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## Two Postcards from Vegas - 2008



Well, they say "What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas" – but not this time – I'm bringing back the news once again from the industry's biggest shows, held on other side of the planet.

They say that 86% of people that come to Las Vegas, do some gambling. So the saying should really say "What you gamble in Vegas, (i.e.; your money)... stays in Vegas"!

Las Vegas is a crazy town, where you can indulge and delight in the best food & entertainment on offer anywhere on the planet, and try your luck at trying to beat a casino in the loser's art of "gambling". In my opinion, if you really enjoy the finer things in life, it is hard to find the time to even bother gambling, let alone focus on work & business... which unfortunately, I had to do!

This year, for the first time ever, there were TWO amazing industry "blockbuster" shows held in Las Vegas, held "back to back" – The West Coast Art Fair (WCAF) and the PMA Show (Photo Marketing Association) show. Both shows are the most popular, most attended and biggest shows you will find anywhere on the planet, pertaining to our industry.

Once again, I was offered the privilege to travel and work at this year's shows, on behalf of GUNNAR (pioneers in computerised mat cutting!), to support them with sponsored educational seminars, and to help work their booth. I was also asked by the show organizers for both the PPFA and the WCAF to contribute to their educational conferences as well as a speaker, which was a great opportunity for a humble sales rep from Brisbane.

After attending WCAF show now for a few years, I have noticed an increase in the attendance of international framers. This show has a lot to offer, especially with regards to education, and it was pleasing to see this year's WCAF attracted almost 30 framers from Australia and New Zealand, when last year there was barely a few. So I didn't feel so lonely this year!

I took the opportunity to organise the first annual "Down Under Dinner" for fellow Aussies & New Zealanders to attend, which was held at the Le Village Restaurant in the Paris Casino. 23 people attended which was great. We had a fun night, and to everyone's delight the cost of the drinks were kindly covered by GUNNAR. From what I heard the next day, in typical Aussie style, the last remaining Aussies had to be asked to leave the restaurant at closing time!





The WCAF was held once again at the Las Vegas Hilton (the home of Barry Manilow!) and masterfully put together by the dedicated people from Picture Framing Magazine. This year's show offered an unprecedented arrangement of educational seminars from industry recognized experts (including three different seminars held by "yours truly" – Jared Davis!) at their "National Conference", which is the

biggest attraction for framers coming to this show. There were countless specialized classes focusing on every aspect of the craft of framing (eg: "How to apply gold leaf to difficult profiles") to business aspects (eg: "How to recruit & train staff"; "Pricing for Profit"; etc) to sales & design aspects (eg: "Making Magic on the Front Counter!")... If there is anything about our profession that you want to learn more about- you will definitely find it on offer here.

The WCAF show itself is always booked out by exhibitors, some years in advance, with a huge waiting list of exhibitors eager to join the show should a vendor choose to pull out. The sheer number of ideas, products and concepts on display are boggling, and leave you with a feeling of both overload, and inadequacy. Attending a show like this make you realize that there's so much opportunity available to our industry, that none of us are truly harnessing the full potential of our businesses.



The popular concepts being researched at this show were as follows – CMC's (of course), pricing software, visualization software & wide format digital printing.

There are also some new style trends in moulding designs emerging which will no doubt become evident in our local market in coming months.

GUNNAR held their official "world premiere" of their new production CMC, the GUNNAR 4001, which is officially "the fastest CMC in the galaxy!". Designed for the hardest of mat cutting workloads, this new machine represents yet another evolution in CMC technology, with positioning speeds of up to 2.0 mtrs per second, and a world-first hybrid vacuum / button clamping system.

The PMA Show at the Las Vegas Convention Centre is also the host for the annual PPFA (Professional Picture Framer's Association) Convention. This 3 day conference is a warm "get together" for PPFA members and framers to share knowledge. Once again, just like the WCAF, there are nonstop classes & presentations on offer for one to learn both general and specialized aspects of our craft. I was given the opportunity to put together a breakfast keynote presentation for over 200 framers and industry peers, called "Frequently Asked Questions at the Front Counter" which

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was thankfully well received, given the fact I had never spoken to an audience of this size before... sober!

The PMA show itself is more focused towards the photographic industry rather than the framing industry, however the crossover between both industries now makes it increasingly worthwhile to attend for both framers and framing exhibitors, especially when you consider the growing popularity of wide format digital printing, laser engraving, professional mounting & laminating, scrapbooking and of course, photography. The show floor display of exhibitors is literally 4-5 times bigger than the WCAF and easily takes more than a full day to explore.

The annual "Shot Show" (Firearms & Guns) also happened to be on at the Las Vegas Convention Centre at the same time, which offered an interesting crowd mix of "framers" & "firearms specialists" at public restaurants and venues. It's not every day you get to see a "scrapbooker", a "picture framer" & a "deer hunter" sharing a conversation in an elevator! I discovered that trying to gain entrance to the "Shot Show" proved a little difficult unless you are in the firearms, security or defense industries with the required credentials and identification. I can't understand why shooting with a camera, and shooting with a gun should be so different?... To top the "crowd mix" off, the PMA show & PPFA Convention finished at the same time as the annual "Super Bowl" which draws a huge crowd of football fans to Vegas to "write off a weekend" in an inebriated blend of football and fantasy.

If you are reading this and thinking, "Wow, I wish I was there to see these shows?", well... you should have! So why not plan now to come along to the WCAF in Las Vegas, next year, and benefit from some of the world class education on offer? Maybe even write off a bit of a "holiday" on the business, during your quiet time of year? If you speak to any other framer who attended this year's Vegas show, I'm sure they will tell you, this trip more than pays for itself in education, fresh ideas and concepts to benefit your business.

If you are going to come along next year, don't forget to drop me a line, so I can put you on the invite list for next year's "Down Under Dinner" ... !

- To learn more about the WCAF – visit this website – [www.wcafshow.com](http://www.wcafshow.com)
- To learn more about Picture Framing Magazine – [www.pictureframingmagazine.com](http://www.pictureframingmagazine.com)
- To learn more about the PMA show – [www.pmai.org](http://www.pmai.org)
- To learn more about the PPFA – visit this website – [www.ppfa.com](http://www.ppfa.com) & [www.ppfaaustralia.org](http://www.ppfaaustralia.org)



*With over 16 years experience in the framing & graphics industry, Jared Davis CPF, GCF has covered the wholesale, commercial and retail aspects of the business. His previous sales, marketing & training experience gives him an understanding of the changing opportunities for retail businesses, and he offers an up-to-date approach on new methods and techniques now required by today's business owners, to be able to successfully market, merchandise and sell their services to consumers. Jared is also a featured educator at major international industry tradeshow & conventions.*

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