

Hana Entertainment | Podcast Transcript

Joseph Cancilla on Fire Performance, Burnout & Business Evolution

Recorded: May 09, 2025 at 10:00 AM MST

Guests: Joseph Cancilla (Hana Entertainment), Hosted by Jared Orr

Welcome to this exclusive podcast conversation with fire performance visionary Joseph Cancilla. In this candid talk, Joseph shares the origins of his entertainment journey, the pressures of running multiple businesses, and his shift toward immersive, multi-sensory event creation. Dive into the story of how Polynesian roots, mental health awareness, AI innovation, and family values all intersect to fuel Hana Entertainment's evolution.

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[00:00] First Fire Performance Experience

Jared Orr: I'll tell you this - my first time experiencing fire dancers was at Disney World, of all places...

Joseph Cancilla: His name's Matuni. He's a competitive fire dancer and performs in the Lion King exhibit in Florida...

Jared Orr: Yeah! I remember seeing him with fire on both ends of the stick. He put it on his feet, and then-

Joseph Cancilla: On his tongue?

Jared Orr: Exactly. I was maybe 10 years old. It blew my mind.

[04:15] Fire & the Body

Joseph Cancilla: The tongue is a bit different - it's wet. Fire burns off fast. Usually, it's just a tiny bit of fuel. Then you've got firewalking, too...

We're hosting a firewalk next month. My partner Rose is putting on a couples event ending with a firewalk...

There's science to it. Feet sweat fast enough to create a barrier. Walk slow and steady. Panic, and you'll get burned.

[06:10] Polynesian Roots of Fire Dance

Hana Entertainment | Podcast Transcript

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Jared Orr: Is fire dancing rooted in Polynesian culture?

Joseph Cancilla: Yeah. Originally called Siva Ailao, the "Dance of the Blade". In 1964, Freddie Latuli added fire, creating the Samoan fire knife dance.

[08:00] Starting with Luau Shows

Joseph Cancilla: I started Hana Entertainment 10 years ago doing 30-minute luau shows. That was the whole business-cultural education and smiles.

[10:15] Transition from Marketing

Joseph Cancilla: I also ran a marketing agency. But our first summer we hit 100 shows. I sold the agency three weeks ago.

[12:00] Surviving the Off-Season

Joseph Cancilla: From Nov-April, gigs dried up. So I'd jump into CRM consulting every winter. Two winters ago, we came to Arizona. Doubled living costs. Knew no one. Got aggressive with networking.

[14:45] Letting Go of the Past

Joseph Cancilla: Deleted all the old folders, calendars, emails. Felt like dropping 15 years of weight. Now I'm fully focused on Hana.

[16:30] Avoiding Burnout

Jared Orr: Every entrepreneur I know says the same-go all in first.

Joseph Cancilla: 100%. Read "The ONE Thing". Changed my mindset. Entrepreneurs see everything as opportunity. But boundaries matter.

[19:00] Mental Health and Rest

Joseph Cancilla: Burnout feels like I'm stuck in cement. My brain won't function. Now I meditate, cold plunge, stretch...

Skipped a Zoom call to go reset. Came back recharged. That's the shift-slow down to go faster.

Hana Entertainment | Podcast Transcript

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[22:30] Family and Delegation

Joseph Cancilla: I have three kids. Emma handles payroll. We do payroll in 11 states.

Virtual assistants should be everyone's first hire. I used to only afford them during summer. Now I'm searching again-possibly Latin American talent.

[26:15] Utah Roots and Culture

Jared Orr: Your family still in Utah?

Joseph Cancilla: Yep. They're rooted there. People thought I left my family, but I didn't. Utah has a huge Polynesian community. 500-600 luaus each summer.

[28:45] LDS and Polynesia

Jared Orr: I served in Seattle. Had Polynesian companions-Micronesia, Tonga, Hawaii. Learned rugby!

Joseph Cancilla: Yeah, Tonga's about 25% LDS. That's huge.

[30:00] The Next Five Years

Jared Orr: What's your vision for the next five years?

Joseph Cancilla: We raised prices twice in two years. Our \$8K package isn't even questioned. We're moving into full immersive production-\$30K-\$40K+ invoices.

Immersive = all five senses + the sixth: energetic connection. That's the magic.

[33:20] Nationwide Expansion

Joseph Cancilla: We're in 11 states now. Doing DMC outreach nationwide. Using local teams instead of flying crews. Cheaper and more scalable.

This summer: targeting Denver while I'm in Utah with family. October, back to Arizona. Then Florida-where we already have performers in Miami, Orlando, Jacksonville.

[35:45] Final Thoughts

Jared Orr: Your shows are incredible. I'll link your website and Instagram.

Joseph Cancilla: Instagram and our website are best. We're on Facebook and LinkedIn too. Always open to connect.

Hana Entertainment | Podcast Transcript

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Jared Orr: Keep going, man.

Joseph Cancilla: Appreciate you having me on, Jared.