

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Marcello Mastroianni

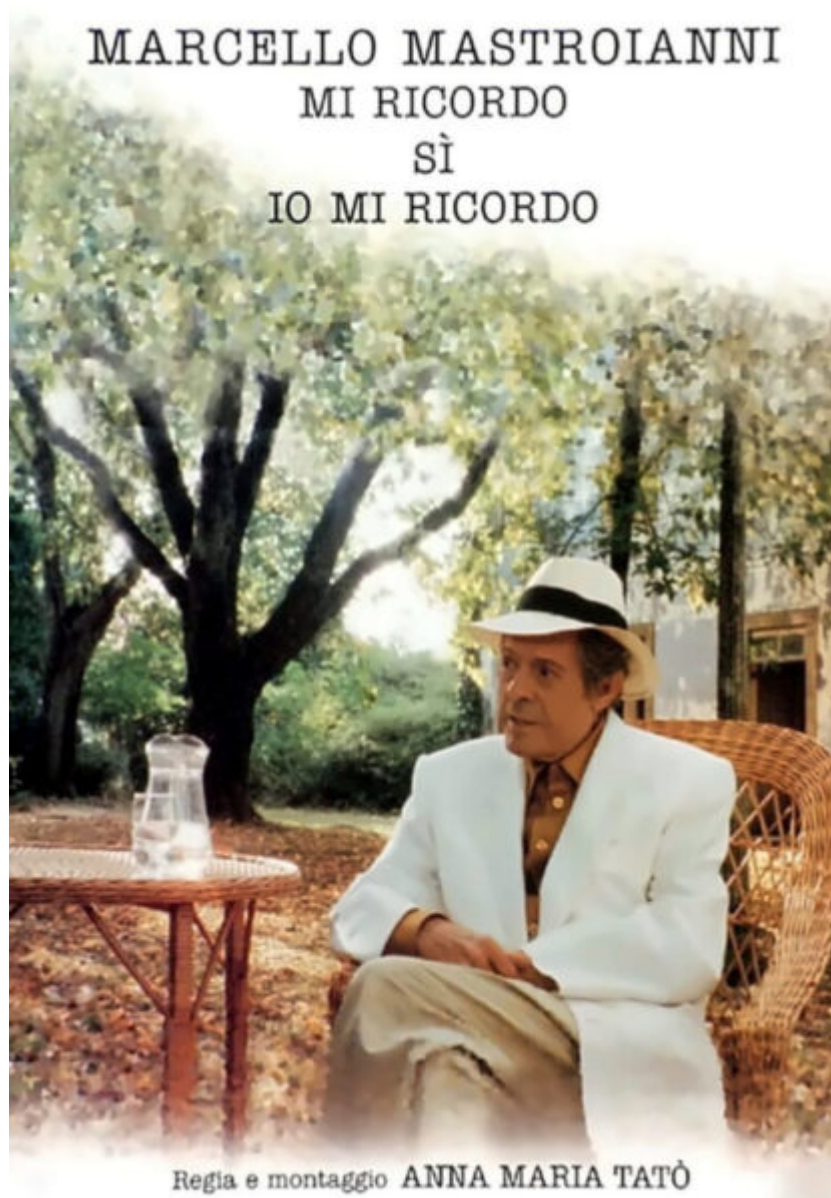
Elisa Leonelli · Monday, May 12th, 2025



I was reminded of [Marcello Mastroianni](#) recently, when I watched a 2024 documentary, [Ciao Marcello, Mastroianni l'antidivo](#), that premiered at last year's Roma Film Festival to celebrate the 100 anniversary of the Italian actor's birth, and was included in the [Filming Italy](#) Los Angeles Festival.



The same week I made a point to go see at Laemmle Royal *Marcello Mio*, presented at last year's Cannes Film Festival, where Chiara Mastroianni takes on her father's persona, shocking her mother Catherine Deneuve and their actor friends.



When it was screened in Los Angeles, I had seen an earlier documentary, *Marcello Mastroianni: I Remember*, after it played at the 1997 Cannes film festival. It was written and directed by Anna Maria Tatò, the actor's companion from 1976 until his death in 1996.



Marcello Mastroianni-La dolce vita-photo by Arturo Zavattini

I remember that, as a tween living in Italy, I very much wanted to go see *La dolce vita* by Federico Fellini, but my movie loving father went with my mother and would not allow me to go along, since I was well under 16, and the movie was ‘forbidden to minors.’



Marcello Mastroianni © Elisa Leonelli 1978

Little did I know at the time that I would get a chance to meet Mastroianni in person, on April 1, 1978, at a press interview, when he was nominated to the Academy Awards for *A Special Day* (*Una giornata particolare*) by Ettore Scola.



Marcello Mastroianni © Golden Globes 1965

He had been nominated to an Oscar before for *Divorce Italian Style* (*Divorzio all'Italiana*) by Pietro Germi, and had won a Golden Globe as Best actor for that performance in 1963, but it was not until 1965 that Mastroianni first came to Hollywood to collect a World Film Favorite award at the Golden Globes. In fact, he was presented with two statuettes, accepting one for his co-star, Sophia Loren. That same year he was also nominated as best actor for *Marriage Italian Style* (*Matrimonio all'Italiana*) by Vittorio De Sica.



In November 2022, to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the Golden Globes, [I wrote an article](#) about *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (*Ieri, oggi, domani*) by Vittorio De Sica, another movie where Mastroianni co-starred with Sophia Loren.

In January 1993, at the Palm Spring Film Festival, I interviewed Mastroianni about *Used People* directed by Beeban Kidron and co-starring Shirley MacLaine. I wrote [an article for Venice Magazine](#), where I served as Film Editor, and another piece in Italian for Marie Claire.



Here's one of my questions, about politics and war, as I often ask, when I'm allowed:

"George Bush was bombing military and civilian targets in Iraq, at the same time that Bill Clinton was being inaugurated as the new President, stealing headlines from what should have been a message of change, and forcing his successor's hand to continue his militaristic policy. What are your views on the Gulf War and on war in general?"

And Mastroianni's answer: "I don't understand politics, I don't love politicians. Fortunately I'm not president of a country, as some irresponsible actors have been (Ronald Reagan), so I don't take much interest in these things. But the situation seems to me increasingly dramatic, we live in a world that could explode at any moment. I do believe that Saddam Hussein is a crazy megalomaniac, but (and many people think like me in Italy and in France) I also see that, when there was a problem in Kuwait, the Americans jumped right in, and we all followed them, to defend a country where cars have gold handles. When all hell breaks loose in Yugoslavia, and there are shameful massacres, nobody can find a solution. Maybe it's true that oil is ruling the world, in the Middle East, like in Africa and everywhere. But this is just my humble impression, and probably a naive one."



Marcello Mastroianni © Elisa Leonelli 1978

Another of the many question I asked: “What do you think of Italian politics, as opposed to American politics?”

His answer: “I admire you Americans because you love your President, Bill Clinton is being inaugurated today and you’re all in front of the television. In Europe we always hate our Presidents, it’s a completely different way, we don’t have this culture, this ‘homage’ for our President in Italy. We have a lot of ministers who put money in their pockets, but at least what happens in Italy is amusing, if you have an ironic outlook. The other day they arrested the famous Mafia chief (Totò Riina). He had been living in Sicily the whole time, like a normal person, while they were looking for him for twenty years. He claimed he didn’t know anything about the Mafia. We can laugh about this criminal, but the dramatic thing is that we’re always told that some people in the government are involved in the Mafia organization, and are probably responsible, so why don’t they also arrest the other criminals that are in the government?”

These thoughtful words still resonate for us today, when we have wars of aggression in Ukraine and Gaza, and a US President with several criminal convictions who is not in jail.

From Balding to Dashing: A Beginner's Guide to Lace Hair Systems in Humid Climates

Our Friends · Monday, May 12th, 2025

So, you've stared long and hard into the mirror, maybe rubbed your head with a sigh or two, and finally decided: "That's it. Time to get myself a hair system or toupee." Congratulations, my follicle-challenged friend—welcome to the club where we glue on our confidence and tape down our dignity (in the best way possible).

Whether you're dealing with alopecia, male pattern baldness, or just had enough of watching your hairline run away from your forehead, making the leap to a hair replacement system, especially a lace-based one, is both exciting and a bit terrifying. But don't worry, I've got you covered (pun absolutely intended).

Why a Lace System?



Photo: New Times Hair via their website

Most of the time, a hair system and **toupee for men** can be used interchangeably. Let's start with the star of the show: the lace base. You've done your research (clearly—you read Reddit and HairLossTalk, so you mean business), and you've chosen lace for one glorious reason: breathability.

Lace hair systems are ideal for hot, humid climates—like, say, *all of India between March and October*. They're light, airy, and allow your scalp to breathe, which is key if you want to avoid turning your head into a sticky swamp after a walk to the chai stand.

Yes, lace can be a bit more delicate and needs a gentle touch during cleaning, but the comfort and natural hairline it offers are worth it. You'll look like you just stepped out of a shampoo ad, and no one needs to know it took a roll of tape and strategic placement to get there.

The Sticky Situation: Choosing the Right Adhesive

Now, onto the glue that holds it all together—literally.

Walker No Shine Tape

You've got your eye on Walker No Shine Tape, which is a solid choice. It's designed for lace systems, has a matte finish (so it won't flash like a disco ball under lights), and holds well in warm weather. Tapes tend to be gentler than liquid adhesives and make cleanup less of a horror show.

But a quick tip: be sure to buy the genuine article. Fakes are floating around, especially on marketplace sites. If the deal seems too good to be true, it probably is. Stick to well-reviewed vendors or verified distributors.

Walker Scalp Protector

This little gem creates a barrier between your scalp and the adhesive. Ideal if, like you, you've got mild allergies or sensitive skin. It can also help with adhesion, especially in sweaty situations. That said, some users in steamy climates find it makes tape bond *less* securely over time (like the protector layer peels away with the tape). Moral of the story? Test it first. Your scalp is unique, like your Netflix recommendations.

Dandruff Woes and Sweat Sorrows

Now we get to the nitty gritty: what if you've got dandruff, or you're the type who sweats if someone even says the word "summer"?

Tackling Dandruff

You mentioned using something like Scalpe+, a smart move. It's ketoconazole-based, which targets the fungus often behind dandruff (*Malassezia*, the unwanted roommate on your scalp).

Just be careful not to lather up the hair system like it's a loofah. Instead, wash your natural scalp carefully, and let the suds gently rinse over the system. Also, wash more frequently during humid weather—build-up is the enemy of good adhesion.

For extra TLC, use sulfate-free shampoos and conditioners. Sulfates strip moisture, and your hair system's fibers aren't regenerating from your follicles—they need babying.

Sweat Management

You don't sweat much, which is a plus. But if you're getting into cycling or gym sessions, slap on a sweatband or a workout cap. Not only does it help your bond last longer, but it also makes you look like you're about to win Wimbledon.

Also, avoid overdoing it right after a fresh install. Give your adhesive a day to set fully before you turn up the heat (literally or figuratively).

Removal: Let's Talk Alcohol (The Scalp Kind)

Your plan to use 99% isopropyl alcohol for adhesive removal is solid. It's effective, cheap, and does the job. But it does come with a tiny caution flag—it can dry out your skin and the base of your system if you bathe in it. Target your spray to the tape edges, let it sit for a minute, and gently lift. No yanking, please. You're removing a hair system, not stripping varnish off furniture.

Alternatives like C-22 solvent are gentler and smell citrusy, but yes, they might irritate sensitive skin. Again, patch test if you're unsure.

Your Routine: Maintenance Is King

You've wisely planned a 7–10 day schedule for reapplications. That's perfect for someone who's fairly active and doesn't want their system hanging on for dear life by day 12. Here's a solid weekly routine:

1. Before Removal: Use IPA or solvent, take your time, avoid tugging.
2. Cleaning the System: Use a soft brush and gentle shampoo on the lace. Rinse thoroughly.
3. Cleaning the Scalp: Anti-dandruff shampoo on real hair and gentle scalp wipes or IPA where the system was.
4. Drying: Let everything air dry. Don't microwave your hairpiece (yes, someone's tried).
5. Reapplication: Scalp Protector (if using), then No Shine Tape, then align and press that baby down like you're sealing a secret treasure.

Real Advice from Real Users

Let's be honest: forums like Reddit and HairLossTalk are goldmines of brutally honest feedback.

1. One seasoned user mentioned that skipping scalp protector actually gave him a *better* hold in a sweaty city. "The tape sticks better directly to clean, oil-free skin," he said, before reminding everyone to buy from reputable vendors because yes—counterfeit tape is real and it's rubbish.
2. Another user swore by IPA but cautioned against flooding the entire system with it: "I got one of those squeeze bottles with a nozzle so I could poke through the hair and squirt right where I needed."
3. And yet another common tip: wash your bio hair fringe regularly to avoid flakes sneaking under the lace. It's the equivalent of vacuuming under the rug.

The Final Word: You've Got This

Look, this journey can feel overwhelming at first. There's a lot to remember, and yes, you might have a moment where you accidentally stick your system on slightly crooked (we've *all* been there). But it's all part of the process.

You're not alone—there's a whole community out there that's been exactly where you are. And with a little patience, a dash of humor, and a solid stash of Walker Tape, you'll be flipping your hair in front of mirrors in no time.

So here's to new beginnings, new hairlines, and the joy of not being able to feel the ceiling fan on your scalp anymore.

A Quick Nod to the Pros: Why Newtimes Hair Deserves a Shoutout

Now that you're all set with tips, tapes, and a head full of plans, let's talk about **hair system suppliers**. When it comes to choosing a toupee that doesn't just look great but also lasts, Newtimes Hair is a name that keeps coming up for all the right reasons. They're widely respected for their high-quality lace and skin base systems, natural hairlines, and excellent customer service.

Whether you're **customizing** your first unit or ordering a stock piece, Newtimes Hair offers a great balance of realism, comfort, and affordability. Plus, they ship internationally, making them a reliable option even if you're shopping from India or anywhere else humid, hot, or fabulous. In a world full of wigs that whisper "maybe," New Times Hair proudly shouts "nailed it."

Photo at top: Freepik

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Common Adult-skin Problems and Simple Ways to Get Rid of Them

Our Friends · Monday, May 12th, 2025

As we grow older, our skin begins to reflect the lifestyle choices, environmental factors, and hormonal changes we experience. Adult skin issues can be frustrating, especially when they appear unexpectedly or become persistent. Fortunately, many of these problems can be addressed with consistent care and smart skincare choices.

Here are five common adult-skin problems and simple ways to manage or eliminate them effectively.

1. Acne Breakouts

Contrary to popular belief, acne isn't just a teenage issue. Many adults—especially women—experience breakouts due to hormonal fluctuations, stress, or poor skincare habits. Adult acne typically appears along the jawline and chin and can be stubborn to treat.

To manage breakouts, use a gentle cleanser with salicylic acid or benzoyl peroxide, and avoid over-washing your face. Incorporate non-comedogenic (non-pore-clogging) products and avoid touching your face frequently. Stress management and a balanced diet can also play a significant role in reducing acne flare-ups.

2. Dry and Flaky Skin

Dry skin can occur at any age but tends to become more common as we grow older due to decreased oil production. Harsh soaps, cold weather, and hot showers can also strip the skin of its natural moisture. To combat dryness, choose a mild, hydrating cleanser and moisturise daily with a product rich in ceramides, glycerin, or hyaluronic acid.

Also, using a humidifier in dry indoor environments can help maintain skin hydration. Drinking enough water and eating foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids, such as walnuts and flaxseeds, will also support your skin from within.

3. Fine Lines and Wrinkles

As collagen and elastin levels drop with age, fine lines and wrinkles begin to form, particularly around the eyes, mouth, and forehead. While this is a natural part of ageing, there are effective ways to slow the process. Using the [best anti wrinkle cream](#) can make a noticeable difference over time.

Brands like Clarins offer formulas with plant-based ingredients and proven active ingredients that help smooth and firm the skin. Look for creams containing retinol, peptides, and antioxidants like vitamin C and E. These ingredients boost collagen production, improve skin texture, and protect against environmental damage. Apply your anti-wrinkle cream consistently, preferably at night, and always wear sunscreen during the day to prevent further damage.

4. Hyperpigmentation and Dark Spots

Dark spots, melasma, and uneven skin tone are often the result of sun exposure, hormonal changes, or inflammation. To reduce pigmentation, incorporate products with ingredients like niacinamide, licorice extract, or vitamin C.

Chemical exfoliants such as alpha hydroxy acids (AHAs) can also help to fade discoloration gradually. Most importantly, using a [broad-spectrum SPF](#) of at least 30 every day—regardless of weather—is essential to prevent these spots from worsening.

5. Skin Sensitivity and Redness

Adults can develop sensitive skin over time, often due to overuse of skincare products, allergies, or conditions like rosacea. If your skin frequently feels tight, itchy, or becomes red easily, it's important to simplify your routine.

Choose fragrance-free, hypoallergenic products, and avoid alcohol-based toners or harsh exfoliants. Using a calming moisturiser with ingredients like aloe vera, chamomile, or oat extract can help soothe irritation and strengthen the skin barrier.

Conclusion

Adult skin issues can be annoying, but with proper care and the right products, they can be managed effectively. By understanding your skin's unique needs and making smart skincare choices, you can achieve healthier, more radiant skin at any age.

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Profhilo Treatment Benefits: How This Injectable Boosts Glow and Reduces Wrinkles

Our Friends · Monday, May 12th, 2025

The Real Reason People Are Talking About Skin Boosters

Fresh, hydrated skin doesn't happen by accident. **Profhilo treatment benefits** are getting attention for one simple reason—results that show.

Forget the frozen look. This injectable treatment works differently from traditional dermal fillers. It doesn't add volume. It spreads beneath the skin to improve texture, hydration, and elasticity. The focus is on stimulating collagen and elastin production, not sculpting.

Let's break it down.

What Makes Profhilo Different?

Two treatments. Five injection sites. That's the starting point. No cutting. No fillers. No numbing cream required for most patients.

Profhilo delivers deep hydration using hyaluronic acid—but it's not the same kind you find in some other skin treatments. It has one of the highest concentrations of HA on the market, designed to spread and hydrate from within.

The product gets injected beneath the surface, where it spreads like honey, triggering natural collagen and elastin growth. The result? Improved firmness, fewer fine lines, and skin that actually feels better.

Why People Choose Profhilo Over Traditional Dermal Fillers

Unlike traditional dermal fillers, Profhilo doesn't reshape the face. Instead, it improves the skin's surface, making it more elastic and smooth.

People notice the change in skin tone, texture, and hydration. That dull, lacklustre skin starts to look alive again. You're not plumping. You're reviving.

That's why more people are opting for non surgical aesthetic treatments like Profhilo to handle early signs of skin ageing. Profhilo treatment helps restore balance without changing your features.

Collagen, Elastin, and a Natural-Looking Result

One of the significant benefits of Profilo is how it triggers natural collagen and elastin production. No harsh reactions. No overdone appearance. Just fresher, smoother skin.

Profilo improves skin tone, targets skin laxity, and softens the look of wrinkles—without the stiffness. The skin feels supple again, and the glow comes back.

Clients usually notice the difference after the second treatment, with full results peaking around four weeks later.

What Happens During a Profilo Appointment?

The procedure takes about 15 minutes. After a quick skin cleanse, small injections go into strategic facial areas. These injection sites are placed where the HA can spread efficiently.

Some patients feel a pinch, but most find the treatment tolerable without a numbing cream. There's little downtime, although heavy exercise is best avoided for a day or two.

Mild swelling or bruising at the sites may occur, but potential side effects are usually minimal.

Profilo Cost and How Results Vary

Profilo cost depends on the provider, region, and number of treatment sessions. It's typically done in two rounds, spaced four weeks apart.

Results will vary depending on individual factors like age, skin type, and lifestyle. But for many, even one session makes a noticeable difference.

Those with dry skin, fine lines, or uneven skin tone often see the fastest changes.

Who's a Good Candidate?

Anyone experiencing early skin ageing, dullness, or sagging may benefit. Those looking for a subtle refresh without major volume or structure changes often turn to Profilo.

It works well for adults of different ages and skin types. If your goal is to improve skin texture, boost radiance, and enjoy a more youthful appearance, you may be a good candidate.

Some use it alongside aesthetic injectables, while others prefer it solo.

Skin Glow Without Looking "Done"

A good skin booster doesn't need to announce itself. Profilo quietly does the work. Skin looks fresher, bouncier, and better hydrated.

It doesn't just sit on the surface. It reaches below to support the structure and give skin back its flexibility.

Clients often say their skin feels plumper and looks healthier. That's because Profilo helps with boosting hydration from the inside out.

Lasting Results Without the Fuss

Unlike some aesthetic treatments, Profhilo sticks to the basics—deep hydration, structure, and skin rejuvenation. You won't leave looking like someone else.

Profhilo treatment benefits go beyond surface-level fixes. The blend of hyaluronic acid and gradual collagen production delivers long-term change.

From fewer fine lines to more even skin tone, the results are hard to miss. It's the kind of glow that makes people ask if you've had more sleep, not more filler.

Final Thoughts

Not all injectable treatments are created equal. Profhilo treatment benefits stand out because the effects come from what your skin does naturally—once it gets the right boost.

Profhilo injections help bring back the youthful glow by stimulating collagen, improving skin texture, and increasing overall radiance. Unlike harsh options, it works gently beneath the surface to support youthful skin from the inside.

It's proof that great skin doesn't always need a drastic solution—sometimes, it just needs the right support.

Frequently Asked Questions

How does Profhilo improve the skin's hydration?

It spreads hyaluronic acid under the surface, locking in moisture and improving the skin's hydration over time.

Does Profhilo help with fine lines and wrinkles?

Yes, it softens the look of fine lines and wrinkles by stimulating collagen and elastin production.

Can Profhilo boost overall skin quality?

Absolutely—skin quality improves as firmness, elasticity, and tone increase after treatment.

How soon can I see results from Profhilo?

Most people start noticing smoother, more hydrated skin within a few weeks of the first session.

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Abigail Kuras: Excerpt from “Severed Souls”

Abigail Kuras · Friday, May 9th, 2025

This is an excerpt from a work-in-progress by 15-year-old Abigail Kuras, one of the first two mentees in Cultural Daily’s free [writing mentorship program](#).

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Severed Souls

(work-in-progress)

Persistent winds weave around bushes and rush through trees, throwing autumn leaves to the ground.

“I’m sorry guys, there’s nothing I can do,” I say, distracting myself with my surroundings. Empty branches poke holes in the sky where the stars would be. The faint scent of coming rain alerts the hopeful birds, the fearful bugs, and hiding mice and squirrels.

“But we still have our Halloween festival,” Cleo says with a shaky voice. “That was supposed to be our sort of goodbye party!”

“I know. I wish I could come.” Rapid waters inch higher and higher, the glistening current a tempting, glittery blue. Skies as red as a velvet coat, as vibrantly orange as a supernova; the setting sun puts the cosmos to shame. If only this moment was as beautiful as the sky. This is nothing like the movies, where friends split up and wish each other the best and promise to keep in touch.

“Why are you leaving so early anyway?” Ace asks.

The earth goes quiet; the animals hiding, as the world drifts to sleep. Almost as if the forest is listening.

“It’s not worth explaining.”

“No! It’s worth explaining to me! Tell me!” Cleo grabs my shoulders.

Crunching leaves cover the sounds of a squirrel’s acorn feast. As river waves crash upon rocks, its scent carries near; enhancing the earthy smell of muddy, tangled roots.

“You won’t want to hear it! Trust me!”

With effortless grace, the birds swoop around, returning to their homes.

Ace gently pulls Cleo off me. “Cleo, it’s fine. Just leave it. Let her process this.”

Cleo takes off running, and I sigh.

“I’m sorry. I have no control in this, really.”

Below the ground, the worms burrow themselves away. The grass tickles everything it touches, like a friendly forest hug.

“It’s okay, you did your best. I’ll see you tomorrow to help you pack up.”

“Okay.” I walk away, defeated.

Warm rays of final sunshine drape everything in love, and Mother Nature’s clouds welcome the rainy night.

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(Featured image from [Pexels](#))

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How has the changing economy affected online casinos?

Our Friends · Friday, May 9th, 2025

Economic transformations, fueled by inflation, technology and changing consumer behavior, have transformed industries globally. In South Africa, the online casino market has not escaped the effects of such developments. Be it budget-conscious players or [technologically advanced](#) gamblers, the evolving economy has impacted how online casinos operate and survive. In this article, we assess the economic trends affecting South Africa’s online gambling market and the prospects for the market moving forward.

Consumer budgets under pressure

Rising living expenses and economic uncertainty have squeezed family budgets across South Africa. With decreasing disposable income, many have had to reconsider how much they spend on recreational activities. Despite this, online casinos have remained popular by providing a budget-friendly alternative to resort-style entertainment, concerts and vacations.

The option to wager small stakes or play free demo games allows many people to enjoy online gambling. Affordability has been a lifeline for the business, as players can indulge in leisure activities without spending much. Online casinos have emerged as a choice option for those seeking amusement on a budget during adverse economic circumstances.

Technology drives efficiency for any online casino

Economic pressures have compelled casino sites to reduce costs while still providing quality. Technology developments have made all the difference, allowing sites to optimize operations while improving player experiences. Solutions like automation and cloud computing have cut overheads, while analytics enable sites to target promotions for individual players .

South African websites, including those on [Play Casino](#), capitalize on such innovations by providing real-money games with security and diversity. From slots to live games, these sites provide value for players seeking engaging experiences for affordable prices.

Cryptocurrency payments are also becoming increasingly popular, giving players a low-fee option for secure transactions. The World Economic Forum's [digital innovation report](#) offers a wider perspective on this technology and its economic resilience.

Player priority changes

Economic adversity has altered the priorities of what players value most when playing at online casinos. South Africans increasingly opt for low-limit games or sites that offer bonuses, including free spins or cashback offers. These help to stretch gambling budgets, making the activity appealing in lean times.

Mobile gambling has also boomed, fueled by the mass adoption of smartphones and cheaper data plans. Casino games can now be accessed by players wherever they go, from commutes to lounging around the house. Mobile-optimized sites have become a priority for operators, who are spending big money developing easy-to-use applications and sites for the expanding market.

The effect of economic changes on game diversity

Economic developments have impacted what games South African internet casinos provide. There is a demand for low-stakes and free-to-play games as players opt for cheaper entertainment. Adjustable bet slots and games of chance, such as bingo, have gained popularity as players can sustain longer sessions with less capital outlay.

Economic forces have pushed game design innovation as well. Developers have produced higher-involvement games, including interactive narratives and reward systems, to engage players for longer durations. Live dealer games have also gained popularity, mimicking the casino experience for less than actual physical locations. These casino games attract players who desire a live experience on a budget.

To compete, internet casinos use data analytics to learn player preferences and adapt their products. By emphasizing varied, affordable games, they are making themselves accessible to a broader population, as well as supporting the economic imperatives of South Africa.

Overcoming regulatory obstacles in the online casino market

The economic downturn has fueled a new wave of calls to regulate South Africa's internet gambling market. Since the government intends to diversify its revenues, legalizing internet casinos can be a substantial source of additional tax revenue. Despite this, the existing framework, based on the 1996 National Gambling Act, does not effectively regulate digital sites, leaving players and operators uncertain.

More regulation may mean higher operating expenses, fewer promotions or higher player fees. However, providing fair treatment and secure transactions promotes greater client trust.

Marketing in an age of cost-consciousness

Economic developments have made online casinos reconsider their strategies. Since value for money matters alongside credibility, operators are adapting by being transparent and running targeted promotions. Emphases on licensing credentials, responsible gambling and affordable promotions promote credibility amid a competitive battle.

Social media is a powerful weapon for engaging with younger players who are attracted by mobile games and influencer driven content. Targeted advertisements from operators are being used for low-stakes games and loyalty schemes, which are attractive to value-conscious players. These indicate a larger shift toward customer-centric strategies that fit economic realities.

What the future holds for the online casino market

South Africa's online casino market is set to expand despite economic hardships. Its capacity for evolution, through technology, player-centric products and smart marketing, has made it resilient. In the future, virtual reality technology and blockchain systems may reshape the player experience, making online casinos even more immersive.

Legalizing online gambling could further revolutionize the market, making it more regulated and increasing government revenues. Through its focus on affordability, security and innovation, online casinos in South Africa are poised to tackle economic challenges and emerge as a favorite pastime for many more years.

Image at top created by files from Vertigo3D and BillionPhotos; both via Getty/Canva Pro

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Pratna Kem: Two Poems

Pratna Kem · Thursday, May 8th, 2025

Knot

uneasy knuckles callused trouble with laces
found Velcro sneaks the Payless shelltoes
looped her krama in a around her neck
a cluster of people a packed courthouse
in her stomach nervous to repeat aloud
tongue tied in a a misspoken oath right
hand raised another pledge of allegiance
she carried so many back and shoulders
nestled deep in tissue behind shoulder blades
muscle fibers a tangled mass to knead out
couldn't stop remember stop remembering
her son on a boat the rest of her money
enough for one drift slow always under 5
never seen again tears enough for a village

a swig of rum one around her neck need out

*

Home Cooking: Recipe for a Lost Generation

Ingredients:

2.7 million tons, bombs
 1 Democratic figure head
 1 genocide
 2.5 million, casualties
 3 million, genocide survivors
 1 American Red Cross
 1 UNICEF
 500 Christian missionaries
 150,000 refugees
 48 states
 6 months, welfare
 Drug abuse
 Alcoholism
 Gambling
 Violence
 Children – amount dependent on number of servings

Directions:

1. Take 2.7 million tons of bombs and secretly drop over eastern Cambodia over 4 years.
2. Then endorse 1 Democratic figure head. This will give rise Communist regime.
3. Allow 1 genocide to take place. Gradually sprinkle in 2.5 casualties over the course of 4 years.
4. Prepare refugee camps along the Thai border. Allow room for 3 million genocide survivors.
5. Deploy American Red Cross, UNICEF, and Christian missionaries.
6. Admit 150,000 refugees into the country. Scatter evenly across all impoverished neighborhoods in the lower 48.
7. Provide 6 months of welfare; no schooling and no job training.
8. Only provide food services and mental health support through the Church. If still Buddhist, batch is no good.
9. Mix in drug abuse, alcoholism, gambling, violence, or any other self-destructive coping mechanism of choice.
10. Set aside mixture and allow to ferment over 5-10 years until the desired level of bitterness is achieved. To quicken the process, frequently add in racial violence and police brutality.
11. Dip children into ready mixture and set on the streets to serve.

(Featured photo is [public domain](#))

A Toast to Relaxation: Enjoying THC-Infused Seltzers

Our Friends · Thursday, May 8th, 2025

As the trend of low-calorie drinks merges with the buzz of cannabinoids, THC-infused seltzers are carving out a refreshing niche in the market. These effervescent beverages offer a unique experience for those seeking to unwind with a can in hand. With the legalization of cannabis products progressing, more consumers are turning their curiosity toward these tantalizing drinks. Today, a growing number of brands are testing the waters with their own takes on THC-infused seltzers, promising enjoyment with every sip. Below, we delve into the evolution of this beverage, its benefits, and best practices for consumption.

Exploring the Rise of THC-Infused Seltzers in the Beverage Market

THC-infused seltzers are quickly carving out a niche in the beverage world, blending the appeal of cannabis with health-conscious drinking. With low calories, no smoke, and a variety of refreshing flavors, these drinks are becoming a go-to choice for adults looking for a clean, social buzz. From citrus blends to herbal twists, there's a taste for everyone, making them perfect for both parties and quiet nights in.

As legalization expands and demand rises, brands are refining production with strict testing and quality control. This focus on safety and consistency has helped THC seltzers gain mainstream acceptance, especially among wellness-focused consumers. With thoughtful marketing and a growing fanbase, the category shows strong momentum—explore the trend at <https://drinkanomaly.com>.

The Benefits of Choosing THC-Seltzers for Relaxation

THC-infused seltzers are a popular choice for relaxation due to their low calorie content and absence of alcohol, ensuring guilt-free indulgence without compromising dietary goals. They also offer calming effects and a controlled dosage, allowing users to choose their level of relaxation.

The rapid onset of effects compared to traditional **edibles** makes them an appealing choice for those seeking immediate relief. The discreet nature of THC-infused seltzers makes them a more sociable choice, suitable for various settings, from quiet evenings to laid-back barbecues.

How to Safely Enjoy THC-Infused Seltzers

Safety is crucial when using THC-infused seltzers, with beginners and experienced users starting with a single serving to gauge their body's response. It's important to read the label closely to understand the concentration of THC in each serving to avoid overconsumption. Staying hydrated and pacing is crucial, and mixing with alcohol or other substances is not recommended.

Consuming in a safe environment is also recommended. Designating a responsible sober

companion can improve safety by monitoring consumption levels and handling unexpected situations. Transportation plans, such as ride-share services or designated drivers, are also important to ensure safe transportation home.

Pairing THC-Infused Seltzers with Social Activities

THC-infused seltzers can enhance social activities by creating a laid-back atmosphere, making them ideal for outdoor events like barbecues and movie nights. Hosting tasting parties allows guests to explore different flavors while encouraging responsible consumption.

These seltzers can also be used in creative pairings, like citrus-flavored with seafood or berry-infused with desserts, enhancing the culinary experience. They can also be included in game nights or creative jams, providing a relaxing backdrop for friendly competition or artistic expression. By moderating consumption and facilitating shared activities, seltzers create memorable experiences without solely focusing on THC content.

Navigating the Legal Landscape of THC-Infused Beverages

Understanding the legal context of THC-infused beverages is crucial for both consumers and manufacturers. Local laws vary significantly, and checking age restrictions and purchase limits can help avoid legal pitfalls. Manufacturers face complex regulations related to production, packaging, and marketing, and compliance is essential for product longevity.

Consumers should buy from reputable companies that adhere to these guidelines for quality and safety. Companies should be transparent about lab testing results and cannabis sources, building trust between the brand and customers. Staying informed about legislative changes is also important, as cannabis laws change and the industry adjusts. Being **proactive** and educated in this area allows consumers and producers to navigate legal intricacies with confidence.

Overall, THC-infused seltzers have become a trendy and enjoyable way to relax and socialize. They offer a convenient, discreet, and enjoyable method of cannabis consumption, with benefits that appeal to a broad range of consumers. As this market segment continues to expand, adhering to safety guidelines and staying informed about legalities will ensure that these effervescent drinks can be enjoyed responsibly and legally for years to come.

Photo: Kindel Media via Pexels

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Preakness Stakes Odds: What Bettors Need to Know

Our Friends · Thursday, May 8th, 2025

The Middle Jewel of the Triple Crown

The Kentucky Derby may grab the spotlight, but the **Preakness Stakes** is where storylines get serious. Held at Baltimore's historic **Pimlico Race Course**, the Preakness is the second leg of the Triple Crown and often defines the momentum heading into the Belmont Stakes. With a slightly shorter distance of 1 3/16 miles, the race sets the stage for a different kind of showdown—and a different kind of betting opportunity.

Understanding the **odds** going into the Preakness is essential for anyone hoping to turn a wager into a win. With fewer horses than the Derby and a different field composition, the Preakness often delivers unexpected outcomes, especially for those who know where to look.

How Preakness Odds Take Shape

Unlike the Derby, which features a massive field of up to 20 horses, the Preakness typically runs with a more compact field—usually between 8 and 12 contenders. This smaller field can tighten the odds and reduce chaos, but it also increases the importance of pace scenarios and jockey tactics.

Preakness Stakes odds are set based on a combination of factors:

- Performance in the Kentucky Derby
- Historical trainer performance at Pimlico
- Recent workouts and form
- Track conditions leading into race day

The early favorite is often the Derby winner, especially if the victory was convincing. However, this doesn't always guarantee a repeat performance. Fatigue, track surface, and a different set of competitors can turn the tables quickly.

Key Contenders and Trends

In recent years, the Preakness has produced both dominant favorites and shocking upsets. Horses who skipped the Derby often enter the Preakness fresh, rested, and with a tactical edge. These “new shooters” can pose serious threats, especially if the Derby was grueling.

Pay close attention to:

- **Trainer trends:** Bob Baffert, Steve Asmussen, and Chad Brown have had notable success in this race.
- **Jockey changes:** A switch to a top-tier jockey can signal strong connections and renewed confidence.
- **Pace projections:** Who's likely to lead? Who's going to close? A fast early pace can favor mid-pack stalkers.

For example, a closer who was too far back in the Derby may find the Preakness's shorter distance and cleaner trip more manageable, making them a strong play at longer odds.

Smart Ways to Wager on the Preakness

Preakness Stakes betting involves more than just focusing on the win odds. **Exotic bets** like exactas, trifectas, and **superfectas** can offer tremendous value, especially in a smaller field.

- **Exacta Box:** Pair a favorite with a mid-range contender who benefits from the pace setup.
- **Trifecta Wheel:** Use the favorite on top, but spread with closers and speedsters underneath.
- **Win-Place-Show:** If you're backing a longshot, this structure gives you multiple paths to cash in.

Don't ignore **live longshots**—those coming in fresh, with strong morning workouts and improving speed figures. A 10-1 shot in the Preakness is often far more likely to hit the board than a similarly priced runner in the Derby.

Factors That Move the Line

As race day nears, odds can shift dramatically. Monitor:

- **Track conditions:** A sloppy track can upend pace dynamics and favor certain running styles.
- **Injury updates and scratches:** A late scratch or change in the field can dramatically alter betting value.
- **Public money trends:** Watch where the casual bettors are placing their faith—and where value may open up in response.

These adjustments can mean the difference between betting smart and betting blind.

Final Thoughts: Betting With Clarity

The Preakness Stakes offers a uniquely strategic betting environment. With a smaller field, a shorter distance, and a high-stakes atmosphere, it's a race that rewards careful analysis and confident decision-making. Whether you're hoping to ride the wave of a Derby favorite or cash in on a fresh-faced newcomer, the odds are your roadmap—and the angles are there if you know where to look.

The bottom line? Bet with insight, not instinct. And never underestimate how quickly fortunes can change in the Middle Jewel of the Triple Crown

Photo: Tom Fisk via Pexels

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Secular Sensibilities

Ann Haskins · Wednesday, May 7th, 2025

Mothers' Day moves in Topanga Canyon; LA Phil's Boulez fest features dance downtown; Peruvian-African diaspora dance in Glendale; a ballet season closer in Santa Barbara; Chinese dance traditions in Irvine; contemporary dance in Hollywood, Pasadena, Burbank, Santa Monica, Irvine, and downtown; more SoCal dance this busy week, plus a peek at next week.

Live This Week

Together again

The LA Phil reteams with choreographer Benjamin Millepied and the dancers of **LA Dance Project** for *Rituel*, part of an LA Phil program celebrating the centennial of conductor/composer Pierre Boulez. Commissioned by LADP, the LA Phil, the Orchestre de Paris — Philharmonie, and the New York Philharmonic, Millepied's *Rituel* arrives in LA after Paris and before New York, all conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen and danced by LADP. The dancers include Lorrin Brubaker, Jeremy Coachman, Courtney Conovan, Daphne Fernberger, Shu Kinouchi, Audrey Sides, and Hope Spears. Details on other music on the program are at the website. Walt Disney Hall, 151 S. Grand Ave., downtown; Thurs. & Sat., May 8 & 10, 7:30 pm, Sun., May 11, 2 pm, \$55-\$219. [LA Phil](#).



Los Angeles Dance Project. Photo courtesy of the artists

Peruvian connections

Curated by choreographer/teacher/producer Jamie Nichols, the Brand Associates Dance Series welcomes the **Afro-Peruvian Experience Dance Co.** to its foothill galleries. For three decades, the company, led by director Nadia Calmet, has showcased the dance and music of Peru's African ancestors. Brand Library & Art Center, 1601 W. Mountain St., Glendale; Sat., May 10, 5 pm, free. [Brand Library](#).



MOMentum Place. Photo courtesy of the artist

For a certain kind of Mom

For an entertaining, halcyon alternative to crowded restaurants on Mother's Day, consider **MOMentum Place**. Taking over a stage that hosts summer Shakespeare under the oak trees, this mostly annual event offers an array of dancers, acrobats, aerialists, and other entertainers curated by Lexi Pearl. Bring a picnic or opt for the spring-themed brunch (additional \$40 charge). With restricted access from Pacific Coast Highway, the best route is from the San Fernando Valley side. Theatricum Botanicum, 1419 N. Topanga Canyon Blvd., Topanga Canyon; Sun., May 11, Optional brunch — noon — 1:30 pm \$40; performance – 2 pm, \$45, \$35 students/seniors, \$15 children 12 & under; [Will Geer Theatricum Botanicum](#).



Milka Djordjevich. Photo courtesy of the artist

Bob and weave

Dancer/choreographer **Milka Djordjevich** also brings her composer chops to *Bob*, exploring algorithmic movement patterns and the labor of the dancing body. Part of the Wonmi Warehouse series. The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA, 152 N. Central Ave., Little Tokyo; Fri., May 9, 7:30 pm, Sat., May 10, 4 pm, \$12. [MOCA](#).



Benita Bike's DanceArt. Photo by Dean Wallraff

Decoding dance

After last month's proscenium theater performance, **Benita Bike's DanceArt** resumes its minimally staged events in non-traditional venues including parks and libraries. The informal programs entertain and explain how dance is made. Dancers include Sarah Chan, Lauren Gold, Dakota Merritt, Dalya Modlin, and Emily Wallace. Buena Vista Branch Library, 300 N. Buena Vista St., Burbank; Wed., May 14, 7 pm, free. [Benita Bikes Danceart Company](#).



BODYTRAFFIC. Photo courtesy of the artists

Continued reminders

Continuing its SoCal tour of *This Reminds Me of You*, the splendid dancers of **BODYTRAFFIC** head south with a three part program. Trey McIntyre's *Mayday* set to Buddy Holly's songs, Matthew Neenan's *I Forgot the Start*, and Joan Rodriguez' Cuban infused *Bloquea'o* completes the triptych. Irvine Barclay Theatre, UC Irvine, 4242 Campus Dr., Irvine; Thurs., May 15, 8 pm, \$44-\$109. [Irvine Barclay](#).

Terpsichorean triptych

A trio of dance theater works take the stage as the **Nancy Evans Dance Theatre** presents *Works 2025: Bound*. The modern dance works include choreographer and artistic director Nancy Evans Doede's *Vigil* considering the ripple effects of a tragic accident, the premiere of Ashleigh Doede's *In-Yun* inspired by the Korean belief that even the briefest encounters are shaped by past lives, and guest artist Cheryl Banks-Smith joins Nancy Evans Doede for *Parallel Universe*, an improvisational collaboration. ARC Pasadena (A Room to Create), 1158 E. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena; Sat., May 10 & 17, 8 pm, Sun., May 11 & 18, 4 pm, \$30-\$100, \$25 students/seniors. [Nancy Evans Dance Theatre](#).



Nancy Evans Dance Theatre. Photo courtesy of the artists

Spectrum widening

The Altadena-based **LA Unbound** offers non-competitive performance opportunities with events that showcase the range of SoCal dance genres. Their *Spring Show* promises an array of dance from contemporary to hip hop, ballet to tap. Mainstage Theatre, Glendale Community College, 1601 E. Mountain Ave., Glendale; Sat., May 10, 4 & 7:30 pm, \$20-\$30, [Tickets](#).

Beachside ballet

For the finale of a season celebrating its 30th anniversary, Santa Barbara's **State Street Ballet** partners with the Opera Santa Barbara Orchestra for *The Brilliance Program*. The dancers present George Balanchine's Gershwin-infused *Who Cares?*, along with Gerald Arpino's *Birthday Variations* set to ballet music from Verdi's operas. A new work from contemporary choreographer Kassandra Taylor rounds out the program. Lobero Theatre, 33 E. Canon Perdido St., Santa Barbara; Fri., May 9, 7:30 pm, Sat., May 10, 2 pm, \$35-\$65, \$24 students/children. [Lobero Theatre](#).



State Street Ballet. Photo courtesy of the artists

Masked man

His head encased in a horned, bovidae-suggestive mask, a naked **Paul Donald** explores masculinity as he navigates wooden set pieces in his solo performance *In Grain*. Highways Performance Space, 1651 18th St., Santa Monica; Fri., May 9, 8 pm, \$25, \$20 students/seniors. [Highways](#).

Into the house

This performance organization is known for its distinctive programs that bring an audience into a residence or other physical structure where performing artists have created movement specifically for that site. Not surprisingly, the site of this fundraising performance is a historic home designed in 1941 by architect Rudolph Schindler with his signature post and beam construction. Performances by Genna Moroni, Emily Marchand, Christina Burchard, Susan Barbour, Joe Berry, and Kelly Loudenberg are accompanied by brunch, silent auction, and the other usual friend/fundraiser options. Rodriguez House, 2567 Glendower Ave., Glendale; Sat., May 10, 11 am-2 pm. \$200-\$350. [Garden Party – A benefit for homeLA](#).



Home/LA at Rodriguez House. Photo courtesy of the artists

Three from China

Three tales, including the source for a Disney movie, are told in the original musical *Legends* from the **Chinese Dance Company of Southern California**. The dancers are joined by a live orchestra to tell three Chinese tales employing Beijing opera, aerial acrobatics, and martial arts, backed by music from rock to classical incorporating traditional instruments. Audiences may be familiar with *Mulan* from the Disney movies and how, disguised as a man, she took her father's place in the army. Less familiar are *Nezha*, who battles a dragon to save his village, and *The Monkey King*, telling of a mischievous monkey's evolution to power. Segerstrom Center for the Arts, 600 Town Center Dr., Costa Mesa; Sun., May 11, 4 pm, \$33.90-\$101.70. [SCFTA](#).

Who needs CGI?

Jaw-dropping puppetry anchors **The Life of Pi**, the theatrical retelling of Yann Martel's best-selling novel about a 16-year old shipwreck survivor adrift in a lifeboat with four animals, notably a Bengal tiger. Nick Barnes and Finn Caldwell created the puppetry for the original, Olivier award-winning British production that went on to Broadway and won several Tony awards. Anyone who sniffs that puppetry isn't dance or choreography should watch the multiple actors tightly orchestrated manipulations as well as the puppet's choreographed moves, and then just shush up. Everyone else can sit back and marvel. Music Center, Ahmanson Theatre, 135 N. Grand Ave., downtown; Tues.-Fri., 8 pm, Sat., 2 & 8 pm, Sun., 1 & 6 pm, also Thurs., May 29, 2 pm, thru Sun., June 1. \$37.95 -\$166.75 (w/fees). [CTG](#).



Psychopomp. Photo courtesy of the artists

They are bend-y

The acrobatic dance company **Psychopomp** provides the performance component of this event exploring Jewish folklore and community. In *Der Golem*, the dancers reconsider the Jewish mythological and culturally ubiquitous creature of the Golem. Fiesta Hall, Plummer Park 1166 N. Vista Street West Hollywood; Thurs., May 15, 7 pm, \$23.02. [Psychopomp](#).

Seasonal signs

It is spring and time for the annual **CalArts Spring Dance** as the graduating class presents a range of choreography from Trisha Brown (a restaging of her *Glacial Decoy* with sets and costumes by Robert Rauschenberg), and commissions from Genna Moroni, Omar Ramón de Jesús, and an alum contribution from Jobel Medina. REDCAT, Disney Hall, 621 W. 2nd St., downtown; Tues.-Wed., May 13-14, 8:30 pm, \$20. [REDCAT](#).



Genna Moroni and G.U.M. Photo by Denise Leitner

The last move

Choreographer **Marissa Herrera** set the moves for hip hop infused *The Last Play* by *Rickérby Hinds*. The play, written by Hinds and directed by Daphnie Sicre, was commissioned by the Latino Theater Company. The action follows an Afro-Latino playwright as he conjures characters from previous plays, seeking inspiration for what he believes will be his final play. What could possibly go wrong? The Los Angeles Theatre Center, 514 S. Spring St., downtown; Thurs.-Sat., 8 pm, Sun., 4 pm, thru Sun., May 25, \$10 (Thursdays), \$48, \$24 students/seniors/veterans/LAUSD teachers w/ ID. [Latino Theater Company at The Los Angeles Theatre Center](#).

Lorca lore

Directed and choreographed by Deborah Colker, **LA Opera's** *Ainadamar* draws on Flamenco and Spanish dance as well as a libretto by David Henry Hwang to recount poet/playwright Federico Garcia Lorca's last days. The opera takes its title from the site where Lorca was executed as part of Spanish dictator Francisco Franco's reign of terror after the Spanish civil war to eliminate artists whose work opposed Franco's dictatorship. Music Center, Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, 135 N. Grand Ave., downtown; Thurs., May 15, 7:30 pm, Sun., May 18, 2 pm, \$32.50- \$296. [LA Opera](#).



LA Opera's "Ainadamar." Photo by Marty Sohl

Greek roots

Choreographer/dancer **Esther Mira** is part of the creative team and also dances in the cast of *Hellas*, written and directed by Christopher William Johnson. This new play surveys the Greek roots of western civilization, complete with dance and fight choreography. The saga is presented in part on Fridays, while Saturday and Sunday offer the full marathon production. The Broadwater Mainstage, 1076 Lillian Way, Hollywood; Fri., 7:30 pm, Sat.-Sun, 2 pm, thru May 11, \$25-\$30, \$20-\$25 students. [Tickets](#).

A Peek at Next Week: (May 16 to 22)

Steven Atwater & Thomas Ford — *In Search of an Exit* at Sierra Madre Playhouse, 87 W. Sierra Madre Blvd., Sierra Madre; Sat.-Sun., May 17-18, 7:30 pm, \$12-\$35. [Sierra Madre Playhouse](#).

State Ballet Theatre of Ukraine — *Sleeping Beauty* at Saban Theatre, 8440 Wilshire Blvd., Beverly Hills, Sat., May 17, 6 pm, \$65.96-\$105.90. [Tickets](#). Also at Long Beach Performing Arts Center, Terrace Theater, 300 E. Ocean Blvd., Long Beach; Sun., May 18, 2 & 7 pm, \$58-\$160. [Ticketmaster](#).

Mark Morris Dance Group — *Pepperland* at Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, 9390 N. Santa Monica Blvd., Beverly Hills; Fri., May 16, 7:30 pm, Sat., May 17, 2 & 7:30 pm, Sun., May 18, 2 pm, \$64-\$141.90. [The Wallis](#).



Mark Morris Dance Group. Photo by Gareth Jones

MashUp Contemporary Dance Company — *Open Mic* at Frogtown Studios, 2828 Gilroy St., Frogtown; Sat., May 17, 7 pm, \$15. [MashUp](#).

Volta Collective — *Loneliness Triptych: Excerpt* at the Brand Library & Art Center, 1601 W. Mountain St., Glendale; Sat., May 17, 5 pm, free. [Brand Library](#).

Okinawa Association of America — *UTAYABIRA, WUDUYABIRA (Let's Sing, Let's Dance)* at James R. Armstrong Theatre, 3330 Civic Center Dr., Torrance; Sun., May 18, 2 pm, \$30. [Ticket request](#).

Kayamanan Ng Lahi Philippine Folk Arts at Sierra Madre Playhouse, 87 W. Sierra Madre Blvd., Sierra Madre; Sat., May 17, 11 am, \$12-\$35 (sold out, but waitlist at website). [Contact](#).

Orange County Dance Festival at HB Art Center, 538 Main St., #98, Huntington Beach; Sat., May 17, 2 to 8 pm, \$10-\$100 (donation). [AKOMIDANCE](#).



OC Dance Festival's AkomiDance. Photo by Vytas Barauskas

Jingqiu Guan — *Where Are We Going Now?* at Highways Performance Space, 1651 18th St., Santa Monica; Fri.-Sat., May 16-17, 8 pm, \$25, \$20. [Highways](#).

LA Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE) — *Endurance* at LA Dance Project, 2245 E. Washington Blvd., Arts District; Fri.-Sat., May 16-17, 7 pm, free w/reservation at [Eventbrite](#).

Global Motion at the Broad Stage, 1310 11th St., Santa Monica; Sat., May 17, 7:30 pm, \$23, \$20 students. [Tickets](#).

Los Angeles Ballet — *Gala 2025* at Beverly Wilshire Hotel, 9500 Wilshire Blvd., Beverly Hills; Sat., May 17, 6:30 pm, \$1,000-\$100,000. [Gala 2025 | Los Angeles Ballet](#).

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Not All Seed Banks Are Legit: How to Vet Marijuana Seed Companies Before You Buy

Our Friends · Wednesday, May 7th, 2025

One flashy website, some photos of frosty buds, and a bold promise—and suddenly you've wired \$100 to a stranger hoping your seeds show up. In the cannabis world, that's a mistake too many growers make. Not all seed banks are created equal. Some care about your grow, others care about your wallet. Before you plant a single seed, you need to know if the company behind it is serious,

shady, or somewhere in between. Here's how to vet marijuana seed sellers like a pro—so you buy smart and grow confidently.

Reputation Is Everything—But Look Past the Surface

Anyone can claim they're "trusted by thousands." But real trust shows up in the details, not in a slogan. A legit seed bank has built a name with actual growers, not just flashy ads and affiliate hype. They've been talked about in forums, tested by customers, and held up under scrutiny. It's your job to find those patterns.

What real credibility looks like

- Grower forum mentions from multiple users with actual results
- Long history of reviews—not a flood of five-stars in one week
- Breeders and brands they carry are reputable and traceable

What should make you pause

- A site with no physical address or staff info
- Dozens of strains with no breeder attribution
- Claims like "100% germination rate" with no explanation or backup

Where to double-check

- Reddit's r/microgrowery and r/trees often discuss seed banks
- Look for YouTube reviews from growers who show their results
- Check Trustpilot or similar platforms—but look for review depth, not just stars

Policies Reveal Intent—Read the Fine Print

The best seed banks expect some failures. They know nature isn't perfect. That's why they offer germination policies, stealth shipping, and clear customer support. Scammy sellers hide behind vagueness. Their refund rules are slippery, their promises vague, and their emails slow to respond—if they answer at all.

Good signs you're dealing with a serious vendor

- Germination guarantees with realistic coverage (not 100%, not 0%)
- Easy-to-understand shipping options, including stealth packaging
- Return or reshipment policies that don't require a fight

Red flags that scream "buyer beware"

- No visible return or support policy
- Over-the-top stealth packaging that feels like it's avoiding legal scrutiny
- Checkout only accepting crypto with no customer recourse

Simple way to test support

- Ask a question about germination or genetics before buying
- See how fast and how clearly they respond—this tells you everything

Genetics Matter—Know What You're Really Buying

It's easy to slap a name like "Gelato Punch" or "Purple Monkey Balls" on a seed and call it elite. But unless the genetics are stable and traceable, you're buying a mystery. [Good seed banks](#) work with known breeders or produce their own stable lines. Shady ones repackage whatever they can source and hope it germinates.

How to spot clean, stable genetics

- Breeder names are clearly listed next to strains
- Genetic history (parent strains) is mentioned, not hidden
- Consistency in photos and grow reports from different users

How bad seeds get sold

- Repackaged bulk seeds passed off as branded
- Random crosses renamed to ride hype waves
- Zero info on THC/CBD content, flowering time, or grow difficulty

Don't trust the name alone

- "Girl Scout Cookies" from 5 different sellers may be 5 different things
- Look for companies that show you how the strain was bred
- Seed banks that breed in-house should provide testing data or pheno info

Conclusion

A seed may be small, but the risk isn't. Buying from the wrong seed bank costs time, money, and a whole season of growing. The good news? With a little homework, you can avoid the scams and find sellers who care about what happens after the sale. Look for signs of transparency, consistency, and community reputation. Real seed banks don't just push products—they support your grow from seed to smoke. And once you find one that does, you won't go back. Finally, if you are looking for the best [marijuana seed companies](#), check out the following article!

Photo: Kindel Media via Pexels

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The Main Trends in the Development of Modern Small-Arms

Our Friends · Wednesday, May 7th, 2025

People's need for modern small arms constantly grows, forcing manufacturers to actively develop their industry and find new ways to improve products. This process is rapidly gaining momentum and affects companies from different countries worldwide. It will allow us to form specific trends

and determine current directions for developing small arms.

Application of modern materials

Until recently, most design elements of small arms were made of various metals. There was no alternative to them for a long time, but with the development of modern technologies, many polymers and composites have become more accessible to people. These modern materials have begun to be widely used in various fields of activity, including weapons production. Due to their characteristics, small arms developers have significantly reduced the weight of the models produced without creating problems with their strength and reliability. By widely using modern materials, manufacturers have eliminated such problems as fatigue during prolonged wearing weapons and the difficulty of transporting them. Experts do not doubt that the trend of using lighter materials will be relevant for a very long time, which means the chances for further development in this area are high.

Use of modular design

Comparing small arms of the recent past and present, everyone will notice that modern models consist of more components than their predecessors. This feature complicates new products' production and assembly process but allows for their universalization. Following this trend, small arms produced today have a base section and many components attached to it. Thanks to modularity, owners of modern guns, rifles and pistols have unlimited opportunities to adapt to current environmental conditions, specific tasks, individual human needs, etc. Also, the modular design simplifies replacing damaged elements of small arms with new ones and makes it possible to repair them even in field conditions. The latter advantage is significant for models used in the military sphere. In this regard, new weapons with a modular design first go to soldiers and only become available to civilians.

Adaptation of weapons to work with various optics

Manufacturers of modern small arms try to make their products suitable for various tasks. To do this, developers pay great attention to the issues of its adaptation to work with such optical devices as civil and **military night-vision rifle scopes**, rangefinders, laser designators, etc. This process has become a visible trend that is relevant in all countries of the world. Following it, developers provide for the possibility of installing various optical devices on weapons, regardless of where and by whom they were produced. For this, universal types of mounts and other useful tricks are often used to simplify the lives of small arms owners. Because modern models are initially adapted to work with various optics, they are becoming more in demand among the military and civilians. This, in turn, allows manufacturers to win the competition and increase their income.

Increasing the safety of weapon operation

Another noticeable trend in the development of modern small arms is the desire of manufacturers to make their operation more predictable and less dangerous for the user. For these purposes, developers constantly improve the design and use additional safety features. This approach reduces the likelihood of accidental shots that can injure or even kill the owner of the small arms. In addition, manufacturers are actively working to protect their products from unauthorized access. For example, some companies are testing today, and others are already implementing protection using a fingerprint scanner and face recognition system. This will allow the owner of a small arms to avoid situations in which anyone possessing the weapon can fire. The trend towards improving

the safety of pistols, shotguns and rifles is highly relevant today. This gives hope that it can minimize the number of unpleasant incidents and protect people from dangers associated with using small arms.

Integration with innovative technologies

Recently, small arms manufacturers came up with the idea of integrating their products with other modern technologies. Many specialists (primarily military personnel) liked it, so it quickly became promising. Today, this idea is given more and more attention every year, and the first positive changes are already becoming noticeable even to civilians. All of the above has allowed us to form a new trend that will be relevant for many years. So far, the most significant progress has been achieved in integrating modern small arms with data networks. Theoretically, this will make it possible to collect real-time information about the user's actions and exchange it to obtain a particular benefit (for example, on the battlefield). In addition, small arms developers are actively integrating them with various wearable gadgets (smart watches, VR and AR devices). In the future, this may help improve data exchange efficiency and awareness of events happening around.

Modern small arms are constantly being modernized. Their manufacturers introduce new technologies, apply innovative solutions, and implement unique ideas. All this allows us to formulate the main development trends briefly described in this article. Having carefully studied them, we can determine the directions in which changes should be expected in the near future and predict what small arms will be like in a few years.

Photo: Kaboompics.com via Pexels

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The Pros and Cons of Liquor Loans: Is It Worth the Risk?

Our Friends · Wednesday, May 7th, 2025

Running any liquor business—from a local liquor store to a premium wine bar and even a brewery—requires navigating several hurdles while leveraging opportunities. With alcohol consumption continuously growing, many players in the sector require further capital to scale or enhance service quality. This is where Liquor Loans come into play, a type of funding particularly for businesses in the alcohol sector. But is this capital option too risky?

This article analyses **liquor loan** advantages and disadvantages to help you make an informed decision.

What is a Liquor Loan?

A liquor loan is a specific category of business funding meant for companies that trade or distribute liquor. The application process for a liquor loan is quite similar to that of other business financing. Still, it is frequently custom-made to factor in the particular hazards and legalities of the alcohol sector. Liquor loans are helpful in many aspects of a liquor business, including buying stock, improving a business's premises, or even covering routine operational costs. However, liquor loans are still loans and thus come with advantages and disadvantages like any other loan.

The Advantages of Liquor Loans

These are some of the benefits of liquor loans:

Flexible Finance Options for Business Expansion

A liquor loan stands out from conventional loans because it is very versatile. Whether you want to pre-stock premium items, extend your marketing campaign, or simply require some additional cash, a liquor loan can assist you in taking your business to the next level. This type of loan is essential for smaller companies looking to expand their operations and maximize profits.

Tailored Liquor Business Loan

Liquor loans are unlike other business loans because they are designed specifically for businesses in the alcoholic beverage industry. This familiarity enables lenders to understand issues specific to liquor businesses, like mounting licensing and demand. This means smoother application processes with business-friendly terms for the owners.

Approval Speed in Some Cases Is Quicker Than Normal

In most situations, lenders who provide liquor loans comprehend the sector's pressing demands. Therefore, because the borrower qualifies financially, some liquor loans will be approved faster than traditional loans.

The Disadvantages of Liquor Loans

These are some of the disadvantages of liquor loans:

Increased Interest Rates

The first con of a liquor loan is that it is likely to have higher **interest rates**. Many businesses face high liquidity due to constraints in regulation. Because of that market, lenders consider these businesses to be high risk, which causes them to add more interest to the loans. Over time, this could worsen your operational cash flow and lower overall cash flow.

Regulations Are Strict

Like many other sectors liquor businesses also face stringent licensing permitting rules and overall regulation in most locations. If your company cannot comply with these rules, the lenders might not approve the loan or cancel the already approved money. Failure to comply could lead to fines, payment, felonies, or even loss of image.

Secured Steps to Obtaining Finance Business Relating Loan

In case liquor loans are of interest to you, it is essential to implement the distinct steps to establish funding. These steps for getting business financing a loan put forth help ensure that the process has workflow:

Examine and Analyze Financials

Consider evaluating your **business credit score**, revenue streams, and expenses and taking steps for self-improvement. Understanding your finances helps determine the loan amount and repayment terms you can reasonably manage.

Find approved liquor store loans

Many lenders don't cater to alcohol-related businesses. Find lending institutions specializing in liquor store loans or those that have dealt with the liquor business.

Compiling Needed Paperwork

Filing a business license, tax statements, financial documents, and a copy of the company's business plan, including others, should be prepared. These measured documents can help to hasten the payment application process.

Applying and Submission of Documents

Business personnel should provide information concerning the business and plans for the loan. Describe details and be ready for your company questions.

Evaluation of Terms and Conditions

Look for the interest and the amount of money repaid monthly, along with the money left to be paid for other works. Be sure you understand what things mean before moving forward with the agreement.

Conclusion

Competitive liquor loans allow specific businesses in the alcohol sector to finance their operations. A few advantages of liquor loans include seasonal trend preparation, flexible funding, and special assistance. Still, higher-than-average interest rates, regulatory hurdles, and strict repayment terms present serious challenges.

Photo: Chris F via Pexels

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The Smart Web Developer's Toolkit: Visual Feedback and Bug Reporting for 2025

Our Friends · Wednesday, May 7th, 2025

Web development has become less about writing code in isolation and more about working in constant collaboration—with designers, product managers, clients, QA testers, and sometimes even users. To keep projects moving, developers need more than just their code editor and GitHub account. They need tools that simplify communication and help surface the right information at the right time.

Visual feedback and bug reporting tools have become essential in this landscape—not because developers can't find problems on their own, but because they shouldn't have to do it alone.

Why Developers Are Rethinking Feedback Loops

The typical bug report is often vague. Something like, “This page looks weird on mobile,” or “The button didn't work for me,” gives developers almost nothing to go on. Now they're stuck asking follow-up questions, trying to recreate the issue, or diving into logs that may not tell the full story.

These slowdowns aren't just frustrating—they're avoidable. The best web teams are now prioritizing tools that allow for more detailed, contextual feedback without extra back-and-forth. It's a shift toward faster problem-solving with fewer interruptions.

Visual Feedback: Clarity Without the Guessing Game

One of the smartest upgrades developers can make to their workflow is to incorporate visual feedback. These tools let team members—or even clients—comment directly on a website or prototype. Instead of sending a screenshot through Slack or trying to explain a layout issue over email, users can click on a specific element and describe the problem right there.

What makes this so helpful is the context. Many of these tools automatically capture things like the user's browser, device, screen size, and even the console logs at the time of the issue. This gives developers what they need to jump right into a fix instead of spending time recreating the issue.

Tighter Cycles with Integrated Bug Reporting

It's one thing to see what's broken—it's another to get it into the workflow quickly. That's why tools that combine visual feedback with built-in **bug reporting** features are becoming popular among development teams.

Instead of collecting bugs in a separate document or ticketing system, these platforms create tasks automatically. They tag the right developer, include the context, and connect directly to tools like Jira, Trello, or ClickUp. No copy-pasting. No manual triaging. Just a clean, connected process.

This tight feedback-to-fix cycle allows developers to stay focused while still being responsive. Fewer tasks fall through the cracks, and teams get to ship updates faster.

Supporting Agile and Remote-First Development

Modern development workflows are more distributed than ever. Whether you're working with a remote QA team or asynchronous client reviews, having a system that supports real-time and delayed feedback equally is key.

Annotation tools and collaborative bug trackers allow developers to keep moving, even when feedback arrives hours or days later. Comments are tied to visual references, not memory, so they're just as clear the next day as they would be in a live conversation.

This makes it easier for teams to work across time zones or check in on progress without scheduling another Zoom call.

From Passive Debugging to Active Improvement

One of the lesser-discussed benefits of better feedback tools is that they create a culture of proactive improvement. Instead of waiting for bugs to pile up or letting users complain after launch, teams can catch and fix issues earlier.

When visual feedback becomes part of staging, testing, or even content approval, more eyes can spot inconsistencies, UX issues, or missed details. Developers get to refine their work while it's still top of mind—and before it becomes a bigger problem.

It also makes the feedback loop more collaborative, encouraging everyone involved in a project to contribute to its polish and performance.

Getting Started Without Disrupting the Stack

For teams worried about adding yet another tool to their stack, most modern visual feedback platforms are lightweight and integrate easily. A simple browser extension or JavaScript snippet is often all that's needed to get started.

You can begin by testing it on a single project—maybe a redesign or a feature release—and invite internal stakeholders to leave feedback visually. Once the team sees the time saved and the clarity gained, it becomes a natural part of the process.

The Right Tool Doesn't Just Report Bugs—It Moves Projects Forward

There's no shortage of bug tracking platforms on the market, but the smartest tools today are the ones that do more than log errors. They help surface context, encourage collaboration, and speed up the path from feedback to fix.

For developers, this means fewer interruptions, less guesswork, and more time spent doing what they do best: building and improving.

Conclusion

The smartest web developers in 2025 aren't just writing clean code. They're choosing tools that help them work better with others—tools that reduce friction, close feedback loops, and turn bugs into small, solvable tasks.

By investing in smarter visual feedback and **bug reporting** systems, developers can ship faster, stay aligned with their teams, and deliver a better experience for everyone who touches the product.

Photo: Lukas via Pexels

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