

Hollywood professional predicts the future of cinema

Entertainment media mogul and private equity tycoon Lee Solomon filled a lecture hall full of Hollywood-hopeful University of Texas at Austin students on September 23 for his speech about the media field and the future of movie theaters.

“Everyone’s competing for your attention and there’s so much of it coming at you,” he said, about the rise of streaming and social media over the past decade. “So the only way you can really get away from it all is to leave your house and go experience something live.”

Solomon spoke about his experience in practically every facet of the entertainment industry from creative to business, and discussed what he learned from his time working with companies such as RedBox and AMC Entertainment. Although a majority of his roles in the media field have been finance-related, the conversation quickly shifted once he revealed his opinions on the survival rate of movie theaters.

“I think there’s an absolute need for theaters,” offered the media mogul. “I think there’s an absolute opportunity for them to continue to succeed. Anything that takes you out of your existing environment that you can get entertainment from, I believe is valuable.”

Solomon shared an anecdote about a discussion he had with Jeffrey Katzenberg, the renowned film producer behind *Shrek*, as a part of the AMC executive board. Katzenberg expressed his belief that people will continue to pay top dollar for a movie ticket because they are seeking a premium experience. Solomon used this story to support his own opinion that theaters have the potential to succeed by offering something unique and valuable that viewers can’t get at home.

[According to the LA Times](#), the box office faced a severe blow from Covid-19, with sales plummeting by 72% since 2020.

Although theaters reopened nationally, they continue to struggle as consumers favor the lower costs and convenience of home viewing. [The Hollywood Reporter](#) noted that earlier this year, AMC Theaters reported a \$300 million decline in revenue compared to 2023, reflecting the ongoing challenges still facing the industry.

“I know there’s a lot of talk right now about movie theaters in decline, and people preferring to stream their movies,” said Jimmy Propper, RTF student and president of the UT Entertainment Media organization. “[Solomon] feeling optimistic about theaters not going anywhere was definitely surprising and cool to hear as someone who’s a big fan of them.”

“I don't think [movie theaters] are going to die, but I do think the business model is going to change,” said Geoffrey Calhoun, writer of multiple Lifetime films and television shows. “I think theaters are just becoming more of a specialized event, trying to cater more towards a luxury experience.”

Solomon and Katzenberg's strategy of selling a “premium” experience is visible in a majority of the theater companies' efforts to bring audiences back to the silver screen, as reported by [CNN](#). Whether it's implementing 4D experiences, in-theater dining, or re-releasing classics for the nostalgic folk, these strategies hope to pull movie-lovers off their couches and towards the concessions stands.

“For me the theater is my church,” offered Calhoun. “It's about being a part of something special, bringing your family and sharing those moments with the ones you love.”

The future of the movie theater may be uncertain, but the optimism from these industry professionals offers hope for audiences who still cherish the magic of the big screen. For moviegoers, the theater is about more than just watching a film—it's about being part of a bigger, shared experience. As the industry changes, it will be up to the filmmakers and studios to create the kind of fresh stories and experiences that draw audiences back, keeping the magic of cinema alive for the coming generations.

“The way we keep movie theaters around is for the studios to make good movies,” Lee Solomon put simply. “Nothing brings people back to the theater more than a good movie. Make good movies, make movies people want to see,” he urged, directly addressing the future filmmakers and screenwriters that filled the room, silent and captivated.

“It's just like *The Field of Dreams*,” he added with a smile. “If you build it, they will come.”

Life in the fast Lane; Feature Article

Kylie Lane doesn't just navigate the glitz and chaos of celebrity publicity- she thrives in it. Whether it's working red carpets, collaborating with celebrity stylists or even convincing Emma Roberts to attend her winter wonderland party for Guess, Lane has mastered the art of all things buzz and brand building.

“I love meeting new people, and I've always been a storyteller,” recounts Lane. “I've also always loved fashion, it's always been my way of expressing myself. And now, I get to bridge the gap between what I'm passionate about and make a career out of it while creating memorable experiences for people. I think that's something really special.”

Ever since Lane's 2017 graduation from the Moody College at The University of Texas at Austin, she hit the ground running and hasn't looked back, living life in the fast lane as she's carved out a career in high-profile publicity. With an ever-expanding repertoire in multiple facets of the PR industry, this Longhorn has successfully worked her way up the totem pole and firmly established herself as a trusted publicist to the stars. Today, Lane proudly holds the title of VIP Director at Michele Marie, one of [Forbes' top PR firms in the nation](#).

"It was a crisis management class where I realized my fascination with PR," reminisces Lane.

"The way that we can control the narrative for brands and be their voice; that really resonated with me. So my junior year, I just kind of randomly decided to take a fashion PR role as an intern in New York for a summer. I absolutely fell in love with it, and I was like, this is what I'm made to do."

Despite her reluctant Mustang grandfather and SMU family legacy running through her veins, as soon as Lane stepped foot on the 40 acres, she knew there was no other place for her. Motivated by her innate creativity and dominant right-brain, Lane was pulled toward a path of honing her communication skills in the Stan Richards School of Advertising and Public Relations.

This seasoned publicist has since tried on many hats in the realm of PR, beginning her journey as a showroom assistant for fashion designers, a role she strongly advocates for as an essential stepping stone for aspiring fashion PR professionals, emphasizing that the experience taught her invaluable lessons and significantly shaped her career trajectory.

Lane then went on to describe her stint in entertainment PR, where she humorously compares her role as a "celebrity babysitter" to a "living nightmare" - a time filled with incessant late-night phone calls from disgruntled A-listers that made for a very anxious new grad.

After years of paying her dues, Lane is now sitting pretty at her dream job- an executive position at one of the top fashion public relations firms in the country. Some of her typical tasks consist of pitching designs to celebrity stylists, collaborating with paparazzi to publish the perfect snapshot incorporating one of her client's pieces, planning [high-profile events](#) and then collaborating with influencers to attend.

"I'm always in awe of how she is able to work the room at any event," said Indigo Vanzini about Lane, reflecting on her time working side-by-side with her self-proclaimed 'work wife' over the past 6 years. "Every influencer, celebrity and the clients themselves get Kylie's devoted attention and she makes them feel at ease. The most important part about being a publicist is crisis management and being able to problem solve quickly - Kylie is a master at this!"

"In the fashion industry you have to think on your feet constantly- it's almost like improv," relates Mimi Connelly, infamous high-fashion photographer. "If you looked at the typical responsibilities under the job Kylie has, you would maybe see 20% of everything she actually deals with on a daily basis. The way she executes everything, never showing stress and always moving forward

is a huge testament to where she's at and is only the beginning of what she is capable of."

Lane's ability to handle high-pressure situations with grace and a cool head is unparalleled. Her colleagues, including Vanzini and Connelly, emphasize her talent for problem-solving and her innate ability to connect with people, making her an invaluable asset to any project or client. Beyond her professional achievements, Lane is driven by a desire to inspire and mold the coming generation of publicists.

"I want to leave behind a legacy of integrity, innovation and mentorship," expresses Lane. "I know how important it is to love your boss and have a great mentor, and I just hope someday I get the chance to be that for someone. I hope to inspire others to reach their full potential as others have inspired me."

Looking ahead, Lane expresses her desire to transition from the hustle and bustle of agency life to a more focused in-house role with a brand she truly loves and believes in. After gaining invaluable experience through her time juggling multiple accounts, she is ready to concentrate her efforts on a single entity, putting all her energy into shaping its identity and legacy. She acknowledges that this next step is highly competitive, but she is determined to pursue it as her next big challenge.

"I have put everything I have into my career; all my blood, sweat and tears," said Lane. "They always say that you should love your job, and I think I'm one of the few lucky ones that truly do."

Sugar & Likes & Everything Nice: How a

Candy Company was Transformed by TikTok *By Carly De Girolomo.*

It began as a regular quarantined summer day in California; the sun was shining, the Zooms were connecting, the coffee was whipping,

and the Tik Toks were recording. However, for candy lover and current business owner Danielle Shaba, it was no ordinary day- but rather, the first chapter of her journey in becoming a successful entrepreneur.

Shaba could hardly believe her eyes when she had awoken to millions of notifications from a Tik Tok she had posted of her very own custom followers, Shaba's orders have increased from 15 to 500 orders per

day.

Viral marketing is today's generation's most effective method of advertisement, and it is responsible for success stories like that of Candy Boulevard. Tik Tok has a mysterious algorithm that determines which videos appear on the "For You" page for each user. Influencers like @d_shaba do their best to navigate their engagements with

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candy bags. She had accomplished every small business owner's dream- going viral.

Danielle Shaba is the owner of Candy Boulevard, a candy business that specializes in creating their own custom mixes of candy that aren't commonly found in stores. Shaba, 19, started her company with the mere love for candy, and dream of becoming an influencer. She started her account by posting videos of herself making platters of different foods and candies before her company was created. She then realized the impact that Tik Tok has on the growth of small businesses, and made the decision to take steps toward making her dream come true.

Then, it dawned on her: if she was able to combine her knowledge of viral marketing along with her platform from the platter videos and incorporated her very own mix of candy, she'd be able to build the enterprise she sought after. Shaba pitched the idea to her family, who were immediately onboard, and thus began their journey into candy land.

"After extensive research, we found our vendors and started packaging our candy in our home office. It took less than a month and we totally outgrew it, so we purchased a bigger facility-and it's already getting too small for all of our orders!" Shaba tells.

"I started posting different types of videos of the candy to see which kind would engage a bigger audience," explained Shaba. After experimenting with different trends, such as packaging videos, mixing videos, and haul videos, she was able to observe what worked, and grow her company's platform.

Danielle's most viewed Tik Tok is a video of her dumping candy into a bucket for her custom mix. It currently resides at 23.6 million views, and 3.3 million likes. "My audience multiplied daily. There was a point when each day I would wake up with another hundred thousand followers on my Tik Tok account," she recounted. With her

customer base increasing daily on Tik Tok due to her 2 million careful manipulation of the algorithm by utilizing specific hashtags, sounds, and following trends that have proven popular on the app on that day.

"We blew up so fast, I have no idea how it happened. I thank God for it everyday," admitted Shaba.

Social media strategist Catherine Kennebeck reports that "TikTok saw a huge rise during the beginning of Covid and has become a fan favorite for short, consumable chunks of interactive information. Videos tend to capture your audience quicker and easier."

Since December of 2020, there have been 6 billion Tik Tok downloads internationally. The app has an annual revenue of \$500 million, and with that comes the "\$1 Billion Creator Fund" which means that not only can businesses that thrive off Tik Tok promotion get free advertisement, but they also can get paid depending on how much attention their videos get.

Kennebeck explains that "TikTok is giving viewers a unique behind the-scenes view of businesses that we haven't really seen before. People are more likely to buy when they're a part of the experience and feel connected to a brand. It's hard to feel connected to a static photo whereas when you can see how a product is used or made, the experience it can provide you, or how a company was started - it creates a connection."

Shaba's Tik Tok account does just that. While keeping consistent content flowing, she creates a behind the scenes look of how her company functions, and the effort that goes into each purchase. This connection is what transforms her audience into customers.

Shaba described her hopes for the future of her business when she explained "In five years, I'm hoping for Candy Boulevard to have multiple locations and storefronts, and to be a household name. I've worked so hard for this, and thanks to going viral on Tik Tok, I think that's achievable and it's something I'll continue to strive for."