

## Mirage Entertainment: 30 Years of Showmanship

This year marks Mirage Entertainment's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in show business. But the true beginnings of the Mirage story date back even earlier. The original 2 partners of what would become Mirage Entertainment, Charlie Kao and Brad Billington, met as eighth grade students at El Rancho Junior High School of Anaheim Hills, California, in 1979. Charlie (a Taiwanese-American) and Brad (a natural-born American) immediately sensed the entrepreneurial spirit in one another and soon went into an unusual business venture together. Renting a booth at a local swap meet for fifteen dollars, they sold a consignment of digital clock pens and disco shirts that Charlie acquired from the overstock of a shop owner he was acquainted with, along with some old toys of Brad's. At the end of the day they made 40 or 50 bucks! A successful enterprise for a couple of middle schoolers in 1979!

The two went their separate ways in high school, and it would be over a decade before their paths would cross again. In 1990, Charlie got a \$10,000 business loan from his father, a distributor of Hong Kong films in South America, and formed Pan Asia America Entertainment, a Los Angeles-based, US distributor of those same Hong Kong films. This was the genesis of Mirage Entertainment.

Also in 1990, Charlie decided to expand Pan Asia Entertainment into the field of live entertainment. While looking for a partner in this venture, Charlie considered two of his current friends, but they both declined, due to the modest pay offered at first. Then he remembered his old business partner, Brad, and offered him the new proposal. As it turned out, Brad was already employed in medical equipment sales and was not willing to switch careers, entirely. But, he had always been interested in the entertainment business, and agreed to help out as much as he could. Thus was born the central partnership that has been at the core of Mirage Entertainment for 30 years.....and their first international entertainment project was about to begin! Stay tuned to find out what it was.

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