

Jeff Around Town – January 14th, 2025

Jeff: Time now for another edition of Jeff Around Town. Joining me this morning, Erika Hansen, she's the vice president of commercial entertainment for Omaha Performing Arts, also the founder of a lifestyle brand and digital course creator that blends fashion, music, and more to inspire others, and there's so, so much more that she does. Good morning, Erika. Thanks for joining me.

Erika: Thank you so much for having me. It's great to be here.

Jeff: Well, you're originally from the greater Sioux City area on the Nebraska side.

Erika: That's right. Yes. Thanks for throwing that in there.

Jeff: Of course. We got it. Yes. So, but you have made Omaha home for a little while now, and you're at Omaha Performing Arts, and you, in that role, you help book acts or bring the entertainment in?

Erika: Yeah. So, kind of as my title indicates, my focus is really commercial entertainment. So, a lot of the national touring artists, comedians, shows that you might see at the Orpheum, the Holland Center, or also at Steelhouse, our newest venue, those are all sort of under my purview. So, I am focused on working with a lot of promoters and agents nationally on bringing the best artists that we can to our venues and to this community.

Jeff: So how far out are you booking those?

Erika: You know, it really depends. We've got shows, or I have some of my shows that are already up and on sale all the way out into maybe September or October of 2025. We've got holds on the calendar into 2026. So, every artist is a little bit different in terms of the way they plan their tours. Some do it at the very last minute, and we're up and on sale, and the show happens two months from now. And then some are going on sale a year in advance. And so, it really just depends on the touring schedule and the planning of the artist and the artist team. But certainly commercial entertainment works sort of within that 12-month window. That's kind of like the prime real estate. And so that's mostly what I'm focused on right now, is just filling up the calendar for 2025.

Jeff: Do you have a, you know, kind of a personal wish list down the road? One day?

Erika: Oh, well, you know, I have my own personal wish list, but if we only book the shows that I liked, I don't know that Omaha would be too thrilled. I'm a big 80s metal fan, and so a lot of what I listen to is sort of like in that genre. But you know, the types of shows that sell really well here, comedy does such a great business in Omaha, such a great support system of comedy fans here. Country sells really well just in this part of the country, and nationally, to be honest, country is obviously a driver of commercial entertainment. And then we've got a great classic rock base as well. And so definitely within those genres, there are certainly artists that are at the top of their game that I would love to get into our venues, but a pretty varied and really supportive community in terms of live music here.

Jeff: Well, you talk about a supportive community, and you've talked about that with your personal passion projects. Can you tell us a little bit about some of the creative things you're doing and what it is about Omaha that makes it so special for collaboration and support?

Erika: I've really enjoyed my time here. I moved to Omaha only about two years ago, but I've spent so much time here. Over the years, obviously being from the Sioux City area, just 90 miles away, growing up, I was in Omaha a lot. And really my first foray into the creative community here in Omaha was through the world of fashion and modeling. And I started my modeling journey when I was 17, 18 years old, and it was based here in Omaha because for anybody that's been around for a while, you might remember Nancy Bounds. Nancy Bounds was a longtime agent and had an agency and a school here in Omaha where she was training the next generation of models. And I was part of that sort of class program and graduated from Nancy Bounds and ended up with a contract with Elite Models based out of Miami. And so, I started my first foray into the world of creativity here. It was through fashion and through modeling, and that's really continued. When I first started working for Omaha Performing Arts, which was about five years ago, the first people that I met and that I connected with were part of that fashion community again. So, it was through developed models. It was through Omaha Fashion Week, through a lot of photographers here locally, and a group called the Fashion Arts Collective, which unfortunately no longer exists. But that group was sort of like the first group that I networked with that really became part of my family here in Omaha. And so that's kind of like my first step into the world of creativity in Omaha. And then it's just kind of blossomed from there. And obviously what I do is very creative as well. Like I'm working with creative people and with artists and very talented individuals in my everyday job. So really, I'm surrounded by creativity here. And there's such a foundation for building creativity in Omaha that doesn't exist in other communities. I mean, I know because I've lived in other communities and there really is a different foundational feeling here of support and creative energy.

Jeff: Just briefly, what do you think it is about Omaha? Because I believe that to be true and I hear that from others. And what do you think it is? Is it something in the water? Is it just our nature?

Erika: You know, I've talked to some people that grew up here. And one of the things that a friend of mine said that really resonated with me was that it was just part of how they developed and learned, even as kids here, like to have something like the Joslyn, to have venues like the Orpheum Theater, to be able to visit like some of the cultural kind of icons of this community as children. And I think, too, like there's a very heavy philanthropic spirit in Omaha that doesn't exist in other places as well. And I think whenever you have that, you have the basis for people really devoting time and energy and money to the arts. And... and so I think people that grew up here just sort of take it for granted that culture and arts are a way of life. But that doesn't exist in other places. And I think that's part of it.

Jeff: A hundred percent. So, I wish we had more time. Can you tell folks how they can find you and find out about your projects and Fashion Week and those kinds of things?

Erika: Fashion Week is online at omahafashionweek.com. Tickets are available, I believe. There, I think, shows are at the end of February, beginning of March. You can find me at houseofhansen.style and you can, of course, find Omaha Performing Arts at o-pa.org.

Jeff: Erika Hansen, such a pleasure. So glad you stopped by. We'll have to chat again.

Erika: Absolutely. Thank you.

Jeff: All righty.