

# Movieline

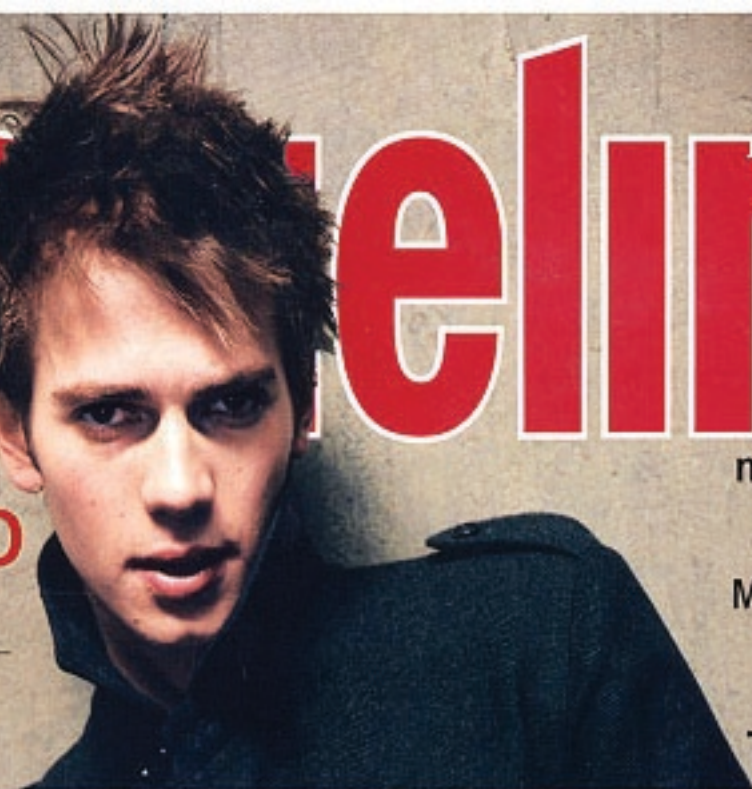
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**HOLLYWOOD  
LIFE ISSUE**

**WHO DESIGNS  
HOLLYWOOD?**

**WHY DID DEMI  
MOORE DROP OUT?**  
By David Thomson

**13 FILMS  
THAT SKEWER  
TINCELTOWN**



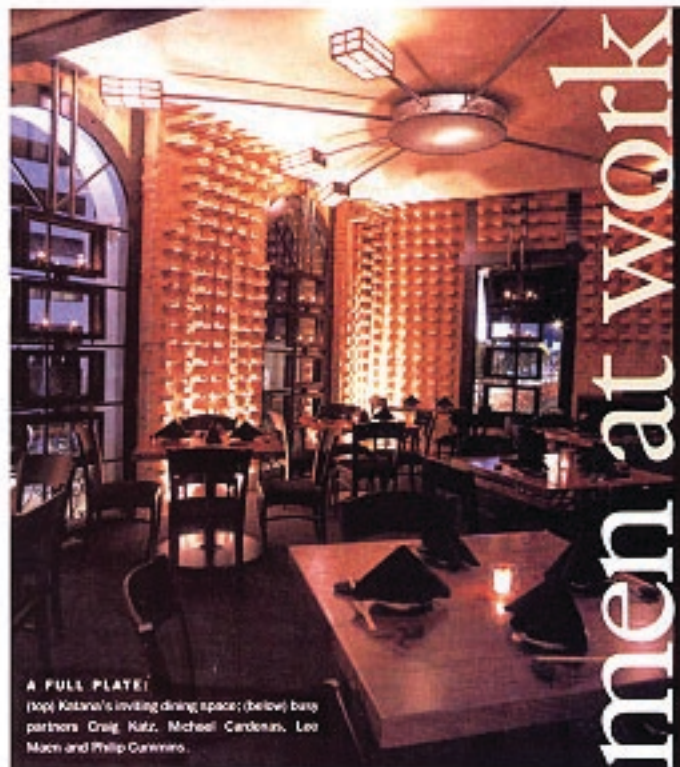
**T**he only thing more difficult than opening a happening haunt in L.A. is making sure it doesn't buckle under the weight of the next big thing. But four entrepreneurs—Lee Maen, Craig Katz, Michael Cardenas and Philip Cummins—did just that after opening Sushi Roku in Hollywood in 1997. A combination of Zen-inspired décor and top-notch Japanese delicacies drew in hordes of customers—including celebrities like Drew Barrymore, Cameron Diaz and George Clooney—and an institution was born. Since then, two more Rokus have opened, as have two non-Roku establishments on the Sunset Strip: Balboa, an edgy steakhouse that doesn't bludgeon its customers with oppressive mahogany, and Katana, a sushi-as-tapas retreat in a warm atmosphere.

Maen, a successful commercial real estate broker, got his start running nightclubs and promoting events with lifelong friend Craig Katz. After partnering up with Philip Cummins, a former investment banking associate-turned-nightclub guru, to open Gem on Melrose Avenue, they decided to branch out with Sushi Roku, but needed a sushi expert to bring aboard. Once they lured Michael Cardenas from his managerial post at Matsuhisa, one of L.A.'s most successful quartets was complete. But city limits can't limit them much longer: expect new ventures in Hawaii and New York very soon, with other cities on the horizon. Doesn't it ever feel like it's all one bump-in-the-rug away from crashing down? "Pretty much every day," Maen laughs. "It is hectic, but we just keep it rolling. We go where the fires are and just put them out."

—Lonny Pugh



PHOTOGRAPH BY DINA SARBELLA



**A FULL PLATE!**

(top) Katana's inviting dining space; (below) bar partners Craig Katz, Michael Cardenas, Lee Maen and Philip Cummins.

men at work