo courtesy of Carol Taylor-DiPietro)

Figure 17

Joan Rivers' publicity poster for AIDS benefit at the Backlot, 1984. (Photo courtesy of Dan Morin)

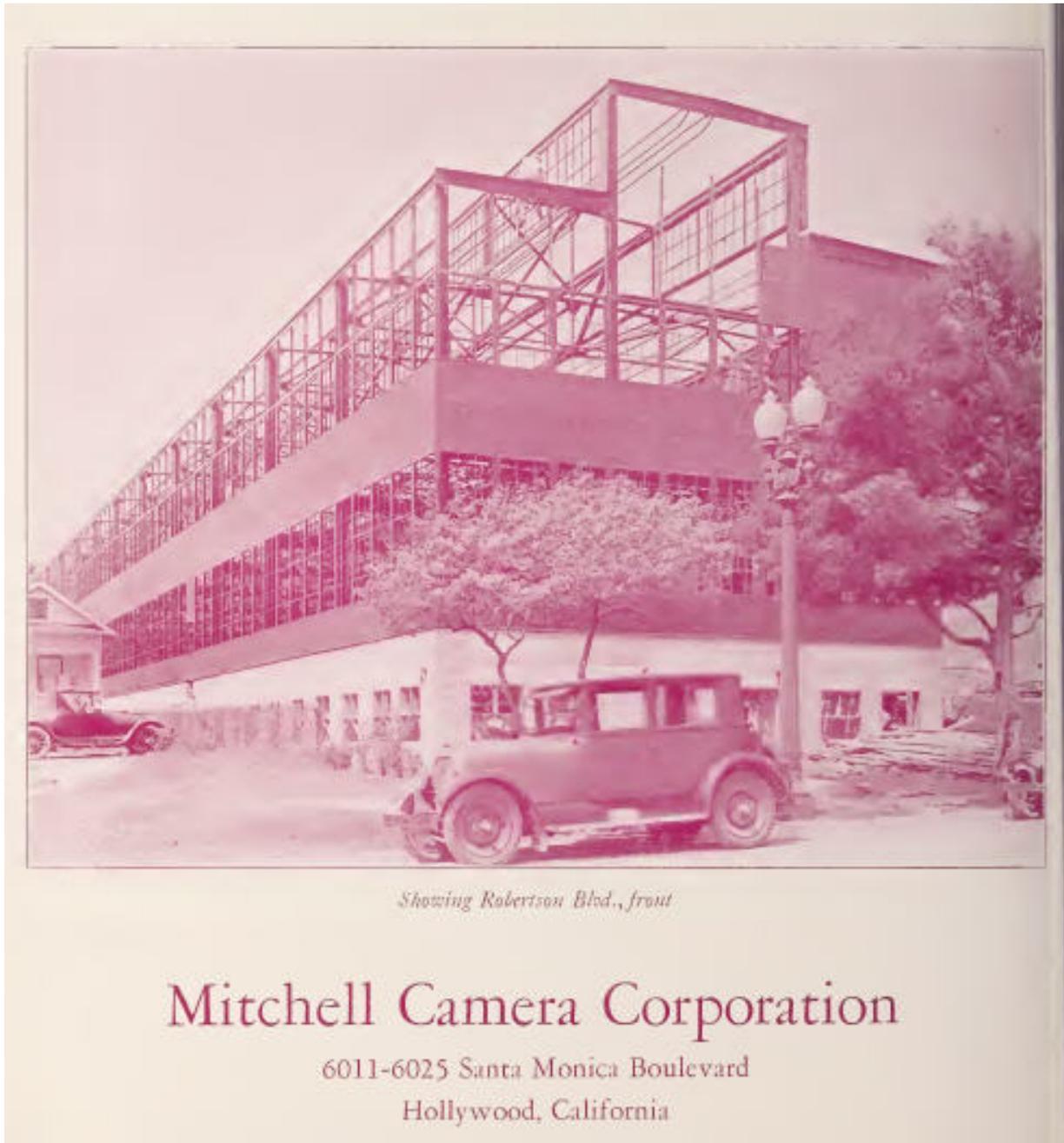
Figure 18

During the crippling AIDS crisis, the people of West Hollywood came together and voted to become a city. Pictured here is Scott Forbes' campaign mailer for City Council, 1984. (Photo courtesy of the ONE Archives)

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Figure 1



Promotional photographs were featured on the back covers of *American Cinematographer* and *International Photographer* throughout the construction in 1929.

Photo courtesy of : American Cinematographer

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Figure 2



Mitchell Camera Corp factory promotional photograph, 1929.

Photo courtesy of: American Cinematographer

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Figure 3



The Factory photographed at the La Peer Drive entrance, 1969.

Photo courtesy of: Bobby Cole

Mitchell Camera Corporation Factory/Studio
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Figure 4



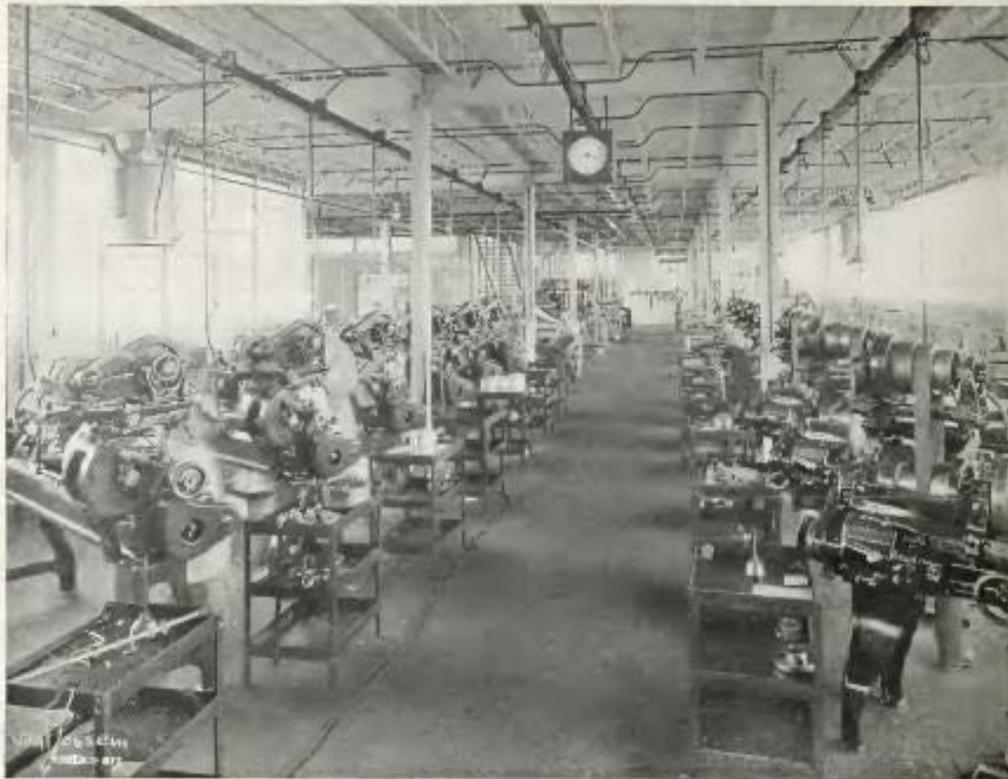
Studio One entrance, 1978.

Photo courtesy of: Robert Bazan

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Figure 5



Part of the lathe section of our plant in which our Standard and Wide Film Cameras are made.

Our Thoroughly Equipped Plant

enables us to handle special work which always receives the same careful attention that we give to the manufacturing of our cameras.

Sawed end grain wood block flooring (set in concrete slabs) was a special request by Mitchell so their workers would be comfortable on their feet, 1929.

Photo courtesy of: International Photographer

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Figure 6



Showing Wood Block Floor, Second Floor of New Factory Building.

Mitchell Camera Corporation

6011-6025 Santa Monica Boulevard

Hollywood, California

CABLE address "MITCAMCO"

Seen here are exposed trusses and joists. Note the white enamel paint on the monitor, which reflected light down to the workers. The many windows offered ventilation and could be opened by a "Truscon Mechanical Operator."

Photo courtesy of: International Photographer

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Figure 7



Breaking ground at the new Mitchell Camera Corp factory, 1929.

Photo courtesy of: American Cinematographer

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Figure 8



First floor of Mitchell Camera Corp factory, 1934.

Photo courtesy of: Mitchell Camera Corporation, Joe Dunton

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Figure 9

STUDIO MODEL CAMERA RECORD

IM - Name # 37 line # 20

BNC-1	8-17-34	Samuel Baldwyn, Inc. Fred. 1970 Camera Service
BNC-2	8-6-35	Samuel Baldwyn, Inc. Fred. 1970 Camera Service
BNC-3	12-6-40	Universal Pictures Inc. by J. King 7/54
BNC-4	1-8-41	Universal Pictures Inc. (London) 1-918
BNC-5	3-15-38	Hanner Bros Pictures Inc.
BNC-6	4-15-38	Hanner Bros Pictures Inc.
BNC-7	4-29-38	Hanner Bros Pictures Inc.
BNC-8	5-13-38	Hanner Bros Pictures Inc.
BNC-9	6-2-38	Hanner Bros Pictures Inc. England
BNC-10	6-10-38	Hanner Bros Pictures Inc. England
BNC-11	7-15-38	Hanner Bros Pictures Inc. England
BNC-12	7-6-38	Hanner Bros Pictures Inc.
BNC-13		No 7 1/40E
BNC-14	8-3-38	Hanner Bros Pictures Inc.
BNC-15	9-15-38	Hanner Bros Pictures Inc.
BNC-16	5-16-39	Selynick International Pictures Inc.
BNC-17	6-17-39	Universal Pictures Co. by
BNC-18	4-2-39	Universal Pictures Co. by Anthony
BNC-19	7-10-39	Universal Pictures Co. Inc.
BNC-20	10-10-39	General Service Inc. Mark Armistead
BNC-21	4/26/46	General Service
BNC-22	5/26/46	General Service
BNC-23	8/21/46	Hal Roach
BNC-24	12/21/46	Pacific International Corp.
BNC-25	9/4/46	Natl. Film Bond (Up to 1946) 7/65
BNC-26	8/21/46	Solomon Salomon (NCA Corp)
BNC-27	11/27/46	Fogalphy, Ltd.
BNC-28		
BNC-29	10/4/46	Republic Productions
BNC-30	11/7/47	Skirball Manning Inc. & Jo Valentine
BNC-31	12/13/46	Queral Educational Film Corp. 1947 7/65
BNC-32	11/7/47	Queral Educational Film Corp. 1947 7/65

Camera Record of BNCs sold between 1934 – 1946. Note: BNCs sold in 1947 were likely made at the West Hollywood factory.

Photo courtesy of: Douglas Denoff

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Figure 10



On the set of Citizen Kane, Orson Welles leans on Mitchell BNC-2 while cinematographer Gregg Toland talks to the crew, 1940.

Photo courtesy of: RKO

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Figure 11



Studio One entrance, Gay Pride 1979.

Photo courtesy of: Richard "Lightman" Lindemann, discomusic.com

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Figure 12



The Backlot Theatre set up for an evening show, circa 1980.

Photo courtesy of: Jude Edwards, discomusic.com

Mitchell Camera Corporation Factory/Studio
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Figure 13



Studio One dance floor, 1976.

Photo courtesy of: Jack Wheeler

Mitchell Camera Corporation Factory/Studio
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Figure 14



Scott Forbes standing on the Studio One dance floor before opening in 1974.

Photo courtesy of: Jack Wheeler

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Figure 15



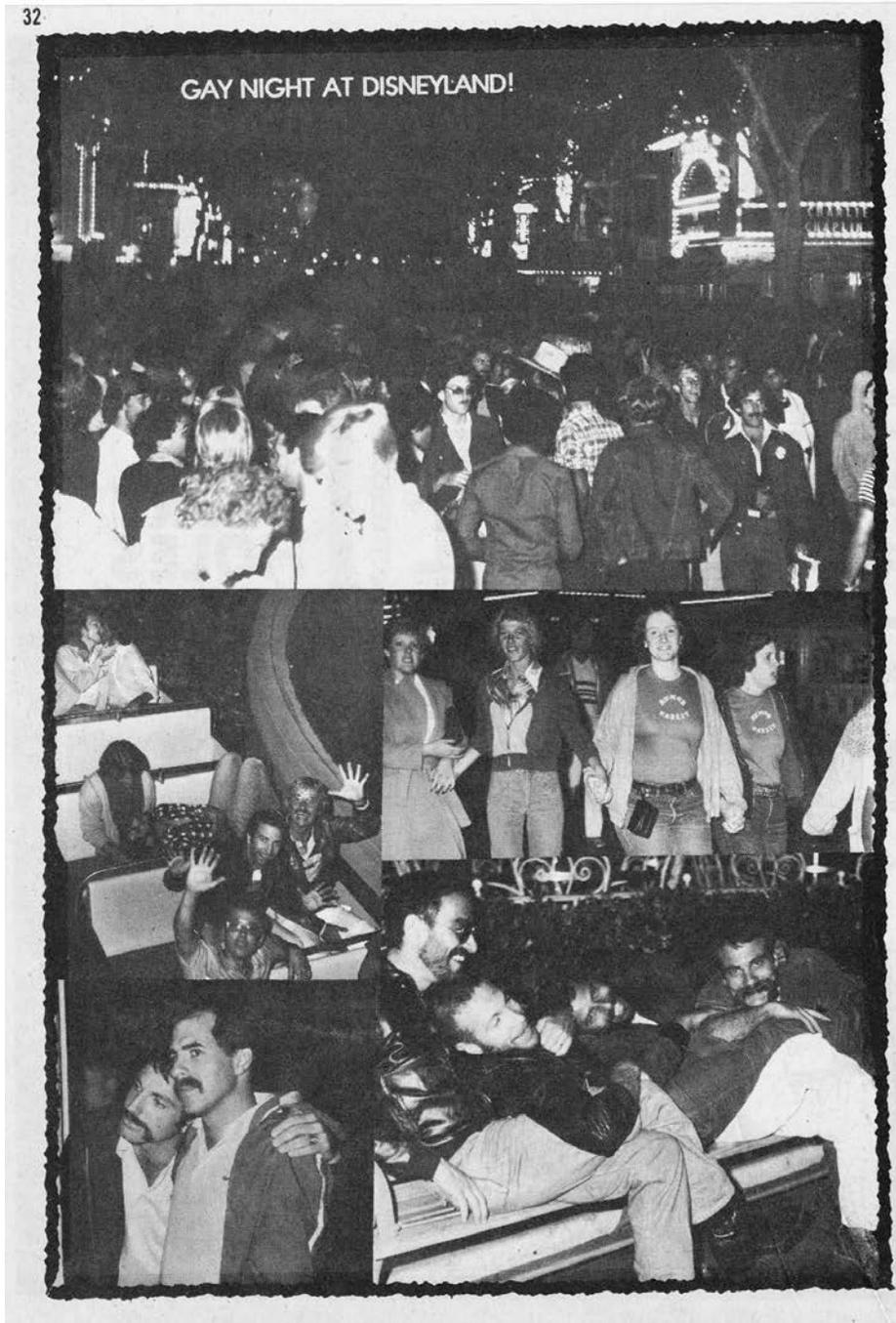
Community Advisory Board meeting of the Los Angeles Gay Community Services Center (Los Angeles LGBT Center) at Sheldon Andelson's house, 1977.

Photo courtesy of: Carol Taylor-DiPietro

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Figure 16



Gay Night at Disneyland, May 24, 1978. Photo spread likely from Data-Boy.

Photo courtesy of: Carol Taylor-DiPietro

Mitchell Camera Corporation Factory/Studio
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Figure 17



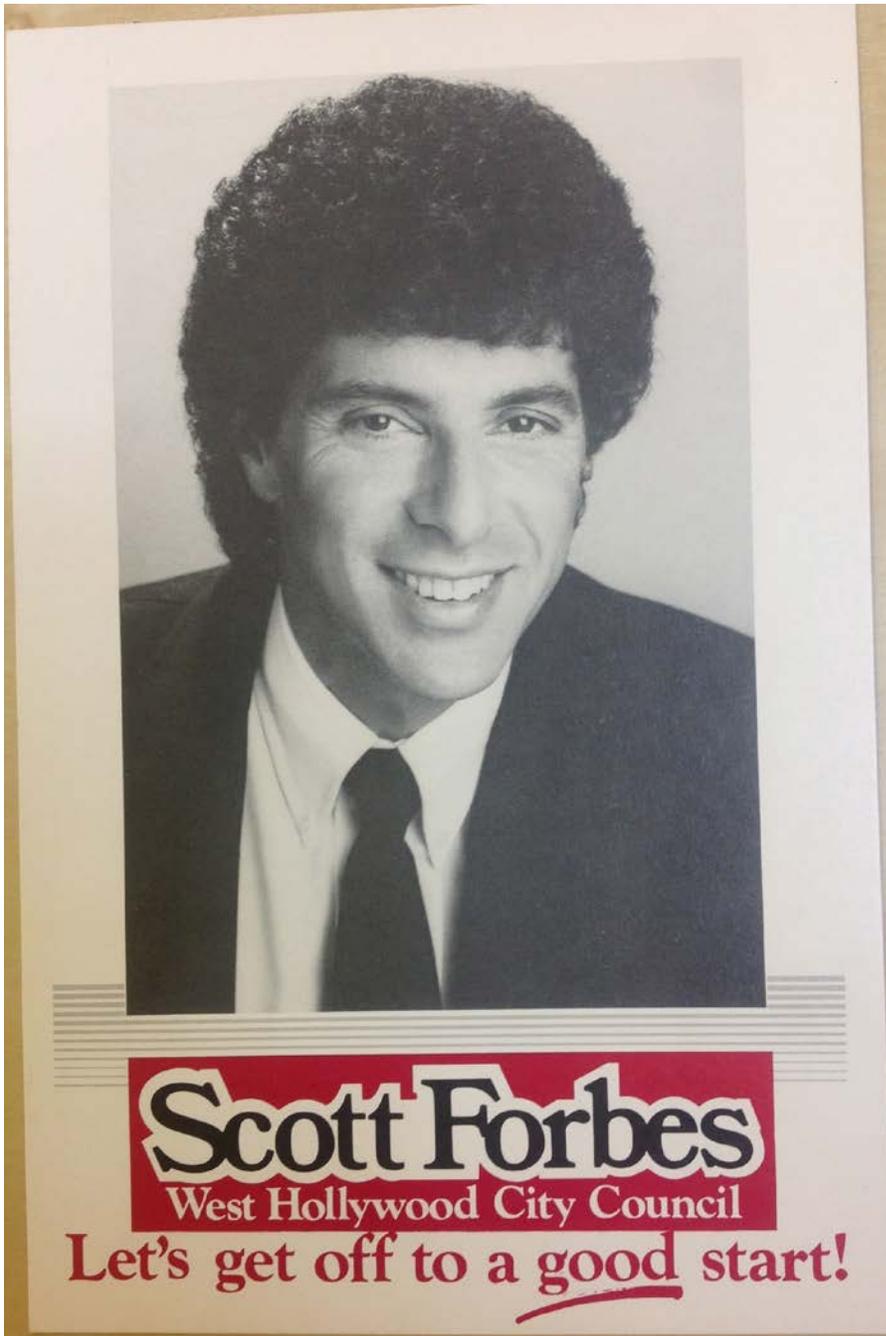
Joan Rivers' publicity poster for AIDS benefit at the Backlot, 1984.

Photo courtesy of: Dan Morin

Mitchell Camera Corporation Factory/Studio
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Figure 18



During the crippling AIDS crisis, the people of West Hollywood came together and voted to become a city. Pictured here is Scott Forbes' campaign mailer for City Council, 1984.

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One Disco-Backlot Theatre

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Photo courtesy of: ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.