



Vegas Unfiltered by "Sammasseur"

A brutally honest POV of Sin City

Puttin' On The Ritz at BAZ BOOT CAMP



YOURS TRULY HAS A "PERFORMER FOR A DAY" EXPERIENCE AT THE SIGNATURE PALAZZO PRODUCTION...



*There was a boy
A very strange enchanted boy.*

*They say he wandered very far
Very far over land and sea.*

*A little shy and sad of eye
But very wise, was he.*

Those dreamy lyrics from 1947's classic [NATURE BOY](#) open the stunning **BAZ: Star Crossed Love** inside **Palazzo Theater**. And for one immersive day, they also described this author's experience inside the world of **Romeo and Juliet**, **Moulin Rouge** and **The Great Gatsby**. Well, minus the "very wise" part, perhaps.



BAZ: Star Crossed Love is a very unique piece of live entertainment. It has the distinction of being my choice for “Best New Show” in both 2015 and 2016. How? By moving from Mandalay Bay’s **LIGHT Nightclub** and being relaunched after a major reworking. While essentially the same production at heart, **BAZ** was fine-tuned to maximize the benefits of a custom-designed venue inside **Palazzo Resort**.



With the full support of [Sands Corporation](#), **BAZ** went from “the little show that could” to an amazing word-of-mouth success. To celebrate their triumphant one-year anniversary (in the intensely competitive Vegas show-scape, no less), a handful of recognizable media celebrities were invited to attend an afternoon “boot camp”. They were welcomed to step into the shoes of **BAZ** cast members and perform a number from the show in front of a live audience.



Invitees included [Barrett Foa](#) (Eric Beale on *NCIS Los Angeles*), [Andrew Freund](#) (Fox Network’s *Dish Nation*), *Las Vegas Review Journal* columnist [John Katsilometes](#), *Morning Blend* host [Jennifer Jean Snyder](#)...and a certain small-time **BAZ**-loving Oregonian blogger. How I ended up being included in a group of such talented and distinguished individuals is anybody’s guess...but I wasn’t about to jeopardize the invitation by questioning it.

Upon receiving the email, it took me all of ten minutes to stop jumping up and down, clear my schedule and book a flight to Las Vegas. In no time, our group was seated in the auditorium and receiving a round of greetings from [Keith Salowski](#), Executive Director of Public Relations and [Blair Farrington](#), the Show Manager.

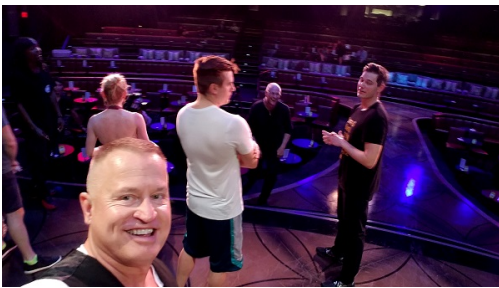


On our laps were folders detailing the **Boot Camp** itinerary, along with statistics about the show. Introductions were made all around, then we headed to the stage for dance lessons with **BAZ**’s ballroom champions [Savannah Cross](#) and [Marcquet Hill](#).

The next sixty or so minutes were perhaps the most invigorating, exhausting, humbling and memorable since my skydive this past February. Surrounded by cast members [Ron Remke](#), Broadway star [Ruby Lewis](#) and [Anne Martinez](#) (*Alice: A Steampunk Concert Fantasy*), our stalwart band of boot-campers received expert instruction on how to kick, swoop, heel-toe-heel-toe and drop-drop-drop.



During all the excitement and sweat, it became clear that one member of our novice group was lagging behind....and it was me. While the others seemed to have varying degrees of showbiz experience, “Sammasseur” brought little to the stage besides laughter and enthusiasm.



Shaun Burgess of Vegas.com (white shirt) gets tips from cast member Ron Remke



Johnny Kats and I go through the paces...and kicks...

To their stylish womp-womp-womps I countered with my Franken-stomps. Their high kicks were my wobbly half-kicks. At one point my left shoe even went flying through the air. While trying hard to look like Gary Cooper, I’d somehow stumbled into the [tap dance scene](#) from a certain Mel Brooks film.



Photographers and a videographer recorded the action as Savannah and Marcquet added more steps to the sequence. Ron Remke kept my spirits high with high-fives and “You’ve got this!” encouragement. I marveled at the ease with which his body swooped and swayed through the mechanics of the steps...just like everyone else around me.



Jennifer, Savannah and Melinda Sheckells show the cameras what they've got.

Soon we were putting the sequence to music and running through the entire scene...from an opening one-legged kneel to the final thrust of our arms. This time, we sang along with the dancing (take that, Britney!). After a brief rest (not brief enough, gasp gasp) it was behind the stage and downstairs to the actual dressing rooms used by the cast.



BAZ Boot Camp Sammasseur
from Sam

00:47



Once there, a small army of make-up artists and hair stylists gave us the theatrical flair that help make the already-stunning BAZ performers one of the most attractive casts on the Strip. My face was covered in a sweat-proof foundation and my eyebrows were darkened and thickened.



While in the chairs, the other guests and I were given on-camera interviews to share our initial impressions. The most common response drew attention to how difficult the dancing was. No matter what level of proficiency they'd brought to the boot camp, it was clear that our troupe had gained a greater respect for the craft of live performance.



NCIS Los Angeles actor Barrett Foa is used to being in the make-up chair...



Andrew Freund records a clip for his Dish Nation TV series...

After donning our tuxes and dresses, it was back to the stage for a round of individual and group portraits before our actual performance. Dynamic **Michael Shulman** (of ShulmanSays.com) acted as emcee and welcomed our audience – guests, friends and execs/team members of various departments within the **Venetian/Palazzo** family.



Ruby Lewis returned to BAZ last week after a triumphant lead on Broadway...

The whirlwind afternoon had come to its biggest moment – a production number carried out by professional performers with the Boot Camp troupe on an actual Las Vegas stage. To call this a “pinch me” moment would be too mild...and it seemed to be over before it actually began.



Standing out there on an elevated extension of the stage, my arms outstretched with applause all around me, this total novice and dedicated fan understood the drive that brings talented individuals to Sin City stages. A lifetime of lessons, joy, pain, sacrifice, tears and ambition to perfect their art culminates in that one moment... and there's nothing like it in the world.



Baz Star Crossed Love Montage One Year Anniversary

from Sam

04:45



Clips from the One-Year Anniversary Performance of BAZ

Returning to the dressing room, the guys and I laughed about how fun the afternoon had been, but the experience was far from over. From there, the group headed over to Venetian's [The Dorsey](#) to sample various libations created by famed mixologist [Sam Ross](#) for their new summer cocktail menu.

Then we slid next door for an outrageously delicious array of small plates and entrees at [Chica](#), the new Latin eatery by celeb chef [Lorena Garcia](#). Perhaps it was the round of cocktails at [Chica](#) that gave us our second wind, but Barrett Fao, Andrew Freund and I decided to grab a taxi and head down the Strip for another song-and-dance show. It was a long, exhilarating, exhausting and unforgettable day.

The next morning I grabbed my laptop to learn that reviews were pouring in for our **BAZ Boot Camp** performance. For once, the tables were turned...and the critic was receiving critique. Much like the day before, everyone was extremely kind:

[Savannah Cross](#) (BAZ Boot Camp instructor/performer) – Killed it!!

[Blair Farrington](#) (BAZ show manager) – Sam... you added a lot of personality to the BAZ Boot Camp performance! Welcome to the team!

[Shane Scheel](#) (creator of BAZ) – Thank you [Sam Novak](#) for your unwavering support of [BAZ Star Crossed Love](#).

[Bill Evans](#) (BAZ emcee/performer) – You look good Sam!!!

[Lisa Sundseth](#) (VegasUnfiltered reader) – You are a STAR ★★!!

[Nikki Ann Medaugh](#) (VegasUnfiltered reader) – Dapper, very dapper. Who knew you could look so good wearing all of those pesky clothes?

Private Message: “Sam – you looked hot hot hot in BAZ CAMP!”

Private message from a cast member: “Sam!!! Ah Thank YOU so much for your incredible energy and presence!! Today was so incredibly enjoyable and was a reminder of why I love this this art form so much. All the love!”

Private message from a cast member – “Sam! You were fantastic and I’m so glad you had fun! Thank you for being so supportive of us!”

Rising from the bed of my **Palazzo** suite (which they’d kindly arranged for me), I noticed how sore my legs were from the previous day. It was a warm reminder of the incredible effort that performers give forth to keep us entertained.



With cast member Ron Remke and Jennifer Jean Snyder of ABC's Morning Blend

As I went through the rest of that day, I kept thinking about how generous everyone at **Palazzo** and **BAZ** had been. They are a tightly-knit group, brought together for one purpose and working together to make **BAZ** the best show on the Strip...a genuine labor of love.

It was an honor to be a part of **BAZ Boot Camp** – and I think I made a few friends along the way.

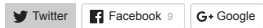
The greatest thing
You'll ever learn
Is just to love
And be loved
In return....

– lyrics from NATURE BOY



Photos: [Sammasseur, BAZ Boot Camp at Palazzo, 20th Century Fox]

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