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DOWNTOWN *Antiques*

VINTAGE VEGAS

HEIRLOOMS & ARTIFACTS

Ever wonder where Vegas celebrities shop for home décor? High-end shops in New York or Los Angeles, right? Or the most exclusive stores on the Strip? Actually, some of them head downtown, to Antique Alley on Main Street.

"Holly Madison and her husband come in here a lot," said Jeff Adler, owner of Vintage Vegas Antiques. "They just moved, and they're remodeling their house."

Comedian Carrot Top has popped in a few times too. The prop department for a Nic Cage film recently wiped out the shop's supply of candles salvaged from the old Clarion Hotel.

And Vintage Vegas has been profiled on the show "American Restoration."

So what brings the celebs in — along with film producers, TV shows and tourists?

INSIDE STORY

"If you go to the regular antique malls, they just put stuff in," said Jeff's wife May. "Here, we arrange our sections several times a month to tell a story.

We buy because we like the story behind it — and the looks!"

That Art Deco-style mirrored glass coffee table up front? It's in perfect condition, and rumor has it that it came from Liberace's house. (There are end tables to match, in case you're wondering.)

The vintage clothing in the back room is authentic. No reproductions here unlike lots of other antiques stores. May scours estate sales, looking for dressmaker details and other hallmarks of quality. Then she styles the pieces into chic vignettes. A dress for picnicking is paired with a gauzy scarf, or a sleek black clutch is matched with a rayon tank dotted with cherries. And she's happy to share the provenance of each piece.

Jeff and May know the history of all their pieces because they're hands-on pickers. They travel frequently to purchase one-of-a-kind finds. When they see something great, they go after it. "I'll go to North Las Vegas, over off of Washington Avenue, knocking on doors," said Jeff. "People say I'm crazy." That commitment means the shop is filled with an eclectic mix of period pieces.

With genuine antiques, a sprinkling of modern items and original artwork created by the whole family, there's something for every visitor to discover at Vintage Vegas.

Guy's will probably gravitate toward the "mantiques," a quirky selection of rusty lighting, toys and military collectibles that includes an entire wall of vintage televisions. A few steps away,

an oddities section is filled with strange novelties, like a zombie boar. "I tell everyone it's the boar from 'The Walking Dead,'" said Jeff.

"It's a little bit for everybody," May noted, "from the little babies to the hipsters to the guys to the grandmothers."

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Jeff and May have four children, and they're involved in every part of the business. "The kids go to Internet school, so we can all travel together," said Jeff. "We drive so we can stop on the side of the road and buy things."

Damon, who's just a year old, has already made his first pick: a glass boot filled with perfume that he found in Beatty. But don't look for it in the store. "He just wants to keep it," laughed May.

Back at the store, Kalysta, 12, helps with merchandising and rings people up. Titus, 7, sells his own stuff at the shop. "He picks knickknacks and puts them together," said Jeff. "Sometimes I'm missing tools because he's hot glued them together to create a spaceship or something!"

That creativity is apparently genetic. The atomic symbol on the shop's building signage was drawn by May and painted by Jeff. May is a mixed media artist, specializing in dress forms that she embellishes with nails, one at a time. Using found objects, Jeff creates steampunk sculptures, one of which is a lamp he modeled after downtown denizen Doc Phineas Kastle (see Downtown ZEN January 2015 issue online). Jeff also fashioned a one-of-a-kind bar by gutting a vintage stereo, adding shelves and attaching Bluetooth so that it'll play music from your phone.

"We like to do things ourselves," said May.

MAIN SQUEEZE

When Jeff and May first opened Vintage Vegas, there was just one other shop in the area. "We liked it because it had an old Vegas feel," said Jeff. "Plus, the rent was cheap." They moved downtown, and since then, five more stores have opened up. That's good news for business owners because antiques lovers want to go to a district where they can walk and see a lot of stores all at once.

Jeff and May are pleased that Mayor Goodman is focusing on developing the downtown area even more, especially the plans to make Main Street a one-way thoroughfare. "We leave our lights on all night," said Jeff. "It's bait for all the people who drive from the Strip at night."

Tourists make up a large part of their clientele, and they have a strong rental business. Their collectibles are frequently rented out for movies, commercials, photo shoots and conventions. Jeff and May also cater to locals. Their vintage luggage is used for weddings, and they welcome other talented artisans who need a place to show off their wares. "If someone has something cool that goes well with the store," said Jeff, "we'll rent the space out." They also supply other antique stores in town too.

Whether you're looking for a great prop for a photo shoot, the perfect accessory for your wedding, a vintage treasure for your home décor or one-of-a-kind artwork, make sure Vintage Vegas is on your list of stops on Antique Alley. You might even run into someone famous while you're there.

Vintage Vegas, located at 1229 Main St., is open Monday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Follow them on Instagram @702vintagevegas.

