

EMPIRE

AN INNOVATIVE MOVEMENT
ROOTED IN BLACK CULTURE





THE EMPIRE LEGACY

AN INSTITUTION THAT REVOLUTIONIZED CULTURE

“In the 1950s, ‘60s, and ‘70s, the rink revolutionized roller skating, its influence spilling over into the worlds of dance, music and fashion.” -- The Village Voice, 2000

Empire Roller Skating Center operated for 66 years in Brooklyn. This is where the electrifying pulse of Black creative expression in the golden era of NYC’s music scene launched roller disco. The rink often hosted more than 2,500 skaters at a time, and celebrity sightings were common.

In those days, Rap wasn’t played on the radio or MTV, so it was performed live at Empire (and later other rinks) where it was influenced by skating and evolved into Hip-Hop.

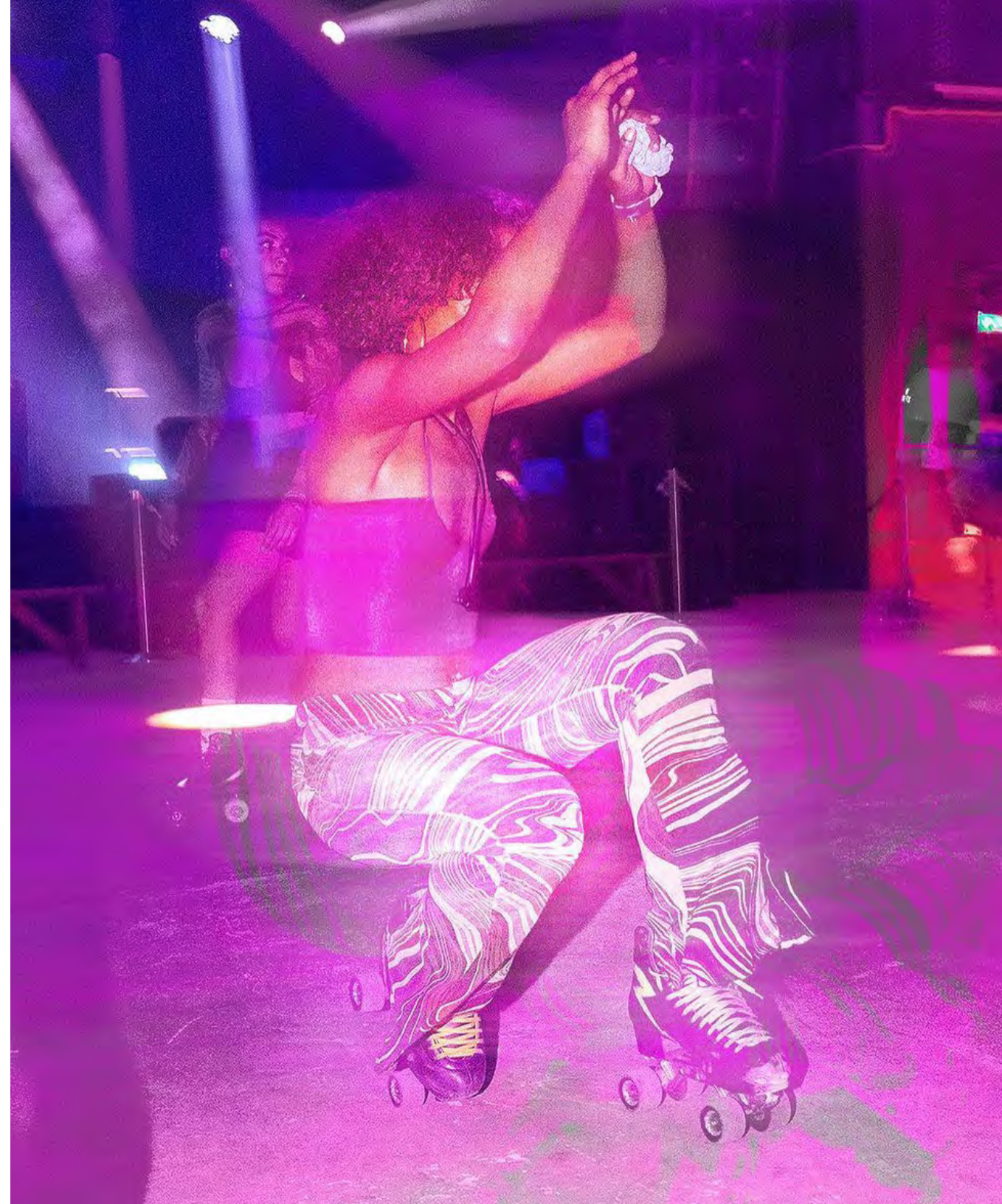
FILLING IN THE VOID

WITH PURPOSE

NYC is bristling with excitement for new entertainment opportunities post-COVID. The Black community of NYC is seeking spaces and experiences that invite social connection and creative expression.

Brooklyn is America's 4th largest city, and across much of it, there is "nothing to do." Not only have rinks disappeared, but there are few movie theaters, bowling alleys, nightclubs or other entertainment venues. It is an area prime for new recreational experiences.

Rollerskating fills a deep void in the Black experience in NYC by offering a legendary venue with deep cultural history and infinite potential for "the new."





BLACK ROLLER SKATING CULTURE

AN UNDERGROUND MAINSTAY WITH DEEP ROOTS

Roller skating may appear to be a passing trend, but roller skating has been a steady mainstay of Black culture for decades. It thrives largely underground, with Black skaters across the country often traveling long distances to rinks.

The grandparents of Gen Z saw Rap for the first time in a rollerskating rink. Gen Z grew up associating rinks with creative expression across music and fashion. Leveraging a legacy like Empire allows us to catalyze other aspects of the Black community, like rising Gen Z musical artists, entrepreneurs in fashion and food & beverage, and innovative media concepts that support storytelling around past, present and future.

ITS ABOUT THE GROOVE

THE IMPORTANCE OF MUSIC AND SOUND

The architecture of sound, use of seasoned DJs, thoughtful curation of music and interplay of lighting will all be central to Empire's design.

We will work with renowned DJs and sound engineers to produce an atmosphere that has sonic power and integrity.

From deep grooves, R&B, Afrobeat, to Hip-Hop, we will celebrate Black culture and its diverse musical roots.



THE FUTURE IS FEMALE

A RISING INDUSTRY

We are experiencing the rise of the female voice across many domains. From TikTok to the Olympics, the female perspective is taking center-stage and has been long overdue in Black rollerskating culture.

Females have always been the drivers of nightlife and fashion, and rollerskating is no exception. The future as defined by women represents a globally untapped and evolving space that will pave new roads in street, activewear, music, culture, and sport.





MORE THAN A RINK

A CATALYST FOR BLACK-OWNED ENTERPRISE

By reopening Empire, we channel the power of that institution's legacy across generations to ignite community interest in entrepreneurship in and adjacent to rollerskating.

The rink is the core operation. In and around is Black-owned enterprise: skate supplies, food-and-beverage, fashion, music and more. Rollerskating serves as the heart of a commercial ecosystem ripe for branding.

Beyond the rink, Empire's digital platform invites infinite opportunities for branding and merchandising with global reach.



IMAGE IS FOR MOOD ONLY

TARIQ ABDUS-SABUR

PRODUCER / CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Tariq is a veteran of creative branding and partnerships, with 20+ years in consulting and collaboration with trailblazers in hospitality, design, music, film, and entertainment. A New York City native, he brings a depth of insight and connectivity to the cultural and artistic movements that originate in niche and micro-communities. Leveraging the undiscovered into the “next thing” that supports thoughtful, culturally authentic, longevity-based branding on a global scale.

Tariq’s passion for NYC, its history, art, culture, music, and nightlife, took root for him as a child of the 80s, surrounded by cross-cultural influences coming out of the Bronx, Harlem, downtown and Brooklyn and as part of a family and community of artists, athletes, musicians, and activists.

Later, as a young DJ, Tariq translated those influences into sonic storytelling, spinning disco, soul, funk, new wave, rock, and early Hip-Hop at clubs and underground parties like subMercer, Webster Hall, Von, Sapphire Lounge, Stay, 2A,

Berlin, Studio 151, SoHo Grand, Bowery Hotel, Happy Endings, St. Jerome’s, and Nublu. He went on to co-found the Brooklyn Radio station **Newtown Radio** in the spirit of turning listeners far and wide on to new genres and sounds.

And over the decades, Tariq’s creative vision has been inspired by the close mentorship of producer **Steve Paul** (The Scene, Blue Sky Records, Johnny Winter, Muddy Waters), jazz musician **Idris Muhammad**, DJ/producer **Mark Kamins** (Danceteria, Madonna), and filmmaker **Albert Maysles**.

Today, Tariq leads the reopening of Empire and the reactivation of its critical role in Black history, music, and culture. In doing so, he leverages his personal connections to NYC and world culture as well as his professional experience helping brands, music labels, nightlife, and hospitality in capturing the new and relevant. In all that he does, Tariq nurtures and protects a sense of history, passion, and authenticity.

[**TARIQ’S LINKEDIN PROFILE**](#)



EXPLORE EMPIRE'S LEGACY

CLICK ON LINKS TO READ FULL ARTICLE

"THE LAST GO-ROUND"

NEW YORK MAGAZINE 2007

"On Tuesdays, as many as 500 people go round the floor to his mix of R&B, house, jazz, and disco classics. There have been plenty of celebrity sightings at Empire (Lil' Kim did a video there)."

[Read Article](#)

"LATASHA ALCINDOR'S 'TEEN NITE AT EMPIRE' PRESERVES A FADING BROOKLYN"

VICE 2017

"Just like many other cultural inner city landmarks have ended up, the venue is now closed and functioning as a shell-of-itself storage facility. But when Lata-sha was a teen starting to venture out into the world, Empire was the epicenter for Black Brooklyn youth."

[Read Article](#)

ROLLER SKATING, CIVIL RIGHTS AND THE WHEELS BEHIND DANCE MUSIC

ELECTRONIC BEATS 2021

"You would see a lot of producers and promoters coming to the roller rinks, because if I was playing a new song and it was a hit in the rink, they knew it was going to stick. Roller skating had a certain strength to it in predicting hit material." - Danny Krivit

[Read Article](#)

"AGE OF EMPIRE"

THE VILLAGE VOICE 2000

"Revelers of every stripe rejoiced last week as Empire Roller Disco, the "Studio 54 of the roller-skating world," reopened its doors. In the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, the rink revolutionized roller-skating, its influence spilling over into the worlds of dance, music, and fashion."

[Read Article](#)

"THE LAST LACE-UP"

THE NEW YORK TIMES 2007

"The rink, which could accommodate 2,500 skaters, was often so crowded that "if you fell, you couldn't fall. In recent years, as young people discovered the thrills of dance skating and speed skating, Empire became a favorite of the Hip-Hop generation."

[Read Article](#)

"WHERE THE MUSIC ROLLED ON: ROLLER RINKS, HIP-HOP'S FORGOTTEN STAGE"

THE NEW YORK TIMES 2007

"Because radio didn't play Rap and there was only a few Rap videos (which weren't played on MTV or BET) Skating Rinks were one of the main mediums for the spread of Rap music."

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