

**Cityside Saga,
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"Die Another Day," the current release in the series of James Bond movie thrillers, is simply fiction. Those who dare to get closer to the real action may wish to consider the new "SpyCruise" slated to leave the West Coast from "a port near San Diego" on March 27 for a trip to Hawaii. Once aboard Royal Caribbean's Legend of the Seas, travelers will be treated to lectures by SpyCruise "professors," retired intelligence officers from the FBI, KGB and Department of Defense, including Tony and Jonna Mendez, former disguise experts at the CIA.

Although the cruise is advertised as a trip from San Diego to Hawaii, the San Diego connection appears to be somewhat fictional. A closer look at the itinerary on the cruise Web site reveals that the ship doesn't actually leave from San Diego's cruise ship terminal on Harbor Drive. Instead, guests fly to San Diego, then transfer to Ensenada, Mexico to board the ship.

Don't blink because you may miss one of the numerous downtown events rushing past as we face 2002's home stretch. Before you know it, we will be in January 2003 discussing Super Bowl celebrations. In the meantime, let's look back at some of this autumn's spectacles:

- BRAVO San Diego, held Saturday, Nov. 23 at The Westgate Hotel Ü was everything it was cracked up to be. Elegantly-attired attendees were treated to a treasure chest of fine food, drink and, most important, a sample of San Diego's talented performing artists. The incredible skill showcased this night was most impressive; proof that San Diego has become a new, thriving cultural mecca. I especially enjoyed the well-trained and poised dancers, including those from Patricia Rincon's troupe. I highly recommend this uplifting event. BRAVO San Diego brings arts, civic and business leaders together to raise funds for the arts and business programs of the San Diego Performing Arts League.
- The Gaslamp Quarter Association's annual Lamplighter Awards ceremonies were held Nov. 12 at the U.S. Grant. The association really puts on a ritzy show, complete with

Jack Berkman giving a lively performance as auctioneer. The evening was even more wonderful because, much to our surprise, San Diego Downtown News was presented with a Merit Award in the Media category. After working so hard and overcoming so many obstacles in a truly competitive market, after publishing items about so many people who have accomplished so much, after serving the community that is San Diego's very heart, financially, politically and culturally, we especially enjoyed our moment of appreciation. It is extremely gratifying to learn that those within the Gaslamp Quarter Association recognized our efforts with this award. We believe Downtown News is an important tool of communication and we have nurtured it with extreme care. Therefore, this important award means a great deal to all of us.

I noticed the ceremony was structured much like the Oscars and the winners were allowed to make a short speech. Most rattled off a series of people they wished to thank, so here go our thank yous: We want to credit all those who helped us get to this point, especially reporter Marisa Lowe, who has been here from the start of this paper, and editor Amy Lehmann. Furthermore, we thank all the free-lance contributors, the graphic artists, classified staff, bookkeepers, publishers and advertising representatives, including Downtown News rep Steve Chabot. Finally, we thank all our readers and advertisers for their faithful support.

- On Nov. 8 the Bayside Community Center held "Celebrating Success" in the Wyndham Emerald Plaza Hotel Crystal Ballroom and presented the 2002 Leadership Awards. The center, which helps new immigrants adjust to American society in San Diego, is celebrating its 70th anniversary. The organization was originally located downtown on Union Street. Leadership Award Winners are San Diego Police Chief David Bejarano; Yvonne Campbell, deputy director, North Central Regional Health & Human Services (retired); San Diego City Councilwoman Donna Frye; Janet Wood, small business manager, City of San Diego Neighborhood Revitalization Programs; and all members of the Social Service Auxiliary.
- The Douglas Wilson Companies hosted an extraordinary grand opening celebration of the Parkloft luxury residential loft complex, 877 Island Ave., on Oct. 19. The sides of the building were bathed in a violet glow and spotlights reached

up through the night sky. "Bohemian Nights" was the evening's theme. Dancers, a street percussionist and a stilt walker greeted guests when they arrived. A performer handed me a set of drum sticks and held up a plastic bucket to beat on, and I demonstrated a serious lack of rhythm. He pointed to a nearby lamp post and I wondered if I should be drumming on a city fixture, but the nearby crowd urged me on. Besides, they seemed to appreciate the raw performance. Inside, guests sampled culinary tidbits as they passed poets and artists in the hallways. Five individually themed lofts were available for inspection and musical acts performed in the courtyard. Proceeds from the event benefited the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego and San Diego Repertory Theatre. The company recently released a statement announcing that 50 percent of the loft units have been sold.

- Some of our free-lance writers made guest appearances on the KPBS show "Full Focus." Joel D. Amos was among the guests Nov. 14. Joel, who often writes articles about both fine arts and performing arts for San Diego Downtown News, spoke about the City Ballet and "Peter and the Wolf." Downtown News fashion columnist Diana Cavagnero was also featured on that very same show. Downtown News theater critic Charlene Baldrige was a guest on the show one week earlier. Charlene, by the way, was recently commissioned to write a book about San Diego and is nearing completion on the project right now. The word is that some of Charlene's poems were chosen to be partnered with opera compositions. We hope to bring more news of this project as it develops.
- On Oct. 16 I was among the judges meeting at the University Club in Symphony Towers selecting the winners of the Papa John's Pizza essay contest called "Papa's Heroes." San Diego school children wrote essays describing their personal heroes. The essays were very impressive — some were very touching and all were well-done. The two top winners were each awarded \$1,000 scholarships and the 50 top essay writers were treated to a Day at SeaWorld with San Diego Padres star Trevor Hoffman on Nov. 2. Other judges were Channel 7/39 meteorologist Joe Lizura; Union-Tribune senior reporter Michael Kinsman; Papa John's Pizza, San Diego owner Brian Mills; Papa John's Pizza, San Diego director of marketing Lisa Erickson; and Binger Communications, Inc. president Beth Binger.

