



2022

The Hippodrome Casino, London

Best Overall Casino Operator

LIFE CAN BE EXTRAORDINARY



Ten years of The Hippodrome Casino

How one casino company has redefined the future of the British casino sector

Jimmy Thomas, former President and co-founder of the Hippodrome Casino, died on July 30, 2022.

In his eulogy to his late father, the company's Executive Chairman Simon Thomas summed up Jimmy's approach to life.

"You have to colour outside the lines once in a while if you want to make your life a masterpiece."

Einstein's original quote deftly summed up not only Thomas senior's own approach to a life spectacularly well lived, but also encapsulated the legacy of the Hippodrome itself, conceived and built by the formidable father and son team.



Our former President and the Hippodrome's co-founder, Jimmy Thomas, who died in 2022

A decade of innovation

“Intelligence is the ability to adapt to change” (Stephen Hawking)

The Hippodrome celebrated its 10th anniversary on July 12, 2022.

During its inception, owner Simon Thomas took the opportunities presented by amendments to the 2005 review of the Gambling Act to rebuild the framework of what a British casino could offer its customers, from the foundations up.

So what impact has it truly had?

Along with attracting more than 15m customers in its first decade, it has gained recognition for doing something no other British casino has achieved; building a worldwide reputation and respect for delivering something genuinely new within a sector that has often divided opinion.

For the first time, a British casino is leading from the front and being praised for its ambition, innovation, customer popularity and strong delivery. Also, for claiming its rightful place within the mainstream night-time economy, an influential figurehead within its local business eco-system, a media favourite, a welcome contributor to the Exchequer, a significant and admired influencer within political circles and a business that effects positive change. All the while employing 680 people and turning a healthy profit.

It is acknowledged as a forerunner of the newly-defined ‘fun economy’ that brings together tourism, theatre, concerts, gambling and increasingly, entertainment which, estimates reveal, now accounts for 15% of national turnover.

The Hippodrome has deftly tapped into the public’s increasing desire for an ‘experience’ over buying ‘things’. A memorable and positive night out at the Hippodrome is marketing gold. A visit has become something to boast about during someone’s time in the capital, ranking alongside a hit show, a royal palace, a famous nightclub or a Michelin-starred restaurant.

More than any other venue the Hippodrome understands the importance of delivering a full-service casino ‘experience’ comprising gambling, entertainment, food, drink, events & leisure services. All the while embracing a diverse and integrated work culture and working with the local community in which it sits.

The Hippodrome has also driven reinvestment in one of London’s highest profile tourist hubs, Leicester Square, and was the first project in a subsequent £2.9bn makeover which saw the opening of one of London’s most important new hotels in a generation (The Londoner), a refit of the Odeon Cinema’s flagship venue and the total rebuild of the new LSQ London block that houses the largest LEGO store in the world and Hearst UK, the publisher of Good Housekeeping, Cosmopolitan, ELLE, Harper’s Bazaar and Esquire.

The figures speak for themselves. One in three people who visit a casino in London go to the Hippodrome; nationally, one in ten of all casino visits are to this Leicester Square icon.

MILESTONES

We have chosen ten top achievements to mark a decade filled with hundreds of them.

1. Launch

Former Prime Minister Boris Johnson – then London Mayor - declared the Hippodrome open on July 13, 2012, with the words: “the creation of this superb new entertainment complex in the heart of the West End is yet another ringing endorsement of London as a great place to invest. This huge project has not only restored and retained the glorious fabric of this historic building, but also created hundreds of new jobs for the capital and provided a major boost for local business.”



In retrospect, Mr Johnson’s reticence to put all his chips on the number 10 was understandable

2. Pop legend Prince

The purple one played host to an intimate audience of 350 at an after party in our former cabaret theatre for the premiere of new film Belle on Thursday May 5, 2014. Cast and crew from the movie were in attendance alongside Kate Moss, Dev Hynes, Bryan Ferry and Paolo Nutini. Tragically it turned out to be Prince's last-ever UK performance but proved a turning point for the Hippodrome in terms of profile and reputation as an entertainment venue London could be proud of.



Pop legend Prince

3. The only way is up

The Covid lockdown provided impetus and an opportunity to complete one of the largest infrastructure projects ever tackled at the Hippodrome, a three-tier outdoor terrace which offered gaming, food and drink. The top terrace is now one of the most popular outdoor spaces in the heart of the West End and a go-to for private events and parties. Future ambitions include extending the terrace all the way to the building's iconic charioteer atop a steel pergola for events and dining overlooking the West End.



The Hippodrome sold more Champagne on its new top terrace during summer 2022 than the entire previous year

4. First for ground-breaking tech

The introduction of table optimisation programme Tangam, and player monitoring software Sensen – both UK firsts – affords us better yield on tables, more efficient staff scheduling and cleaner data for key decision making. It is testament to the Hippodrome's pursuit of state of the art technology to improve the customer journey and experience, and stay well ahead of our peers.

5. Return of the EPT

Alongside Pokerstars, the Hippodrome welcomed back the EPT to London in 2022. Last seen in 2014 we hosted players from 52 countries, drawing 749 entries in the main event with a prize pool of £3,632,650 and a massive £664,400 for the winner. In total we had more than 40 events and paid out over £15million in prize pool during the 11 day festival. The top five countries comprised: UK (148 players or 27.8% of the field), France (58 or 10.9%), Germany (24 or 4.5%), USA (23 or 4.3%), Canada (22 or 4.1%).



The Hippodrome's Director of Poker KerryJane Craigie

6. Officially the best steak in London

Never before has a restaurant within a UK casino established itself as such a popular and renowned stand-alone destination. Over the years, Heliot Steak House has been awarded the 'best steak restaurant in London' title three out of five years by the country's largest online booking service, and runner-up the other two. Our Executive Chef was also chosen as a judge in the prestigious world steak challenge. The Hippodrome has cleverly trademarked a brand new category, the 'Meatologist', which denotes ultimate expertise in preparing the best steak in the capital.



Executive chef Ioannis Grammenos, the UK's only official 'Meatologist'

7. Hosting the European Dealer Championship

Organised by the European Casino Association (ECA) in conjunction with The Hippodrome and the National Casino Forum (NCF), the 2017 European Dealer Championship took place from 8th-10th May in the heart of London's capital, a first in the competition's 11-year history. The Hippodrome provided a compelling backdrop for the prestigious competition, as Europe's dealer elite battled it out to be recognised as the best in the business. Thirty-one judges from 20 countries oversaw three main categories; technical skill, game control and hospitality in a fierce knock-out competition over two days.



Antra Gaika from the Olympic Voodoo Casino, Latvia, raises the EDC trophy outside the Hippodrome

8. The Magic of Mike

An early Sunday morning meeting with Hollywood superstar Channing Tatum and owner Simon Thomas to discuss the possibility of Tatum's smash hit Vegas dance show Magic Mike Live coming to the Hippodrome, led to a £3.4m refit of the Hippodrome's cabaret theatre. The launch of Magic Mike Live on ITV's Britain's Got Talent crashed TicketMaster, and saw it become the sixth fastest-ever selling show in the history of the West End. The owners of the famous Piccadilly advertising hoardings were even persuaded to change the display to an official 'London Welcomes Magic Mike' – a central London first, which saw the publicity stills gain worldwide exposure. The show attracts 3,000 customers a week to the Hippodrome.



The Magic Mike Live team marks its 1,000th performance

9. A community champion

“When the Hippodrome does well, we all do well”

(Fadil Maqedonci, Koha Restaurant and Bar)

The Hippodrome is a central force within the business eco-system of the West End, London’s entertainment quarter. Since opening, Simon Thomas has effected considerable positive change in his role as board member of the local Business Investment District (HOLBA), his involvement with two Police independent advisory panels (one for Westminster, one for SO6 advising on events and marches), and by opening the venue as a meeting hub to myriad community, policing, security, political and safety groups. The Hippodrome’s relationship with Westminster City Council is key to initiate and drive local security and infrastructure projects that benefit the area and limit the impact of low-level crime. Thomas was also instrumental in the appointment of private security group My Local Bobby, the licensing of buskers throughout the West End and the imminent licensing of pedicabs working alongside local MP Nickie Aiken.



A close partnership with Nickie Aiken MP has led to the licensing of London’s pedicabs, an initiative driven by the Hippodrome

10. A negotiator for change

As Chair of the UK’s land-based Casinos committee, working alongside the Betting & Gaming Council, Simon Thomas has led discussion with central Government’s DCMS for positive amendments to the Gambling Act. Thomas has met with more than 100 MPs in the protracted negotiations, and presented on numerous occasions to All Party Parliamentary Groups and forums including local and national politicians and the Gambling Commission. He also appeared before the London Assembly discussing the effect of the pandemic lockdowns on the casino and hospitality sectors. His knowledge of the intricacies of the sector and the role of new technology to improve the customer journey and ensure gambling safety is wide-reaching, and he is considered one of the country’s leading experts.



Uniquely among the British casino operators, Thomas has discussed casino gambling policy personally with Michele Donelan, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

Post Lockdown Recovery and Growth

The Hippodrome led the West End out of Covid with a publicity stunt that encapsulated the Hippodrome's determination to re-open more ambitiously than ever before; it captured the imagination of the media worldwide.



Simon Thomas declares the Hippodrome will never shut its front doors again after a protracted lockdown and curfew closure

Simon Thomas unveiled how he had chosen to see lockdown and curfew as an opportunity to improve and expand his business. During the mandated closure he completed some of the Hippodrome's biggest infrastructure projects to date – a three-tier outdoor terrace for gambling, food, drink and events and laid the groundwork for a new restaurant, café and bar.

His ambition, he said, was to bolster the venue's dining, drinking and entertainment credentials adding to the casino's existing eight bars, pre-show cocktail lounge and award-winning restaurant Heliot Steak House.

Further expansion

“Build it and they will come.” And they are doing.

In 2022 we re-purposed two former retail spaces within, but hitherto separated from, the core Hippodrome building. Planning and delivery on this £2.8m investment took 10 months. These projects have unified the entire elevation of the Hippodrome building on its Cranbourn Street side.

Chop Chop at The Hippodrome

‘Chop Chop by Four Seasons at The Hippodrome’ opened on October 19, 2022. The interiors were designed by Rachel O’Toole, the visual talent behind the venue’s Magic Mike Live theatre and the recently-launched Permission cocktail bar. Its menu features dishes such as Four Seasons’ renowned roast duck - named by The Financial Times as the best in the world - and premium dim sum, including a range of vegan options.



The launch of Chop Chop



The Chop Chop team



CHOP CHOP
By FOUR SEASONS
at the Hippodrome

CrêpeAffaire at The Hippodrome

CrêpeAffaire opened in November 2022 and serves French crêpes and galettes, the brand's new Crêpe & Roll range, coffees and desserts. An innovative evening concept of "Crêpes & Cocktails", exclusive to CrêpeAffaire at The Hippodrome, adds to the offering. The interior of the street level café, again designed by Rachel O'Toole, recreates a relaxed living room vibe.



CrêpeAffaire at the Hippodrome


crêpeaffaire
at the Hippodrome

Permission

We developed a new identity for the pre-show cocktail lounge, formerly known as The Boozy Tea Room. During 2022, the space was renamed Permission – a central theme to Magic Mike Live – and was given a complete makeover with new menu and cocktail list. Sales in the first month saw sales increase by 48% year on year.



Permission cocktail lounge



A focus on new technology

We remain well ahead of our peers in adopting the latest technology exclusively, both to improve customer experience and run a more efficient operation.

Tangam: We were the first casino business in the UK to adopt the Tangam system, a table optimisation programme that helps us manage dynamic pricing on the live gaming tables. The analytical software captures data from all gaming tables through our IG system and assists with staffing levels and table pricing to maximise revenue and staffing levels effectively/efficiently.

Sensen: A UK and European first within the casino sector, in partnership with Sensen AI Systems we have installed SenGame onto all live gaming card tables. The system, operated via smart-camera recognition, provides us with information to monitor number of players at table, hands per hour, accurate betting levels and side-bet contribution. This allows us to establish the popularity of side bets and accurately define a table's hold percentage and to maximise hands per hour based on number of players at table.



SenGame chip recognition technology in use on a Blackjack table at the Hippodrome Casino



SenGame chip recognition technology in use on a Roulette table at the Hippodrome Casino

Focal Research: The Hippodrome has also adopted the Focal Research ALERT and BETTOR Protection system currently includes models for identifying players scoring for low risk, responsible gambling as well as models identifying at-risk for prevention and harm reduction.

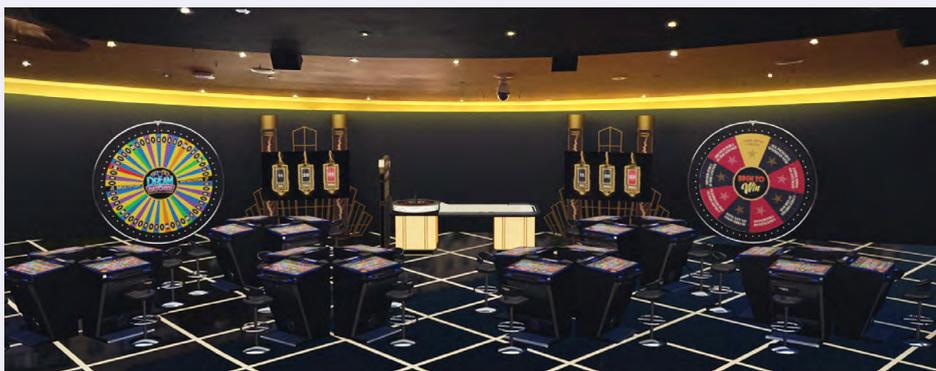
“Since 2015, the Hippodrome has consistently demonstrated a forward-thinking commitment to innovation within the UK casino industry and the use of new technologies to enhance customer engagement and player safety.” (Tracy Schrans, Principal & President Focal Research Consultants Limited)

Lucky Lady’s: We introduced Lucky Lady’s multiplier enhanced Roulette on our Electronic Table Gaming terminals, provided by Novomatic. **Another Hippodrome first for the UK and Europe**, this is a variant of Lightning Roulette from Evolution’s online gaming library, which gives the player an opportunity to win up to 240 times their original stake on a straight up number.



Evolution Online – Lightning Roulette

In partnership with Evolution the Hippodrome will soon be bridging online gaming and the land-based environment. Enhanced traditional electronic table games, such as roulette, will come to life in the form of the world-renowned “Lightning Roulette”. New digital wheel games will also be on offer, including “Crazy Time”.



An artist’s impression of Lightning Roulette in Lola’s Underground Casino at the Hippodrome

Corporate Social Responsibility

“Simon Thomas at the Hippodrome has become a pivotal figure within central London’s business community, unafraid to use his position as the owner of the country’s largest entertainment and casino venue to negotiate positive change.” (Evening Standard)

The last year has seen us increase our determination to present the West End in its most positive light to a worldwide audience.

Thanks to Thomas, the business has the ear of national and local politicians, business and community influencers, press, Chinatown and the important residential community.

In 2022 he has again used his role as Board member of the Heart of London Business Alliance (HOLBA) to tackle crime and infrastructure issues that affect perceptions and visitor safety which include: illegal behaviour by pedicab operators, busking, infrastructure issues, homelessness, rough sleeping, begging and public disorder.

To help, we offer the Hippodrome meeting rooms for free to a wide selection of local community, MET police, Westminster Council, charity, and area security organisations. We were instrumental in the appointment of a private security firm, My Local Bobby, which supports council inspectors and the MET with local issues.



The Hippodrome has met with Cllr Adam Hug, new leader of Westminster City Council and many of his new cabinet to discuss local issues including the Council’s new safer gambling initiative

The Hippodrome Family Trust: We calculated the Hippodrome donates around £250K annually to registered charities, neighbourhood groups, community causes and gifts in kind to more than 30 individual projects that request our help. However, we felt that our charitable giving needed some structure and a more defined purpose, which led to establishing the Hippodrome Family Trust.

Hippodrome staff members, local charities, individuals and groups and those who need cash support for a worthwhile cause can apply for a grant from the Trust, granted twice-yearly by an independent board. In this way we have a true record of what projects the Hippodrome has helped.

Top for social media engagement

The Hippodrome is still the fastest growing UK casino on all social media platforms. We achieve this by generating post-worthy tales throughout the year, ranging from gaming-floor wins, visiting celebrities, celebrating new food and drink menus, openings or staff achievements. We treat the Hippodrome as a news patch, where a local reporter would hunt out stories for daily reports.



Ten years and counting

It's testament to the Hippodrome's determination to foster strong staff relations, and its focus from the early days on embracing diversity, inclusion and honest communication, that we have been able in the last year to reward nearly 100 members of staff with their 10 years' service anniversary pin and a personalised copy of the Hippodrome book, which details the history of the building and business.



Marking ten years' service

What sauce?

Also part of our 10th birthday celebrations, was a special dinner for staff from every part of the business. Our executive board served as waiters for the evening.



Simon Thomas takes his turn waiting on staff for the 10th anniversary dinner



The Hippodrome is London's number one destination to view the NFL

Home of the NFL

After several years we're still the number one destination for fans of the NFL who come in their hundreds every Sunday to view. As one reviewer put it: "Across the brand new 10m x 2.5m big screen and five other 50+ inch screens all 6pm and 9pm matches were broadcast via the NFL Game Pass. It's not just the big screens and venue that were epic, but also the food and drink menus. Food options include classic bar snacks such as buffalo wings, nachos and jalapeno poppers." We couldn't have put it better ourselves.

A sign for the times

We wanted to create an Instagram opportunity for our customers and took our lead from Hollywood to build a Hippodrome sign positioned on the roof, viewable from the Rooftop Terrace. The colours of each letter can change throughout the evening, and we have so far paid tribute to the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee, LGBTQ Pride and the conflict in Ukraine. The sign was launched by LBC's star host Iain Dale.



Magic Mike Live & Overtures

Interestingly, the Hippodrome's famous Magic Mike Live stage show is now to be immortalised in Channing Tatum's third Magic Mike film, to be launched February 10, 2023. This is in direct response to the success of the venue's staging of the production, many elements of which are included in the new Hollywood film and tell the story of the film's eponymous hero taking his show to a London stage.

Magic Mike Live recently celebrated its 1,400th performance and over 420,000 people have seen the show. The Magic Mike Live London TikTok account has over 2.4m million followers, increasing the reach of the Hippodrome's social media



Channing Tatum made a surprise visit at the show's 1,000th anniversary performance and our social media figures hit the roof

Overtures: Throughout the year, our new three-night-a-week 'singalong' show Overtures continued to attract hundreds of musical theatre fans every week to our below-stairs theatre in Lola's, coming together for renditions of showtune classics.



Jillian George-Lewis, the Hippodrome's
Director of Entertainment

For the many

In 2022 the Hippodrome took its first steps into the world of hosting high-profile podcasts. We partnered LBC presenter Iain Dale for a recording of his two-hander show 'For The Many' alongside former Home Secretary Jacqui Smith in front of a live audience in the Magic Mike Live theatre. It was a sell-out.



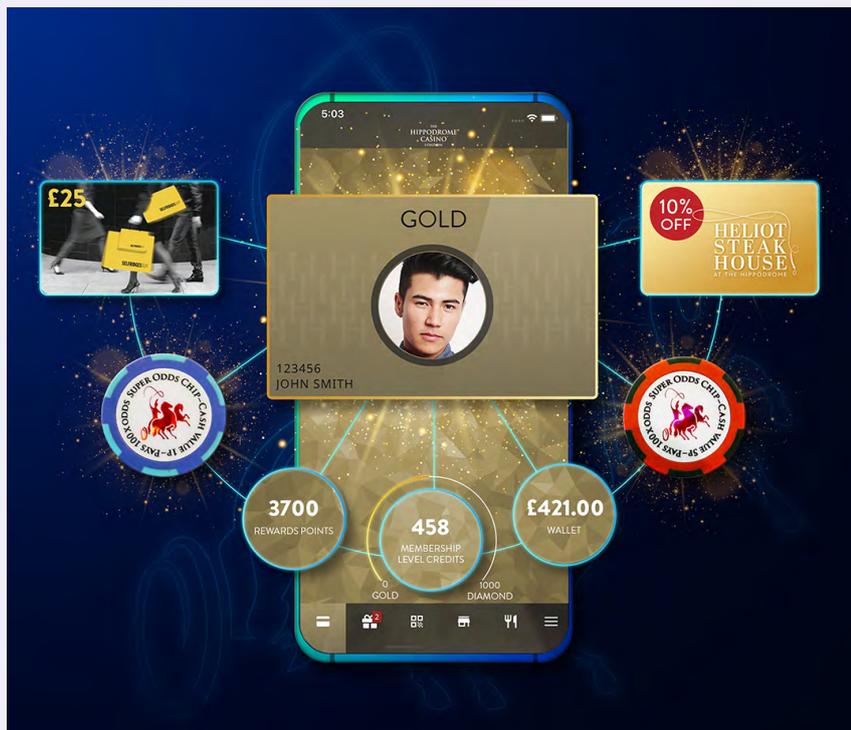
The Hippodrome App

A project that saw significant customer adoption in the past year was the Hippodrome Member App, which has been downloaded by more than 20,000 customers.

Alongside developer Software Services, we worked with Intelligent Gaming (IG), the casino management software company, for over a year on the software interfaces. We understand that we are still the only casino within the IG network to have developed a customer App.

Available free from Apple App Store and the Android Play Store, its features include:

- A digital membership card residing inside the app acting as ID and proof of membership
- Pin protected cashless wallet to securely hold the users money
- Exclusive offers and promotions for members at tier and member level
- Merchandise purchases using loyalty points
- Restaurant and bar booking
- Direct marketing direct to users' device
- Cashless wallet deposit and withdrawal using PayPal, Google Pay, Apple Pay and Okto Wallet
- Safer gaming self-monitoring
- Introduction of a new membership type 'hospitality customers'
- Introduction of KYC and AML via Pelican



The Hippodrome App, downloaded by more than 20,000 customers

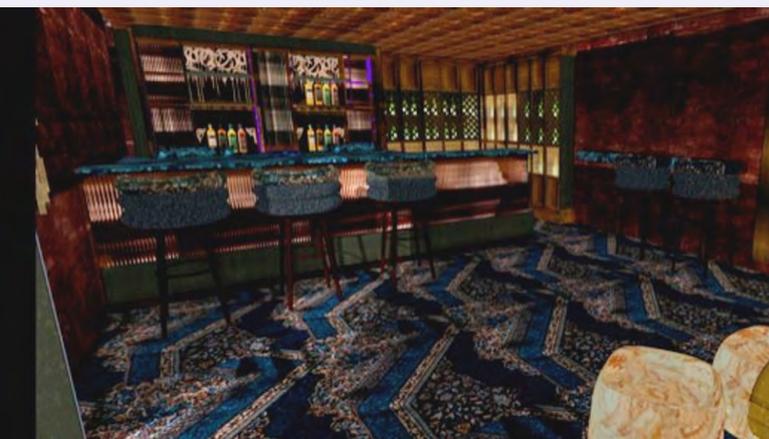
2023 and beyond

The secret of the success of the Hippodrome is our focus on the customer. To this end, we continue to improve facilities and services, including:

Magic Mike 3: we will be closely involved in the upcoming launch of the new Magic Mike 3 The Movie starring Hollywood star Channing Tatum



Secret Bar: a fourth new opening within our F&B roster, this new and hidden subterranean cocktail bar concept will open in April 2023.



All bar none: work on the removal of the Grand Casino bar to make way for more gaming tables will begin quarter one 2023



Rooftop terrace extension: plans are currently being developed for a major extension of the top terrace bar up to the iconic cupola on top of the Hippodrome building

White Paper: at the time of writing this submission we look forward to the contents of the Government's White Paper following the gambling review and are well prepared to optimise the new deregulation.

“Being present when the best independent operator in the UK came face to face with the best independent operator in Las Vegas was a truly iconic moment. Shame we didn't take a photo – but the fact that this was done in the evening and not in the G2E conference was a missed opportunity, in my opinion! Oh. for an hour's conversation between them!”

Oliver Lovat, CEO, Denstone Group
(when Simon Thomas met Derek Stevens in Las Vegas)