

Creative Deceleration

Looking for the fast track to creativity? Try slowing down.

▶ **ANOTHER DAY, ANOTHER TRIP TO THE** mailbox, another magazine telling me that I'd better board the bullet train of disruptive change if I hope to survive. Today it's *Time* with a cover prominently displaying the words "change the world." Not long ago it was *The Atlantic* with one of its regular celebrations of all things innovative. And pretty much every day the aptly named *FastCompany.com* brings me the latest in catch-me-if-you-can creative destruction. If I listen closely, I can hear the afterburners of history as time passes me by.

Amid the whistle and whir of all this high-speed disruption and high-volume hype, it's tempting to say that creativity is the capacity to see things for what they aren't. Dispense with the present; onward to the future! But it's difficult to see the hidden possibilities in things unless you can first see them for what they are. And that kind of vision isn't just a gift; it's a process—one that, strangely enough, rewards those who take it slow.

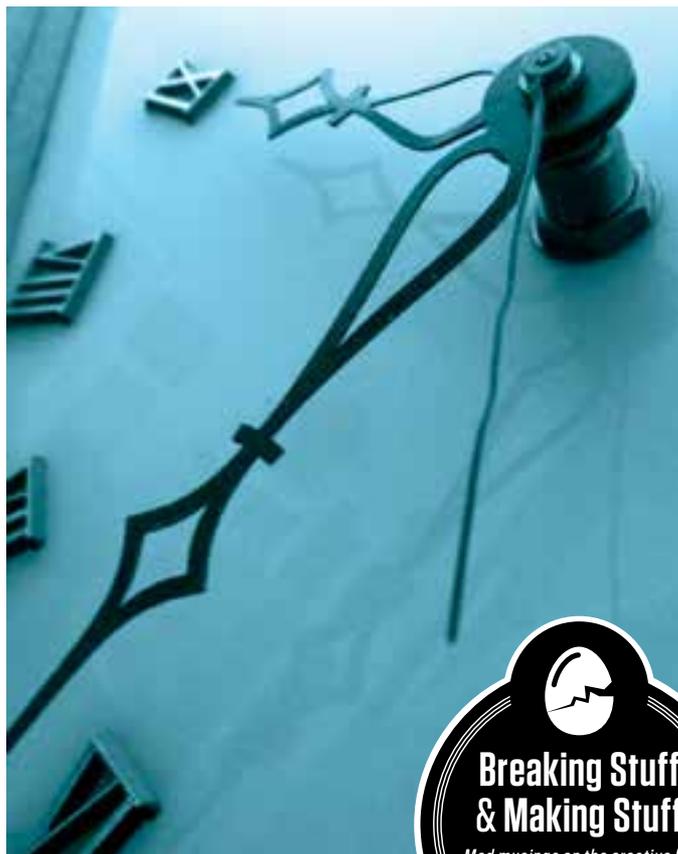
Creativity calls for looking at the world from different angles and seeing it for what it is from each of those angles. The wonder of this process, if we give it the time it deserves, is that each time we change position and look anew, the world (just as *Time* promised) really does change, right before our eyes.

This sense of change—this creative insight—comes not from a disrupted world but from our own transformative perception of the possibilities the world has harbored all along: Look closely, explore, take your time, cover the angles across space and time and memory, examine all the facets of the diamond and note the way the light shines through. Cut the diamond to pieces and collide the fragments in search of juxtaposition, fusion, repulsion and concord. The possibilities, as they say, really are endless.

Next comes a second phase of slowing down. We've generated a forest of observations; now it's time to choose the timber and start building. At this stage, three questions can help us find our way:

- Which details contribute most elegantly to the solution of a problem?
- Which ones change our focus, inform us that there's a better question than the one we've been asking, and send us down a new path?
- As we tell the story of our discovery, how do we put emphasis where it most belongs?

The final question challenges us to know the difference between a detail that is mechanically necessary (a "need-to-know") and one that is spiritually indispensable (a highlight), and it leads us to a technique that writers call "unpacking." When we talk about unpacking a moment or image, what we're really talking about is the selective deceleration



tion of time—identifying the most important moments and making them last.

The creative process is a continuing narrative of discovery, yielding countless insights, shimmering at close range, each making its case for further development. But even after initial pruning of the idea tree, it's impossible (and ineffective) to develop all of our observations to the same extent—we must look closer, set our priorities and choose the spark whose light most merits our descriptive powers. Deceleration helps you show your audience—and yourself—what is most resonant in your tale; it sharpens focus, heightens tension, provokes thought and inspires emotion.

But how do you make time move slowly? Here are two methods, one grounded in space, the other in time: The first is to hold the camera on the moment (or image or insight) and draw out its details, both global and granular, soaking in and then sharing all that the senses provide. The second—the province of the flashback, the flash-forward and even the comparative analysis—is to use the narrative moment as a gateway in thought to a place, time or concept that informs and is informed by the present moment.

Go to this place, explore, and remember to re-surface to the present, where you are needed. Then pack your bags, rejoin the flow of time and ride on, eyes and ears open to the blur and crackle of time. 🎧

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Ask a Native

JAMES P. REZA

Vegas Radio and That Weird Downtown Tower

A reader recently asked what seemed to be a simple question: What was the first radio station in Las Vegas? But like many history questions, digging up the answer led me somewhere equally as interesting.

My Vegas radio recall begins in the 1970s with KORK (920-AM, today known as KBAD, the radio home of UNLV sports). That tinny AM sound was what my mother listened to during the long, sweltering summers we endured back when all local schools shut their doors from June to August. On-air personalities Red McIlvaine and Walt Reno played the pop tunes of the era (I could karaoke "Undercover Angel" without a teleprompter, but I won't), engaged in small-town banter with listeners and ran contests that seemed to be the highlight of the day for mom and her calling circle.

From KORK, I graduated to FM and its refreshingly crystal-clear stereo sound pop on KLUC (still at 98.5-FM; does anyone remember the Jell-O Jump?), album rock at KENO/KOMP (92.3-FM) and classic rock at KKLZ (96.3-FM, "where the LZ stands for Led Zeppelin!"). By the time I arrived at UNLV, my hair dyed a gothy shade of midnight and my VW Rabbit wallpapered with bumper stickers, my radio was permanently tuned "left of the dial" to KUNV (91.5-FM) and its legendary "Rock Avenue" punk and New Wave program.

But getting back to your question: Mom's KORK signed on in 1951. That's early, but not first in line. According to George Apfel's "Las Vegas Radio History" website, AM stations KRAM (KRLV) and KLAS (KLAV) arrived in 1947, seven years after KENO, which signed on in 1940. But while KENO is the oldest surviving radio station in Las Vegas, it was preceded by the brief run of KGIX (1930-1935). And here's where your question, Vegas history and this column intersect.

KGIX was located in what was then considered to be "near Downtown" (12th Street and Stewart Avenues), essentially occupying the same parcel as the so-called "Mystery Tower" (11th Street and Ogden Avenue) discussed in this column multiple times. Cue the aha moment! Could this finally be the answer? Was our Downtown mystery monument initially used to broadcast the KGIX signal? It sure looks like a quintessential radio tower, and this answer makes the most sense of the ones I've been presented. How about it, readers? Can anyone connect the dots?



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