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THE LOCAL INDUSTRY BANDS TOGETHER TO MAKE

# ERDAY

MINNEAPOLIS SHINE DURING ILEA LIVE 2019.

By  
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CHRISTIE ALTENDORF & MEGHAN GUSTAFSON



ILEA BRANDING AT MACHINE SHOP



D'AMICO CATERING



OPENING PANEL AT HYATT REGENCY MINNEAPOLIS



With the goal of creating an environment that offers compelling education, authentic experiences and intentional connections, ILEA (International Live Events Association) Live 2019 brought planners from around the world in early August 2019 to inspire creativity, network with like-minded people, celebrate the industry and get to know Minneapolis.

### Local Representation

It was the host committee's task to make sure attendees experienced Minneapolis and St. Paul. "There were local touches woven throughout every turn," says Christie Altendorf, co-chair of ILEA Live 2019. "It was important to everyone on that team from the very beginning that Minneapolis was not represented in a way that focused on flannel, campfires and canoes. While those things are

very much a part of our great state, they only scratch the surface when it comes to showing the real Minnesota. In addition to our incredible natural resources, the committee chose to highlight the commitment that the Twin Cities has to some of the best things in life: delicious food, transformative music, and an art and theater scene that is second to none."

Meet Minneapolis, a member of the host committee, welcomed guests with a booth at

the airport and hosted a custom website for attendees. Mayor Jacob Frey spoke at the opening session. Izzy's Ice Cream was served after the session with Maria Moyano of Museum of Ice Cream. Attendees could also sign up for tours of Surly Brewing Company and Paisley Park, go behind the scenes of the X Games at U.S. Bank Stadium and work out with Alchemy 365 at the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden.

Hyatt Regency Minneapolis was the conference's main hub for educational sessions, and McNamara Alumni Center, Machine Shop, First Avenue, Walker Art Center and Orchestra Hall hosted some of the conference's ancillary events.

D'Amico Catering played a big part in feed-

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ing (and wowing) guests. Altendorf, who is also the senior event planner and marketing manager for D'Amico, worked with culinary and production teams to design some of the ancillary events. In partnership with the McNamara Alumni Center and Todd Pinzuti of Bungalow 6 Designs, D'Amico served lunch to the participants of the Global Event Forum, a two-day summit that brought together some of the brightest people in the industry. "Feeding those minds was of great importance, and the gorgeous setting, table and menu were all designed to satiate both the eye and the palate," she says.

The ILEA-MSP Chapter event, No Coast Up Close (a '70s Yacht Rock-inspired event), welcomed everyone into town. A "Caviar Bar" (with faux

caviar made up of small beads created via molecular gastronomy from different liquids) sat within an ice sculpture, while the Oyster Dessert Belt had chefs serving a white chocolate yuzu truffle "pearl" on a gold painted oyster half shell from a leather belt with silver buckets, traditionally used for shucking oysters. D'Amico's executive pastry chef Leah Henderson created miniature desserts for the Esprit Awards Gala at the Walker Art Center, including Salted Butterscotch Lollis, Malted Raspberry Meringue Tartlets, Black Currant Pistachio Parfaits, Dark Chocolate Black Cherry Bon Bons and Northern Lights Geode Macarons ("the perfect way to end the celebration on the rooftop of the Walker overlooking the skyline of Downtown Minneapolis," says Altendorf).

## Supporting Cast

"The most energizing part of this conference being in Minneapolis was seeing the excitement and growth that it brought the local event industry and how passionate everyone was about showing who we are as a community," says Altendorf. "We are unique in that collaboration truly does trump competition here and the fact that it was exemplified on the international stage is a true testament to the character that embodies the Twin Cities."

### Minneapolis Host Committee

#### Conference Co-Chairs:

Meghan Gustafson  
(mpls downtown council)

Christie Altendorf  
(D'Amico Catering)

#### Opening Party:

Jim Leighton (RAIN Events),  
Jolene Ihle (Entourage Events  
Group) and Leah Anderson  
(Entourage Events Group)

#### Esprit Awards:

Matthew Trettel (The Wedding  
Guys), Ryan Hanson (BeEvents)  
and Ellaina Henke (The Wedding  
Guys)

#### Sponsorship:

Susan Diamond (Jigsaw Unlimited)

#### Admin:

Lataya Williams (U.S. Bank Stadium)

#### MSP Welcome Reception:

Jessica Barrett (Machine Shop)

#### Volunteers:

Connor Myhre (W20 Group)  
Ariel Gutierrez (Augsburg University)

#### Minneapolis Ambassadors:

Madonna Carr (Meet Minneapolis)  
Erica Bergum (Meet Minneapolis)

#### Experiences:

Jodi Collen (Be The Match),  
Gretchen Culver (Rocket Science  
Weddings & Events), Kim Fischer  
(CWT Meetings & Events) and  
Sarah Johnson (Machine Shop)



## The Purple Party

Jolene Ihle of Entourage Events Group endeavored to give the 500 guests at ILEA Live's opening night party at First Avenue (dubbed the Purple Party) real VIP treatment. "I really wanted to keep a genuine music club feel, an authentic experience where everyone felt like they had a place in the venue and where they felt welcomed and able to let loose in their own way," she says. The first stop was for attendees to line up on a red carpet along the Star Wall to have their photo taken, which The Brand Booth used to create a name badge that hung from a lanyard.

"Discovery moments" were planted in First Avenue's nooks and crannies; the people who understood, for example, why there were no brown M&Ms in the candy dispenser or were lucky enough to try one of the Electric Daisies (small, edible herbs that were stowed in the Green Room's small fridge), passed along their insider knowledge to friends. The Merch Wall was stocked with complimentary swag for attendees to take and wear. "People were surprised and delighted they didn't have to pay for the items—it somehow felt sneaky taking it off the wall," says Ihle.

Ihle visited the Minnesota History Center to learn more about the venue's history. She discovered in her research that Joe Cocker was First Avenue's first musician when it opened 50 years ago in April 1969. "On his rider, he requested a purple shag rug and when it didn't arrive, measures were taken to bring in 2,000 purple carnations instead," explains Ihle. "And that's what we did. I ordered the carnations and Haute House created the floral design on the custom swing we built for the centerpiece on the dance floor." The swing held designer star cook-

ies, cupcakes and silver-brushed macaroons from Farina Baking Company.

Food enhanced the theme of the night. Glam Doll Donuts, which makes donuts for visiting bands, supplied themed donuts. The Meat & Greet station was an all-meat installation that truly lived up to its name, doling out meat in innovative ways that got people talking. The Rider Hot Crew Meals, served in kraft boxes, were inspired by riders of bands who played at First Ave.

Because it was a party for industry people, Ihle's attention to detail was even more keen; she wanted to inspire people of all sects of the industry. Caterers, for example, were wowed by the hand-painted mural of a "rocker chick" that boasted fresh greens and herbs as her hair, creating a three-dimensional element that served as a backdrop and garden for chefs.

Each space was different, allowing guests to choose their own vibe. The Green Room recreated elements of 7th Street Entry and served as the hair and makeup area. The second floor was lavishly decorated to give it a VIP feel (vegetarian food was served in reverence to Prince) and featured a temporary tattoo station. The Backstage had custom-built in-house roadie case chairs and ottomans as well as the Meat & Greet station. The Mainroom had high top tables behind the dance floor and showcased a selection of First Avenue's 50 years of music that culminated in a set from The Purple Xperience—a five-piece Prince tribute band. Jim Leighton, who chaired the event, says his favorite memory from the night was "when just about everyone in the building was on the dance floor singing Purple Rain together."

1. The Purple Xperience, a Prince tribute band, got the crowd dancing. 2. Attendees lined up along First Avenue's Star Wall. 3. Marshall Charloff, front man of The Purple Xperience, interacted with the crowd. 4. Sound Bites were served from custom-designed hawker-style trays complete with Fender straps. 5. The Meat & Greet station. 6. Custom-designed donuts from Glam Doll Donuts. 7. Charloff posed for pictures. 8. The VIP lounge on the upper level. 9. Entourage Events Group created a custom "rocker chick" mural with fresh greens and herbs for hair. 10. Primped got attendees ready for the event. 11. Desserts from Farina Baking Company were served in the carnation installation.

# Local Sponsors

## Pearl:

ATOMIC, BeThings\*, BoothEasy, CORT Events, Culinaire\*, EideCom, Entourage Events Group

## Diamond:

BeEvents\*, Georgia Bridgewater Orchestra\*

## Emerald:

The Brand Booth\*, metroConnections, SOS Charging Solutions\*, The Wedding Guys\*

## Sapphire:

AV For You, BMINX (Hana April Inc.), Cvent\*, The Purple Xperience, Walker Art Center\*

## Platinum:

A'Britin Catering\*, Big Ink\*, CRAVE Catering\*, Create Catering\*, Curtis Kennedy Films\*, Festivities, Jeannine Marie Photography\*, Lauren B Photography\*, Quest Events, Your-Type\*

## Gold:

D'Amico Catering\*, The Deco Catering\*, Premier Transportation\*, Imagine Lights\*

## Silver:

Alchemy 365, Après Event Décor and Tent Rental, BBJ Linen\*, Beam Suntory\*, Blommonster\*, Bungalow 6 Design + Events, Dana\*, Equal Parts Cocktail Company\*, Girl Friday\*, Ice Occasions\*, ILEA MSP, Joe Szurszewski Photography, Maddy & Maize\*, McNamara Alumni Center, Paisley Park, Platypus Papers\*, Smartpress\*, Stage Point\*, Surly Brewing Company, Renaissance Minneapolis Hotel, The Depot, Transmission Music (DJ Jake), U.S. Bank Stadium, Visions\*

## Supporting Partners:

Brett Dorrian Artistry Studios, Chameleon Chairs\*, Dream Day Dressing Rooms, Farina Baking Company, Faribault Woolen Mill Co.\*, Glam Doll Donuts, Haute House Studio, Izzy's Ice Cream, Lakes & Legends Brewery, Primped, Pure & Clear Minnesota Ice, Rapit Printing, Winebow Fine Wine + Spirits

\*Denotes Esprit Awards Gala sponsors



## Esprit Awards Gala

When first tasked with producing ILEA's annual Esprit Awards, co-chairs BeEvents Chief Creative Officer Ryan Hanson, CSEP and The Wedding Guys president Matthew Trettel may not have known when or how, but upending the traditional sit-down awards program was a must.

"We knew we'd include at least a few theatrical, immersive moments and the concept flowed from there," says Hanson. The event, which was held at the Walker Art Center, was inspired by events like Refinery 29's 29Rooms, Google's Curiosity Rooms and New York's Sleep No More—"which is a fully immersive run-all-over-the-building-type of experience"—the team set out to explore how an engaging event could play out across multiple spaces and a "curiosity fractured" theme was decided.

From guest arrival, complemented by a sur-

prise outdoor performance as guests looked on from within, to floating fish and a cityscape dance party, each of the event's distinct spaces was designed to be fully interactive. "The goal was for everyone to have an individual journey. We wanted that fractured concept to transcend by ensuring each space was its own experience. No one experience was the same," says Trettel.

"We essentially created seven individual events in one—each space was detailed as a standalone with its own unique challenges and identities," says Hanson. After plenty of brainstorming sessions, "we riffed on the question of 'where can you get curious?'" says Trettel. "So 'curious in space' became Luna, the last stop on the journey. 'Curious goes for a swim' became FISHBOWL and was surrounded by glass and bathed in blue light with an aquatic-themed drag show and swimsuit-clad servers offering fish-shaped snacks. 'Curiosity takes

flight' became Jetset—a Pan Am-style cocktail lounge—and 'curiosity grows' became Wunderbar, a botanical wine bar concept."

Each room also featured its own embedded entertainment, all of which included Easter eggs to the themes of the other spaces. "Most people may not have noticed them, but we had a real blast with those. For example, the flight attendants from Jetset wore birds in their hair that were taken from the botanical gardens and when guests initially arrived at the traditional-seeming welcome reception, all of a sudden there's a performance outside with the performers pointing in. The guests were in a kind of fishbowl through that interaction and later that space was transformed into a more literal fishbowl," says Hanson.

No corner was left untouched. Even fur-lined and marionette-inspired elevators became extensions of the fractured concept



*Clockwise from opposite top: A large installation welcomed guests to the Esprit Awards Gala; guests moved through the themed spaces at the Walker Art Center; an inflatable fish floated throughout FISHBOWL, the aquatic-themed room; the Walker's rooftop was an after-party location, boasting views of the Minneapolis skyline; flight attendants greeted guests to the Pan Am-style cocktail lounge; elevators acted as rabbit holes; the botanical-themed wine bar space sparked curiosities; the awards ceremony began with an entertaining musical number.*

and proved to be playful surprises throughout the evening. “We were really thoughtful about the journey, from the moment guests stepped off the bus to the moment they departed. Every sound, every scent, every taste and graphic was thought through, and we really used entertainment to guide people or entice guests through each space. We wanted to wow ‘em and move ‘em on,” Trettel says.

And packed with comedic musical numbers, costume changes between categories and even a “dead” event trend in memorium video (“a popular highlight from the evening—people are still talking about that one,” says Trettel), the duo also successfully reimagined what an awards program could be. To ensure honor-

ees felt special and their work acknowledged, nominees received personalized invitations, locally curated gift baskets and unique photo experiences, but entertainment for all guests was a top priority. “We’ve all sat through so many—let’s be honest—boring awards shows and with this being an industry-centric awards program, we approached the program as, ‘let’s have a little fun with ourselves. Let’s be able to laugh with ourselves. Let’s be a little bit irreverent.’ There were some formal award elements to the show but we put a twist on everything and were able to poke a little fun at ourselves and at the end of the day, it was amazing to create something that resonated so much with the audience. We’ve heard from so many people

who enjoyed the awards as much as the party. When do you ever hear that?” says Trettel.

### Good Impression

“When you plan an event for event professionals, you always have to keep in mind that feedback will be given generously afterwards, and this conference was no exception,” says Altendorf. “As a host committee, we were delighted by all of the comments from international attendees about the celebrations that the committee had planned, how much people enjoyed the beauty of the Cities, the opportunity given to connect with like-minded professionals from across the globe and the fact that, ‘surprisingly,’ temperatures were quite lovely.” 🍷