

THINGS TO BE THANKFUL FOR : I LOVE TWILIGHT
IT WASN'T EASY THIS YEAR, BUT WE'VE COMPILED A LIST!¹ AND HATE MYSELF FOR IT!²

+ ANGELICA BRIDGES!³
PORN TWEET!⁴
LOOZIANA EATS!⁵

LAS VEGAS (Arts // Entertainment // Culture + Everything Else That Matters™)

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Fantastic journey

Bridges goes to court and back to stay onstage in Vegas **By Richard Abowitz**

OFFSTAGE, SITTING IN A lounge at Luxor, Angelica Bridges is a modest, friendly woman whose height, perfectly sculpted face and wafer-thin body are reminders that she was discovered by the head of a modeling agency. She likes to give relationship advice and is working on a dating show to do so. "I have seen three marriages and now one couple engaged that I have orchestrated," she says. "I feel I have a gift for putting the right people together and making some magic." She asks about the woman in my life and gives me dating tips.

A few hours later, Bridges will transform into a stunning vixen, sultry, sexual and nothing like the kindly lady in the lounge—for her role as the singer and host of *Fantasy*, the topless show at the casino, in which she teases and poses while offering covers from Portishead to Nancy Sinatra, as well as a song from her own band, Strawberry Blonde. She is a burst of new energy and attention for the long-lived show.

Casting Bridges also puts *Fantasy* in line with the latest trend in Vegas adult shows: celebrity hosts, especially ones with a *Playboy* connection. Holly Madison presides at *Peepshow* at Planet Hollywood; her co-star through December (when her contract expires), Aubrey O'Day, has also appeared in *Playboy*. And the venerable *Crazy Horse Paris* at MGM Grand has been bringing in guest stars like Dita Von Teese and Carmen Electra. Bridges also has name recognition from *Baywatch* and soap-opera roles.

But her real life became a soap opera last month; the day after her October 13 opening night in *Fantasy*, she was ordered by a judge to quit the show and move back to Los Angeles or lose her children for the time she lived here.

Bridges says she was caught off-guard. "I had no idea. I had one of the most amazing nights of my life. We had a reception and cut a cake." Her predicament quickly made headlines across the country and filled gossip websites.

She believes the judge was biased against Vegas. "I had a court date the next morning. But I was expecting the judge to decide this was 2009, and parents should work, and if they are giving the kids a good life and the kids are not missing a beat, then great. But when I was on the stand describing my job, I really felt the judge was biased about the job and about Las Vegas. That is when I thought for the first time that it might not go the way I wanted it to go. And then the judge decided, if you do go to Vegas, the kids will go to Canada to be with their father for the time you are in Vegas. We were in court for eight hours to get to the point where I had to quit."

According to Bridges, her ex-husband invoked (and the judge ruled on) geographic restrictions in their custody agreement to force her out of the show. But her ex-husband's real objection was not geography (as a player for the NHL's Edmonton Oilers, he does his share of traveling for work), according to Bridges, but the content of *Fantasy*. "He married me after I appeared in *Playboy*. That was all good and fine. But I think it was a matter of his not understanding the content of the show. I think him hearing and seeing on the Internet 'topless revue' or 'voted sexiest show on the Strip,' those words can really affect someone's judgment. I think it really scared him." As the singer in *Fantasy*, Bridges performs the entire show covered. But for the moment that did not matter.

"I am a single mom. And I have dreams that are important to me that I am trying to fulfill," she says. "If I am happy, my



children are happy. If am fulfilled, my children will sense that."

Still, when given the choice between the job she really wanted and living with her two children, there was no choice at all. "My first priority was getting the kids back. The day I left Vegas, I took all my stuff, and I didn't know what was going to happen. But I knew in my heart that I am a tough girl and I would make it back. When I had to tell the judge I quit, that was hard. But I needed my children back."

Once she had them, Bridges immediately began to work to regain the right to perform in Vegas and bring her kids. To do that she had to get her ex-husband to see her job in *Fantasy* in the way she perceived it: an opportunity to spend more time with her children. She succeeded. "We completely worked out everything to where he is very supportive of me doing the show now."

With the custody issue sorted out,

Bridges quietly returned to *Fantasy* on October 25.

Still, the incident derailed the publicity of introducing a new star to the show. "I do feel a bit like the thunder was stolen," Bridges says. Going into the slow winter season, this has to be a particular disappointment. It is a pity, because Bridges brings plenty to the stage.

She grew up a tomboy in Missouri, and in her role as host she is capable of mixing it up with the male tourists who've had a few drinks. And, though fully clothed, she establishes a classic sex appeal. Her look stands out, likely because she is rather unusually not using a stylist or wearing costumes selected by a director:

"I prefer to pick and choose my costumes, and then management gives their approval. I get some of my wardrobe from vintage stores, designers that I know or even right off the rack if it's stunning enough. I know my body and know what works ... besides, it's so much fun to dress for an audience."

Meanwhile, she says, her children are adjusting happily to life here. Bridges believes that Vegas is a perfect town for a single mother working a show-business career. This is especially true for someone whose fame does not come with enough riches to supply a staff.

"My kids love it. Sin City has such a stigma, but this has been the quietest part of my life. It is easier to balance now. I get up at 6 and take the kids to school, and I pick them up every day. In LA, I can be on the set for 18 hours shooting TV or a commercial. My kids have a very stable environment. They are 2 and 6. I go to the show after my kids are in bed. They go to school, but then we spend the day together. It is more stable for me to have this job than anything I have been in."

In fact, Bridges' confidence in Vegas as a place to nest is so total that, though her *Fantasy* contract is only for three months, she has rented her home for a year. "I just can't think of anywhere else that is going to let me work and allow me to give my children so much time, attention and such a stable life."

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