

PACIFIC BUSINESS NEWS

ENTERTAINMENT

'IT'S NOT EVEN A JOB'

David Nagamine is a serial entrepreneur
who started in corporate finance.
Now his business is to create
innovative fun for all ages.

BY BRIAN MCINNIS | 8-10

NONPROFIT

Keeping live theater at the core

Deena Dray, executive director
of Diamond Head Theatre,
anticipates a house full of happy
audiences for its upcoming
productions, while closing on
the last stretch of its capital
campaign. **KELSEY KUKAUA, 23**

SPECIAL REPORT

LACK OF INVENTORY DRIVES UP INDUSTRIAL MARKET ¹¹



THE LIST

Commercial
real estate firms ¹²

Commercial
mortgage lenders ¹³

PACIFIC BUSINESS NEWS

July 30-August 5, 2021
Vol. 59, No. 28, \$3.95
737 Bishop St.
Suite 1550
Honolulu, HI 96813



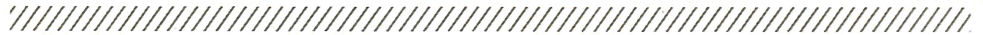
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David Nagamine, owner of Razor Sports located in Ka Makana Alii. The space can accommodate families or larger parties looking for some fun.

EUGENE TANNER | PBN

CATCHING THE DRIFT

Razor Sports and Razor Games are on different wings of Ka Makana Alii but serve the same purpose: They are meant to be enjoyed by kids, or kids at heart.

BY BRIAN MCINNIS | bmcinnis@bizjournals.com

For most of his adult life, David Nagamine drifted from business model to business model in pursuit of something both simple and elusive. ¶ Fun. ¶ The co-owner of two entertainment concepts that sprang up within the last year, Nagamine, 58, thinks he's finally found it. ¶ Razor Sports (go-cart racing and drifting) and Razor Games (Nerf blaster battles) are on different wings of Ka Makana Alii but serve the same purpose: They are meant to be enjoyed by kids, or kids at heart.



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space was closed by Pearlridge management in May in favor of an apparel store, he said. He's hoping to open another there by the end of the year.

Razor Games, with obstacles for Nerf dart and ball firefights in a neon, futuristic-themed 3,000-square-foot space near Consolidated Theaters, typically sees more traffic in the area but is just building a following, having launched in May on a temporary lease as a sort of trial run.

"They came to us with an opportunity and an idea and [Ka Makana Alii] ownership said, 'let's give it a shot,'" said Stephanie England, the mall's general manager. "That's what we're about ... our community and supporting local businesses."

Nagamine said he's been profitable there within the first two months of establishing Razor Sports, and that he's been approached by people on the Mainland asking him to expand.

So far, he's declined. Someday, perhaps, he'll consider helping others with their build-outs – for a fee.

Meeting the demands of a growing West Oahu community is worthy enough at the moment.

"It's definitely kudos to Stephanie for taking a chance on a person like me," he said. "I was experienced in retail, but I had no idea what I was doing when starting this business. We started from nothing. There was nothing like it in the whole country."

Both Razor spaces require significant upkeep. There are the pandemic considerations, like distancing barriers and constant sanitation of equipment, and hospital-grade ventilation filtration systems that cost \$8,000.

Razor Sports carts, purchased for \$450 a pop, are constantly being maintained and having parts swapped out, Nagamine said. At Razor Games, a few thousand Nerf darts and balls must be replaced every week.

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Business success runs in his family. His grandfather, Steven Nagamine, was the found-



Nagamine inspects the drivetrain of a car that is under repair.

EUGENE TANNER | PSBJ

er of the Flamingo restaurants, including the original 1959 Flamingo Café along Ala Moana Boulevard where Restaurant Row is now.

His father followed his grandfather into business right away, but his mother forbade David and his two siblings from working in the family Flamingo restaurants downtown, on the Windward side and in Pearl City.

She wanted them to have a chance to be their natural selves, and so it was; his brother became a doctor, his sister an architect.

He thought he'd go into corporate finance.

Nagamine was off working on the East Coast for computer companies IBM and Digital Equipment in the mid-1980s. But it was only a few Boston winters before he decided to come back to Hawaii with his wife in 1990.

In the process of return-



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DAVID NAGAMINE,
owner of
Razor Sports

ing home followed by a stint with the University of Hawaii's Shidler College of Business, a family entrepreneurial streak was rekindled.

"[Finance] is just crunching numbers. I can do it left and right; I'm good at it," he said. "But I don't enjoy it. This is actually fun for me. I don't know how I got to here in my life, but however I got to here, I can truly say my job is like play. It's not even a job."

There were some lessons learned the hard way. Tougher than the pandemic, he said, was the Great Recession of the late 2000s.

"It's been a ride. In 2008, I was selling everything I had ... to stay afloat. Somehow I made it through."

At present, he employs 45 across his businesses.

The long-term plan is to align Razor Sports and Razor Games in the same wing of the mall, when space becomes

available, and upgrade Razor Games to 5,000 square feet or more. Eventually, he'd like to have both under the same roof, and said "stay tuned" on future projects to pair with the carts and darts.

Despite the increasing difficulty of the traditional retail model, he intends to keep Razor Concepts open for business. He still gets a kick out of seeing kids' fascinated faces pressed up against the front window.

"The stores, and the people in them, are just like my kids," he said. "My two main managers have been with me 15 years. I've seen them grow up."

He does not have children of his own, but occasionally borrows his nephews to try out equipment.

Nagamine, who wears a patch over his right eye, chuckled as he confirmed to PBN that it was not a result of a Nerf blaster accident. ▮