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From the L.A. Rebellion and Today

Serious Musings
"For me, poetry provides a space in which..."

Time is Running Out of Time

In a perfect confluence of art historical assessments, "Time Is Running Out of Time" is both a celebration and a seminar. As much as our modern world is obsessed with violent videos and engaged with inclusive storytelling, it’s good to pause and appreciate the pioneers of that modernity’s experimental origins. Art + Practice, 3401 W. 43rd Place, Leimert Park; opening reception Sat., Feb. 2, 2-5 p.m.; on view Mon.-Sat., noon-6 p.m., thru Sept. 14; free. (323) 337-6887, artandpractice.org.

—SHANA NYS DAMBROT

Rally ’Round Dark Delicacies
A macabre bookshop and gruesome gift store that celebrates death and doom like no other, Dark Delicacies itself refuses to die. Though owner Del Howison had said he’d cease running the brick-and-mortar store and go online only if greedy landlords hike up the rent again for his Magnolia Boulevard space, he’s changed his mind thanks to fans including such horror heavies as comics icon Neil Gaiman and filmmaker Guillermo del Toro, both of whom have rallied behind the 25-year-old business, encouraging the public to contribute to its GoFundMe. Dark Delicacies reached its initial goal for a planned move around the corner but now needs to raise an additional 10 grand or so for the build-out. The Dark Delicacies Relocation Fundraiser aims to do just that. Offering "some very special signed items for sale," the event is an opportunity to support small business, hang with fellow horror freaks and score cool and creepy stuff before the move. Dark Delicacies, 3512 W. Magnolia Blvd., Burbank; Sat., Feb. 2, 7-10 p.m.; facebook.com/events/356537251809018/.

—LINA LECARO

Pros and Joes
Resembling a deconstructed flash mob, almost two dozen dancers of various shapes, sizes and skill levels spontaneously take the stage, sometimes alone, sometimes in a group, all part of Jérôme Bel’s Gala. In one section, set to Chopin music from the ballet Les Sylphides, a sequence of dancers each briefly take center stage to execute a pirouette or some semblance of that turn. Later, the chain move focuses on Michael Jackson’s moonwalk and, still later, a waltz. Adored for his events in the art world, Bel’s creations have included 20 minutes of a young man slowly removing layers of messaged shirts and also a gathering of 20 singers of different voices and skill levels, each interpreting pop song lyrics. Decried by a few critics as gimmicky and diversity-by-the-numbers, Gala has mostly drawn praise, with reviewers describing Bel’s “non-dance” choreography as eye-opening and heart-warming, lauding the 50-year-old Frenchman’s effort to redraw the lines for what is dance and who is a dancer.

Even the doubters admire the trust Bel draws from the participants, who illustrate that everyone can dance, and that those who dare, whatever their training or abilities, are dancers. The Theatre at Ace Hotel, 929 S. Broadway, downtown; Sat., Feb. 2, 8 p.m.; $29-$59, theatre.acehotel.com.

—ANN HASKINS

Spirit Animals
As long as humans have made art, we have made pictures of animals, often with a profound spiritual or allegorical intention. We love to assign human psyches to their expressions and personalities (and vice versa) and to imagine almost telepathic connections with them. In this tradition, Toronto-based artist Kisung Koh posits that we are not imagining it at all. In his experience, communion with the world’s multiverse of fauna has been very real, and its lessons have proven true. The new paintings in his exhibition “Way of Life II” combine a classical technique for rendering of landscapes and the fox, bear, antlered and feline denizens thereof with a surrealistic impulse for symbolism and metaphor, a dark wit, and a deep appreciation for sublime beauty. Thinkspace Gallery, 6009 Washington Blvd., Culver City; opening reception Sat., Feb. 2, 6-9 p.m.; on view Tue.-Sat., noon-6 p.m., thru Feb. 23; free. (310) 558-3375, thinkspaceprojects.com.

—SHANA NYS DAMBROT

Calling All Cookie Monsters
Billing itself as the “biggest baking, pastry and sweets convention on the West Coast,” the L.A. Cookie Convention & Sweets Show aims to celebrate and elevate all things sugary, salty and savory in the world of baking and confection. Celebrity chefs including Ron Ben-Israel, Rosanna Pansino and Adriano Zumbo will be on hand, the latter (of Netflix hit Zumbo’s Just Desserts) joining forces with...
Disney for a themed demo and kids contest inspired by Disney’s Nutcracker movie. A “Sweet Genius” contest will showcase bakers battling it out live onstage. If the kiddies happen to eat too much sugar, they can mellow out in the Kids’ Zone with balloons, balloon figures, face painting, cookie decorating and pancake art. Cookie Con celebrates its fifth anniversary this year and promises party treats as only it can provide. Anaheim Convention Center, 800 W. Katella Ave. Anaheim; Sat.-Sun., Feb. 2-3, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; $12-$63.96. lacookiecon.com. —LINA LECARO

BOOK

A Sequel to Look Forward to
Janet Fitch is that rare local writer who has the highest literary ambition and talent but also has had far-reaching popular success. White Oleander, her 1999 novel about a precociously talented girl’s quest for identity, resonated with readers even before it was naturally observant child’s search for identity, between racial and ethnic lines, with the July publication of a much-anticipated sequel, Chimes of a Lost Cathedral. “The voice of the soul is not so easily translated,” her narrator muses in the experience of a transgender individual — particularly those of color — is often rife with challenges, ranging from the callous indifference of those in power to the disturbing rates of victimization the vulnerable populations face from the chimera of racism, homophobia, sexism and transphobia. After months of surveys and community consultations, the TransLatin@ Coalition is releasing its Trans Policy Agenda to help break down barriers for the thousands of transgender, gender-nonconforming and intersex Angelenos — and perhaps offer a beacon for the rest of the nation. The agenda has six main thrusts: educational access and research justice; economic stability and housing equity; holistic, accessible universal health care and bodily autonomy; ending policing, state violence and incarceration; decriminalizing migration and global trans rights; and gender justice and identity autonomy. The launch and reception will include food, drinks, performances and music, as well as ways to get involved. If you are taking the Metro, Union Station is a short jaunt away. The California Endowment, 1000 N. Alameda St., Los Angeles; Thu., Feb. 7, 7 p.m.; free. (323) 465-1334, chevaliersbooks.com. —AVERY BISSETT

TUE 2/5

CULTURE

Nautical New Year
It’s not much of an exaggeration to say that it’s possible to celebrate every holiday of note aboard the Queen Mary, and Chinese New Year is no exception. Chinese New Year: Shanghai Nights will bite the wallet a bit, but the buffet and evening’s entertainment offerings are plentiful. While stuffing their faces, guests will be treated to the Sound of China Guzheng Ensemble, a martial arts performance on themes of traditional Chinese philosophy (yes, you read that correctly) from Golden Dragon, Wushu Shaolin and other entertainments. VIP tickets net you drinks, front-row seating and a server. Queen Mary, 1126 Queens Highway, Long Beach; Tue., Feb. 5, 6-10 p.m.; $99.99 online/$105 at the door, $49.99 kids, VIP $129 online/$135 at the door/$59.99 kids VIP. queenmary.com/events/upcoming-events/. —AVERY BISSETT

MON 2/4

Make a Pig of Yourself
There’s a good chance a Chinese New Year celebration put on by Panda Express in a mall may not be the most traditional event. But it will probably still be good fun; and with the Lunar New Year falling on Tuesday, Feb. 5, this year, most of the big celebrations don’t come until the weekend — so why not get a head start on ringing in the Year of the Pig? The House of Good Fortune consists of five immersive and photo-friendly rooms. There’s a room where you’ll have the chance to catch a red envelope or two (for good luck) and one where you’ll have to extricate yourself from a tangle of noodles (which represent longevity and health in Asia), plus traditional lion dances and more. The entire experience should take 30 minutes. Westfield Century City, 10250 Santa Monica Blvd., Century City; Fri.-Tue., Feb. 1-5, noon-8 p.m.; free. eventbrite.com/e/house-of-good-fortune-tickets-54311157133. —AVERY BISSETT

WED 2/6

LGBTQ/ACTIVISM

Tackling Transgender Challenges
The experience of a transgender individual — particularly those of color — is often rife with challenges, ranging from the callous indifference of those in power to the disturbing rates of victimization the vulnerable populations face from the chimera of racism, homophobia, sexism and transphobia. After months of surveys and community consultations, the TransLatin@ Coalition is releasing its Trans Policy Agenda to help break down barriers for the thousands of transgender, gender-nonconforming and intersex Angelenos — and perhaps offer a beacon for the rest of the nation. The agenda has six main thrusts: educational access and research justice; economic stability and housing equity; holistic, accessible universal health care and bodily autonomy; ending policing, state violence and incarceration; decriminalizing migration and global trans rights; and gender justice and identity autonomy. The launch and reception will include food, drinks, performances and music, as well as ways to get involved. If you are taking the Metro, Union Station is a short jaunt away. The California Endowment, 1000 N. Alameda St., Los Angeles; Thu., Feb. 7, 7 p.m.; $30. (323) 469-1181, hollywoodforever.ticketfly.com/event/1814375-stars-screen-cuisine-los-angeles/. —FALLING JAMES

ICE SKATING

Competition on Ice
It’s been 10 years since Southern California last hosted a major figure-skating competition, when the World Figure Skating Championships came to Staples Center for a week in March 2009. Although the Southland occasionally gets touring exhibitions, such as the generally cheesy Stars on Ice revue, a non-competitive showcase with primarily North American skaters, ISU’s Four Continents Figure Skating Championships is a serious four-day event that matches the world’s best skaters. This year’s U.S. competitors include Mariah Bell, Ting Cui, Bradie Tennell, Jason Brown, Tomoki Hiwatashi, Vincent Zhou, pairs team Ashley Cain & Timothy LeDuc, and ice-dance duo Madison Chock & Evan Bates. Honda Center, 2695 E. Katella Ave., Anaheim; Thu., Feb. 7, 12:30 & 5:30 p.m.; Fri., Feb. 8, 11:45 a.m., 3 & 7 p.m.; Sat., Feb. 9, 2 & 7 p.m.; Sun., Feb. 10, 1 & 6 p.m.; $29-$104. (714) 704-2400. —AVERY BISSETT

FILM/FOOD

Critical Discussion
How much does geography impact the creation of art, or the criticism of that art? These and other questions are mulled over by a trio of disparate critics at the panel discussion Stars of Screen and Cuisine. Manohla Dargis is a film critic with The New York Times who has infused her past work as a writer at the Village Voice and Los Angeles Times and as film editor of L.A. Weekly with a rare combination of sly wit, scholarly knowledge and an acutely perceptive, humanist and feminist perspective. She’s joined by New York Times food editor Sam Sifton and local restaurant critic Tejal Rao for what’s likely to be a wide-ranging and merry discussion. Hollywood Forever Cemetery, 6000 Santa Monica Blvd., Hollywood; Thu., Feb. 7, 7 p.m.; $30. (323) 469-1181, hollywoodforever.ticketfly.com/event/1814375-stars-screen-cuisine-los-angeles/. —FALLING JAMES

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At first glance, he looks like any tattooed kid you’d see weaving in and out of pedestrian traffic on Figueroa on his skateboard. In reality, he’s the maestro of the mushroom, the hangar steak hero and the bone marrow virtuoso of Los Angeles. But Casey Lane’s vision goes way beyond the kitchen — he has redefined hotel dining in Los Angeles.

Chef-partner at the Tasting Kitchen, Viale dei Romani, Breva and the Veranda at Hotel Figueroa, as well as Casa Apicii in New York, the 35-year-old Lane has built an empire that started on Abbott Kinney in Venice 10 years ago.

He opened the Basque-inspired Breva in the newly restored Hotel Figueroa in 2018 and followed up with the elegantly casual Viale dei Romani, designed by Parts & Labor, at the Kimpton La Peer Hotel a few months later. He oversees every food aspect at the Kimpton — breakfast, lunch and dinner at Viale, service for the pool, the lobby bar, in-room dining for all 105 rooms, 120-person rooftop dinners, business banquets and breakfast buffets.

“With the new agreements, food & beverage really operates everything but [cleaning] the rooms — the lobby, the lobby bar, the rooftop, the dining, the banqueting,” Lane tells L.A. Weekly in the airy blue and gold dining room of Viale dei Romani. “All the personnel you encounter in the hotel is ours. At the Hotel Figueroa, everybody is part of the F&B team, even at check-in. For developers here, it’s become much more of a focus that they’ve decided to let the F&B operator be the face of the hotel.”

Lane’s style comes off as super casual and mellow, giving the impression that the kingdom just runs itself. But behind the friendly demeanor is a chef who was trained by the old guard of brutal chefs with a dedicated belief in craft and the old way of doing things as well as the power of anxiety.

“In everyone that I hire or have worked with for a long time, the first thing we weed out are the people who don’t have anxiety,” Lane says. “When we’re looking for people we want to invest our time into, the first thing we look for is if they are generally anxious. Are they nervous? Because if you’re not nervous, you’re not pushing yourself as hard as you should be.

“I love learning and following the guidelines of what has been taught and passed down through generations,” he adds.

When Lane moved to L.A. from Portland, Oregon, at the tender age of 25 with his young sous chef to start the Tasting Kitchen, they wanted to do everything the hardest way possible. They didn’t want to buy into molecular gastronomy. They butchered whole animals, did their own curing and baked their own bread. There were...
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no bandsaws in a fancy kitchen; it was a cleaver and a mallet. They created art that was different from the L.A. culinary landscape, and it made a splash.

But Lane wanted more. He started talking to developers with an idea to make their hotels part of the neighborhood instead of a destination outside of the city. That would mean a neighborhood restaurant and, according to Lane, 80 percent of restaurants in the world are neighborhood restaurants.

“My dream restaurant is one of those old-school dining establishments where people aren’t going out to dinner, they are dining properly,” says Lane, who describes Viale dei Romani as old Beverly Hills meets punk rock.

“It’s bucking the trend of what’s going on in L.A. right now. L.A. loves simple, chef-driven and edgy. I’m a fan of the old-school tablecloths and presentation. We change the cloth without you ever seeing the table. These practices really inspire me. I adore that old-school Beverly Hills meets old Hollywood, with Lionel Richie eating the veal liver marsala sitting at the next table.”

Viale’s executive chef, South Bay native Brian Bornemann, has been with Lane since he walked into the back door of the Tasting Kitchen looking for a job making pasta after traveling Europe, and he shares Lane’s philosophy.

“I’ve always loved working with Casey because we both come from the same cooking background, from scratch cooking,” Bornemann tells L.A. Weekly while tending to the wood-burning oven overlooking the La Peer patio. “It’s by the eyeball, by the ounce, and less about following dedicated recipes.”

Bornemann says Lane’s style is letting people be the best version of themselves and knowing when not to step on their toes.

“Sure, we all get stressed, it’s a part of what we do. It’s all about how you hold the stress and are able to communicate effectively through stress, through anger. You’ve got to be able to keep your head level. He’s always been able to have a level head about him in situations.”

“There’s definitely different ways to do it,” Bornemann says. “Some restaurant groups are very militantly enforcing the same rules every single day. That’s just not the way we like to operate. In an environment like this, with the different number of events, banquets and menus that we have — if you expect the ease of repetition, this is not the right job for you. If you enjoy the curve balls, if you enjoy the change, if you enjoy the constant dynamism, that’s what makes it fun. Some people don’t understand that is the job. It’s not the exception, it’s the rule.”

Just don’t break any of the dishes.

Growing up in Texas and surrounded by china cabinets representing years of special family occasions, Lane developed a dish tick that is represented on the tables of all his restaurants. An eclectic mix of Richard Ginori tableware from Italy, no two settings at any table are alike.

Ginori was just as anxious to foster the friendship and wanted a presence in the Beverly Hills area, so they invited Lane to go through their back stock, scoring deals like coffee cups that went for $80 apiece for $1.78 each. For Viale dei Romani alone, Lane bought $250,000 worth of the china, factoring in breakage.

“There are different dishes for certain things,” Lane says. “We only pull the ones we want to use at certain times. I love the idea that every time you get your table setting changed, there’s something new for your eyes and something new to talk about. And even if you don’t talk about it, it’s going to have some sort of effect on your memory and experience or maybe even elicit one of your own.”

So, what happens when a dish breaks?

“I’m not as angry as I used to be,” he says from the inner sanctum of his massive closet filled with one-of-a-kind plates, platters, gravy boats and teapots.

“That was my biggest problem as a young chef. After a decade of it, I was like, I can’t just be a dick all the time. It’s making my reality something that is always angry. I don’t like that.

“So, when someone breaks a plate, there’s a quiet moment of us looking at each other. Let’s clean it up and move on. Now if it’s the second or third time from the same person, you’re probably just not respecting our building and will end up with your walking papers.”

Lane’s love of juxtapositions of ornate and classy against a little bit of punk rock is evident in each of his unique venues and is largely inspired by famed interior architect Martin Brudnizki, who loves to create different moments all over a single room.

“I would sit in his properties and might feel totally different if I was sitting in another corner of the room,” Lane says. “It could be a totally different experience if I was in the lounge seating as opposed to this chair, and the table setting is an integral part of that.”

Working together with his mentor and partner, Tom Dylan, on the three-year, multimillion-dollar transformation of the historic Hotel Figueroa downtown was the true test for Lane, who was just hitting his stride as a young disrupter of the Los Angeles hotel scene.

“If you’re not disrupting things, you’re really just following someone else’s habits, and that’s just not an ambitious endeavor for me,” Lane declares.

“I think even with the Tasting Kitchen, when I moved down here from Portland and saw the landscape and what was happening in L.A., I thought, wow, what I do natively is completely going to change how people think about how this should be done.

“I loved the property and the building and the fact that it’s an old piece of Los Angeles that was just out of the comfort range on operation. The La Peer is only 105 rooms, and my learning curve on the Figueroa was just a dead sprint and blind faith on how to do it properly.

But even as a younger, cockier upstart, Lane has always been old-school.

“I joke with all the kids these days saying, ‘Dude, you’re never going to be as good as we are because we’re not allowed to manage you the way that we were managed,’” he says.

“We also didn’t have the give-up nature that this quitter generation has. I knew it was going downhill when I went to that...
pee wee football game where nobody was keeping score. Whether or not it was forced on you, we learned respect. Even now, just in the moment when I cook, I can’t stop it from coming out. I’ll be expediting from the other side of the line and I can be real patient, but as soon as the quality of my execution is brought down by your mistake, we have a problem. It was part of learning to take something so seriously. It’s the idea that either everything matters, or nothing matters.”

Bornemann and Lane have designed dishes for the L.A. palate, which is what keeps locals coming back. Many are Italian dishes you would never see in Italy. “A lot of what we’ll do is based on the flavor profiles you see around us every day, like spicy tuna, things with fish sauce, wraps and Mexican food,” Bornemann says. “We take the ethos of Italian cooking, which is good ingredients we believe in, and compile them in a foreign way. It doesn’t make sense to make Italian food by buying products from Italy and replicating dishes you see there. For me, it’s more about making a dish from ingredients we find here.”

The Calabrese fried rice is a perfect example. The team used to make the Northern Italian sausage and rice dish risotto de piloto at the Tasting Kitchen. Moving into the Viale space and lighter fare, it didn’t seem to be the right fit. They changed it to sautéed rice with a crispy bottom, like a paella. It’s still made with their house-made Calabrian sausage with chilies and finished with Roman fish sauce, another Italian ingredient. It’s cooked with pork and shrimp stock and finished with crab.

“At the end of the day, it almost eats more like Thai food. You’d never see anything like that in Italy. It’s really for the Angeleno palate — it’s what people want to eat here,” Bornemann says.

At the very seafood-focused Viale, all the oysters, scallops and mussels come from private purveyor Sue Buxton in Stonington, on a remote island off the coast of Maine, within 24 hours of being pulled from the icy waters by a select handful of divers. Scallops don’t sit in a warehouse for two weeks; they’re shelled on the boat and go out the same day via FedEx to Lane and other customers including Wolfgang Puck, Thomas Keller and Jean Georges. The name of each diver in each boat is on each tin of scallops.

“Casey’s team always has so many questions,” Buxton tells L.A. Weekly over the phone from a balmy 38-degree Stonington, where her family has lived for six generations. “We did a Facetime call — one of the first two or three that I’ve ever done — with the entire staff of Viale and I walked them around my property, showing them my 100-year-old barn where my seafood shop is, and answered all their questions. They’ll text me with questions on the difference between diver scallops and day boats, the divers, how many tanks they use, how deep they go, the names of their boats and a lot about sustainability.”

Buxton buys the cream of the crop from the local divers every day specifically for each chef at each of the 40 restaurants she serves and considers them all close friends. “Casey’s very creative. I don’t think you can pigeonhole his menu development,” she says. “He’s forever looking for something different.”

And when it comes to looking forward, Lane’s next project might just be a small bed-and-breakfast, European-style agricultural tourism space. “I’d love to do like 45 rooms and control the whole space, from check-in to the food and beverage to the farm,” he says. “I’d put it together in a lovely soulful way, something completely tourism- and food-driven. I don’t want to travel. Something close to the city, like Ojai, in a beautiful farm community.

“The only thing I really look forward to at this point is eight hours of sleep without anxiety.”
Fans of Cher, Madonna and Charo should get ready to fall in love with a new one-named diva who is already taking over 2019, only a month in. Her name is Valentina, and if you watched the 2017 season of RuPaul’s Drag Race, you’re probably already familiar with the lovely L.A. native, not only because of her killer runway looks but also for her way with words, especially the now-infamous ones, “I’d like to keep it on please,” uttered during the big lip-sync challenge on the show. Not knowing the words to an Ariana Grande song, she attempted to keep a mask over her mouth during her performance. But Ru wasn’t fooled and told her to take the thing off, forcing the contestant to reveal her lack of prep and ultimately have to sashay away. Val may had the last laugh, though: Her “keep it on” retort remains a popular meme to this day, though: Her “keep it on” retort remains a popular meme to this day, and it made her one of the most memorable queens in the show’s history.

After graduating high school, Valentina was in a dance company in East L.A. for a few years before she got into drag. While she’s performed numerous times throughout Los Angeles since her Drag Race debut, her Feb. 3 show, All About Valentina at the Luckman Fine Arts Complex at Cal State L.A., is her first solo headlining show. Valentina said she was inspired by the venue after she went to a show there, and also by its location. “It’s an honor that I get this opportunity and that it’s in East L.A.,” she says. “It’s really special to me because it’s where I come from.”

All About Valentina will be different from any of her past performances since it includes live vocals, not just lip-syncing. Fans will have no doubt expect to hear a live rendition of the single she released at the end of 2018, “A Prueba de Todo.” “I’m really wanting to put together a performance [for] my fans that is not just living in the world of nightclubs but really features my talents as a singer, as a dancer, as a personality.”

Rent was an opportunity to inspire Latin queer kids (and adults) but she always representing on RuPaul’s Drag Race (the All Stars show was filmed last year and, as of press time, she is still in the running for a spot in the Drag Race Hall of Fame). Her most shining moment so far was in episode two, “Super Girl Groups, Henny,” when she got vindication for her infamous season-nine elimination. She won a challenge having to lip-sync to her own live vocals alongside Monet X Change and then faced off against Monet in a “lip-sync for your legacy” to another Ariana Grande song.

“Oh my goodness, girl, when they said the lip-sync song was going to be Ariana Grande, I said, girl, what is this? What a coincidence! I don’t know how that happened or why that happened, but once I saw Ariana Grande, I said, ‘Oh bitch, you better learn this lip-sync and you better do it and do it well’,” Valentina recalls. “I’m very proud of myself. The redemption that I needed and wanted has been done, has been made. … I feel like I’ve proven that put to the challenge, I can lip-sync for my life."

Though her unmasked lip sync was traumatizing, it turned out to be a blessing in disguise, literally. “It became something that a lot of my fans found easy to replicate, and that year for Halloween I had hundreds, thousands of people that were dressed as ‘I’d like to keep it on, please Valentina’ for Halloween,” she says.

As for the song (Grande’s “Greedy”), she adds, “Not to toot my own horn, but I feel like that iconic moment had a lot to do with how popular that song became in the gay clubs. The gays know that song because the gays know that moment in Drag Race history.”

So what does the future hold for Valentina after Drag Race All Stars, Rent and All About Valentina? “Because of Rent, I aspire to continue in this kind of work where I am in front of the cameras and I have to learn lines and act or sing. Valentina says. “I definitely want to stay in television or move into film, and if opportunities like that don’t come, I will gladly go on tour as a singer and show people my talents in a different light and in a different way. But right now it’s kind of like a transition moment for me where I can go anywhere and everywhere. This is my first time putting together my own show, so I’m trying to see how it would work on tour. This is the rehearsal toward building a tour, if that’s what my next move is.”

Whether Valentina sees more time on-screen or in the live theater world, one thing is certain: Her star is definitely on the rise, and whatever she does, she’ll be a proud representative for both the LGBTQ and Latinx communities. She’ll also carry plenty of Los Angeles pride as well.

“Hope that what I can do for other people is lead through example and be somebody who has overcome adversity and represent my people in a positive way,” Valentina says. “Latin excellence. I want to take it to all parts of the world, not just here in America where we’re going through a really tough time and being highly criticized. I want to go against the negative stigmas of what people are thinking of Mexicans and immigrants. I am an example of the American Dream. My great-grandparents brought my parents here for a better life, and my parents were able to give me a better life. I am American and I’m very lucky to be an example for young kids to see that success is for everyone.”
New York graffiti legend has first solo show in L.A.

ARTS

bers his mom first showing him the subway. It another way, "Before Instagram, there was absolutely exploded around the world. LEE puts Wild Style graffiti in an art scene that abso-

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a vacant tunnel that hadn't been used since 

opened underneath New York's City Hall, in 

1974 and emerged as one of a select group of avant-garde in/f_luencers of 

Wild Style graffiti in an art scene that abso-

LEE fondly remembers how he fell in love 

His family didn't have a car, and he remem-

understatement. We may never 

LEE (artist Lee Quiñones) is an 

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 Quiñones, who greeted fame with the 

view

"If These Walls 

'This is the wall I built, not the wall that 

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into Little Rock Central High School in Ar-

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spontaneous musings and tags from writer 

friends who stopped through to visit, making 

for a trove of graffiti history. 

"The Empire Strikes 

"Star Wars 

A show standout is 

has a rich narrative based on the 

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 Nine Lives 

into Little Rock Central High School in Ar-

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LEE’S WALLS SPEAK VOLUMES

New York graffiti legend has first solo show in L.A.

BY TRINA CALDERÓN

“IF THESE WALLS COULD TALK,” INSTALLATION VIEW

PHOTO BY MICHAEL UNDERWOOD/COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND CHARLIE JAMES GALLERY

To insinuate that interesting things have happened in the studio of New York graffiti legend LEE (artist Lee Quiñones) is an understatement. We may never know all the details, but the tablets hanging in his latest exhibition — his first solo show in Los Angeles — hint at good times and an ongoing exploration of creative process. “If These Walls Could Talk” features pieces of LEE’s studio walls, literally chunks of wall that are hung as framed segments, along with paintings, sketch studies and color drawings that date as far back as 1977.

 Quiñones, who greeted fame with the moniker LEE, is an originator of the New York graffiti movement. A Puerto Rican from the Lower East Side, he started painting subway cars in 1974 and emerged as one of a select group of avant-garde influencers of Wild Style graffiti in an art scene that absolutely exploded around the world. LEE puts it another way, “Before Instagram, there was another way, "Before Instagram, there was another way,” LEE fondly remembers how he fell in love with graffiti. “I picked up those cans knowing that these are colorful people, people of color being so colorful. I’m like, I want to be part of this food fight. Let’s have a food fight!”

 A member of the Fabulous 5 crew, LEE painted well over 100 subway car murals throughout New York’s MTA system. His life was chronicled in the 1983 feature film Wild Style, in which he starred with fellow writers Lady Pink and Fab Five Freddy. In 1978 he painted his first handball court mural, iconic graffiti that’s since been destroyed but left behind an eternal vibration in the New York community.

 Shifting into a studio practice was not an overnight process for LEE. Fundly enough, his first experience painting on canvas happened underneath New York’s City Hall, in a vacant tunnel that hadn’t been used since the 1940s or ’50s. “That was the only place that I knew I could just go and paint and have this weird juxtapose. I was painting on rolling stock, now I’m painting on a canvas that would be in someone’s home in a different form, in a different context,” LEE says.

 He floated through friends’ studios and didn’t commit to his own until the late 1980s. LEE’s way of nurturing his ideas finally took the process off the pad or easel and straight to the studio walls, where he sorted out the thoughts and images that he brings to his work. There are two large tablets from LEE’s studio in the Navy Yard, which he inhabited in the 1990s, that include scribbles of his son’s height measurements over the decade he painted there, love letters to ex-girlfriends, spontaneous musings and tags from writer friends who stopped through to visit, making for a trove of graffiti history.

 “This is the wall I built, not the wall that some creatures out there are trying to insinuate that we need. Anyway…” he says.

 Because one must have a sense of humor to survive in this world, LEE’s dark wit and sociopolitical messages are the fabric of his work, and they’re revealed in his process; the walls act as his sounding board. Phrases written there are his own, borrowed song lyrics, or excerpts he heard that reverberate later and find their way onto the wall.

 The sectioned tablets framed and on view in Los Angeles were cut out of a more recent studio in Brooklyn. Color tests, spray paint and marker doodles are everywhere, along with drips, and fleeting meanings. Names of paintings, like Song and a Prayer, and the title of the show itself can be deciphered from their kaleidoscopic, multilayered contents. “I phrase my work and my words the way I paint sometimes,” LEE says. “It’s abstract. It means something that’s direct but sometimes I just beat around to give it flavor and color.”

 A show standout is Born From Many Apples, a large unfinished painting that dominates the gallery entrance. The meticulously rendered image of a subway yard with trains pulling through while a young boy walks a tightrope overhead is not about trains, or memories of the past. Instead, it’s a metaphor for how you step through life. And since the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree, the artist’s son modeled for the image. Everything in LEE’s past is in direct lineage to the present scene. It’s an artwork that transcends many styles and, even in its unfinished state, LEE embraces this part of the painting’s journey, something he sees as “never really finished.”

 Nine Lives has a rich narrative based on the 1957 photo of African-American student Elizabeth Eckford arriving to be integrated into Little Rock Central High School in Arkansas. The original plan for nine students to integrate the school together changed the night before, and because Eckford didn’t have a phone at home, she didn’t know and was alone, tormented by a mob, which included hateful white teen Hazel Bryan Massery screaming behind her. LEE chose to go into micro-detail on the hands of the females and allow redacted text to read “Those … us.” In a scoff at the way the government redacts public documents, LEE blocks out the obvious fear and hate in the girls’ faces and looks at the language of frustration, shame and anger in their hands.

 Several of the drawings in the exhibit are working studies for subway mural plans, some that never happened and some that did, at least for a time. In the 7 Yard is a plan for a mural for CAINE 1, a writer dear to New York graffiti history. The rough sketch features two friends, both writers, on the outside of a fence looking into the yard, scheming to paint. The Color List hangs beside it, with a methodical list of color plans for the words, characters and background. CAINE 1 was killed in early 1982, shot in the neighborhood. He was a painter LEE admired, and he didn’t get to meet him until 1982, just before he died.

 An exceptional color study in alcohol marker and glitter, Star Wars shows off all of LEE’s technical skills including color combination, composition, lettering and his unique abstraction in background details. In the lower right corner he wrote, “LEE Strikes Again,” a few years before The Empire Strikes Back was even out.

 His foresight in the graffiti scene helped set the tone for an important art movement with a loud and colorful voice. In fact, the walls do talk — and the whole world is listening.
WILLIE'S RESERVE

Margo Price

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DAY TRIPPIN’: INSIDE THE EMERGING WORLD OF LOS ANGELES CANNABIS TOURISM

BY Claire Kaufmann

Cannabis tourism is on the rise in California, and L.A. is leading the way. According to KushTourism.com, searches for cannabis tourism–related information were up nearly 300 percent in the last year. That data point, for what it’s worth, seems to be in line with the busyness of the market.

“When I started my tour company a year ago, I think there were three pot tour companies,” says Robert Fiore of DopeTour. “Now there’s 10 to 15. … The landscape is changing so fast.”

The cannabis tourism scene in L.A. is a pretty compelling microcosm of the cannabis industry — frustrations with regulatory challenges, a diversity of entrepreneurs addressing a diversity of market demands, and hustlers.

The proliferation of tour operators and the resulting competition for customers makes it a buyer’s market, which should be welcomed as good news for anyone interested in taking a cannabis tour. Prices for tours are competitive, itineraries offer something for everyone, and tour operators are eager to please.

Tours are also a great way to get a sense of the many dispensaries and the dizzying number of brands and products now available to anyone 21 and older. Whether you’re visiting L.A. or live here and want some guidance scouting out good shops, most tours include at least one dispensary, if not more. And tour operators are incentivized to build relationships with dispensaries they can trust to accommodate w/their groups, schedules and questions.

“The majority of people coming don’t know good products from bad ones, medical from non-medical,” Fiore adds. “We try to steer people to products that are right for them. We’re constantly educating our tour guides on the latest products, brands, reviews and feedback.”

Why take a cannabis-themed tour at all? Why not just walk into any adult-use dispensary, buy your gummy or joint or vape cartridge, and take your own canna-tour of L.A.? The short answer is, plenty of people — tourists and locals alike — do exactly that. But cannabis tours offer a few benefits that make them worth considering, whether you’re visiting L.A. from Tokyo or Tallahassee or Torrance:

1. You get an education along with the sights and sensations. Every tour operator in the cannabis scene right now recognizes the opportunity, and the imperative, to educate their guests: about the plant, its effects, its culture and the bevy of products available. Having a knowledgeable guide to show you around makes plenty of sense for cannabis tours, just like it makes plenty of sense when you’re visiting cultural and natural destinations around the world.

2. You’ll make new friends. Not to sound like an encouraging parent on the first day of school, but taking in a new experience with others with similar interests can be a very rewarding way to sight-see. Add in the fact that many canna-tourists are new to the scene or new to L.A. or both, and you can see why a tour bus of strangers + a knowledgeable guide + weed = fast (and hungry) friends.

3. Social consumption work-around! Basically, every state and local jurisdiction that has legalized weed has done so by (initially) taking social/public consumption off the table. Now states that legalized early (Oregon, Colorado) are working hard to pass social consumption laws allowing people to consume cannabis at bars, cafes, lounges, etc. But for now, if you’re visiting L.A. and staying at a hotel or even a private rental, you may find it difficult to find a place to enjoy your legally purchased bud. A cannabis tour provides one solution. Consuming while on board the tour bus is allowed, so long as the driver is physically separated from the main cabin. Tours vary in what’s permitted to be consumed on board, but it’s better than being kicked out of your hotel room or forced to pay excessive cleaning fees for that Airbnb. As is true for the broader marijuana marketplace, the No. 1 rule for the prospective canna-tourist is Caveat emptor: Buyer beware. Do your research, check out the reviews, call around. If you do, you’ll find a lot of great ways to check out L.A.’s booming cannabis scene with the right tour for you.

“We get a good mix of everybody, from locals wanting an alternative girls night out, to out-of-towners,” -Lauren Jones

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But how do you know which tour company and which tour are right for you? That's a great rhetorical question! Here's the non-rhetorical answer: It's not that hard. It turns out most cannabis tourists fall into three categories: the canna-curious, the health hunter and the chronnoseur.

Tours for the Canna-Curious
The canna-curious make up a notable segment of the clientele, according to tour operators. “We get a good mix of everybody, from locals wanting an alternative girls night out, to out-of-towners,” says Lauren Jones, who co-founded Weedly to share her passion for LA’s cannabis scene and provide some education in the process. “Our first booking was a private tour for a couple for Valentine’s Day weekend, a wine and weed tour. They were from South Carolina, totally new to cannabis. The wife lit the joint from the wrong end!”

Dope Tour’s Fiore agrees, “What surprised me was how many people came from places with the strictest [prohibition] laws, especially Texas, the South and Florida.”

If you’re canna-curious, you’re most likely not a regular consumer of cannabis — maybe never, maybe back in college. Maybe you’re visiting LA from a “pre-legalization jurisdiction.” Maybe you find yourself in LA for a conference and you want to be able to tell your friends and family back home what it was like to step into the future. If you’ve got a blazing desire to learn — about the plant, the industry, the growth cycle or some other aspect of legal marijuana — good news, curious ones! There are several great tour options for you.

From the team at Weedly, the Weedly 101 tour offers a two-hour experience ($89) that promises to educate you about the science and culture of cannabis with stops at two popular dispensaries.

“Education is important to the mission — that’s why we chose to play on it for our name,” says Weedly’s Jones. For those visiting LA (or showing your visitors around) and wanting to do the Hollywood tour thing but with a fresh twist, this tour’s for you: Dope Tour’s Hollywood tour ($100) is a mashup of a classic-Hollywood-sites kind of tour and a weed tour featuring dispensaries and munchies. Imagine the grimacing selfies you’ll have. Probably an afternoon well spent.

And for people who love discovering tasty local craft beer and might want to explore some local craft bud to go with it, L.A. Hemp Tours offers a Budz n’ Sudz Cannabis and Beer Tour. The four-hour tour hits up a couple of dispensaries and a couple of micro-brewing facilities. Similar wine-and-weed tours are offered by other opera- tors as well.

Tours for the Health Hunter
Whether you’ve heard about cannabis’ many alleged health benefits from a relative, or you’re already using cannabis therapeutically, if health is your primary connection to cannabis, you’re not alone. L.A.’s reputation as a mecca for the health-and-mindfulness set — its long history with medical marijuana, yoga and health food — already attracts visitors from across the country and around the world. Cannapreneurs realized there was a market for cannabis tours and experiences that felt more like a yoga sesh than a connoisseur of the chronic. Welcome to LA!”

If you came to LA for the weed, you chose well. And if you came to LA for another reason but are glad the weed is good and plentiful, we are, too. As one might imagine, there are good and plenty of options for the rolling stoner.

Green Tours’ Celebrity 420 experience with Tommy Chong ($149 for 4.5 hours) is a natural starting point. Yes, the voice of the yak in Zootopia is also one of the icons of marijuana worldwide, and doubly so in Los Angeles. Getting lit with Tommy Chong feels like a cannabis bucket list default setting, and the rest of the tour — dispensaries, food, information — rounds out a memorable experience.

Also worth checking out is WeedBus L.A.’s Munchie Crawl ($149 for four hours), which is pretty much what it sounds like. Smoke, eat, smoke, eat, repeat. There is no shame in going for it, if inducing and satisfying munchies is your kind of stoner trip.

And in a similar vein, check out Weedly’s Mary Jane & Music ($119 for three hours), which they say is open to all levels, but the mention of a dab lounge hints that this might be a better fit for the seasoned toker; or their Grow Tour, which Jones promises is “like no other. … Other tours may just peek through the door; we walk through the grow.”

But that’s not all! The cannabis tour scene is also like the broader cannabis market in another way: It’s constantly innovating. From experiences in infused cooking, to tours that’ll teach you the basics of the cannabis industry for interested entrepreneurs, the bottom line is this: Whatever kind of cannabis experience you want to have in LA, there’s an operator for that.

L.A. is a great place to visit for those who love weed, those who’ve never had weed, and those who can’t remember which. Cannabis tours option around, with options and flavors aplenty. Regardless of which kind of tour you choose, take advantage of the knowledge and professionalism of the tour guides and tour company operators. Yes, they’re navigating a frustrating landscape of changing regulations and capri- cous rule enforcement (Yelp seems to have earned the ire of many a tour operator). They are also eager to make you happy and determined to educate. Their hope is that you learn something, take home stories to tell of la mota de Los Angeles, and whether you’re returning to Tallahassee or Tokyo, you’re better versed in the promise of cannabis and equally important, the promise of ending prohibition.
Cannabidiol—CBD—is a cannabis compound that has significant medical benefits, but does not make people feel “stoned” and can actually counteract the psychoactivity of THC. The fact that CBD-rich cannabis is non-psychoactive or less psychoactive than THC-dominant strains makes it an appealing option for patients looking for relief from inflammation, pain, anxiety, psychosis, seizures, spasms, and other conditions without disconcerting feelings of lethargy or dysphoria.

Scientific and clinical research—much of it sponsored by the US government—underscores CBD’s potential as a treatment for a wide range of conditions, including arthritis, diabetes, alcoholism, MS, chronic pain, schizophrenia, PTSD, depression, antibiotic-resistant infections, epilepsy, and other neurological disorders. CBD has demonstrable neuroprotective and neurogenic effects, and its anti-cancer properties are currently being investigated at several academic research centers in the United States and elsewhere. Further evidence suggests that CBD is safe even at high doses.
Mark Adams of Delta 9 Introduces CBN with 1 PUFF

By Nick Walker

The means by which we discuss cannabis have evolved drastically over the last decade. Ten years ago, the primary way a casual consumer differentiated product was by price point. The more expensive the miscellaneous bag of grass was, theoretically, the higher quality the product. Since then, as the cannabis industry has grown larger and more legitimate and we learn more and more about the individual properties of marijuana, our ability as consumers to make clearer decisions in what we buy also has grown. It began with the distinction between sativa and indica. Eventually, we broke it down even further, noting the differences in a strain’s cannabinoid properties, namely its THC and cannabidiol (CBD) percentages. Recently, however, Mark Adams and his new line, 1 PUFF, have given us an entirely new cannabinoid to consider: cannabinol, or CBN.

Mark Adams got into the cannabis industry in 2006, when his grandfather was dying of colon cancer. After experimenting with cannabis in an effort to improve his grandfather’s condition, Adams saw the positive impact marijuana had on his grandfather’s pain levels while also noting the enormous number of hoops a patient had to jump through just to get his hands on it.

Shortly thereafter, Adams dedicated himself to the study of cannabis, hoping to make it more readily available to a public that could greatly benefit from its anti-inflammatory and pain-relieving qualities. Starting out with his own

For those consumers who say, “Vaporizers don’t really do that much for me,” this may be the product to change your mind.
Delta 9 Introduces Mark Adams of its anti-inflammatory and pain-relieving qualities. Starting out with his own to make it more readily available to a public that could greatly benefit from Shortly thereafter, Adams dedicated himself to the study of cannabis, hoping had on his grandfather’s pain levels while also noting the enormous number of improve his grandfather’s condition, Adams saw the positive impact marijuana was dying of colon cancer. After experimenting with cannabis in an effort to his new line, 1 PUFF, have given us an entirely new cannabinoid to consider: the distinction between sativa and indica. Eventually, we broke it down even more and more about the individual properties of marijuana, our ability as con- sumers to make clearer decisions in what we buy also has grown. It began with his means by which the higher quality the grass was, theoretically, differentiated product way a casual consumer years ago, the primary strain? The answer he got was terpenes. Up to that point, terpenes in cannabis had not been a focus for most researchers, because terpenes are not unique to the cannabis plant. Terpenes are found in all fragrant plants, which is why cannabis researchers were much more focused on the cannabinoids and those elements of cannabis that made it unique. Adams, however, had drawn a connection between a plant’s scent and its effects in consumers, and with that answer, formulated his own opinion on where the “medicine” of marijuana might really lie.

Adams took that theory and began to put it into effect in his work. Utilizing feedback and surveys from patients, he was able to better break down what strains caused what effects, and what terpenes were dominant in those strains. The real trick, however, was to be able to mimic those effects from smoking and put them in a vaporized form. This is where Adams and his team created their unique triple extraction process that is used in their 1 PUFF line. After distilling a fresh plant, terpenes are extracted from the plant at three separate points in the process and are then reformulated back into the oil at the end of the process at the exact concentration that they are found in the original plant. This triple extraction process creates the “true to strain” effects of 1 PUFF.

Adams and his team felt that if a person smoked a specific strain for a specific effect, then they should be able to experience in its vaporized form not only the flavor of that strain but the effects for which they had chosen that strain in the first place.

But the unique technology of 1 PUFF doesn’t stop there. Within the vaporizer itself, the product’s unique radiant heat technology heating coil plays a huge part in the overall experience. This mechanism manages to do something most vaporizers on the market have not been able to achieve: Create a cooler burn while still maintaining a large volume. Even at the low temperature this heating coil creates, it still manages to give off approximately 13mg of THC per one puff (hence the name), compared with most products currently on the market that give out an average of 2mg to 6mg of THC per puff while burning at higher temperatures. It is this technology matched with the triple extraction process that really creates the “true to strain” experience.

For those consumers who say, “Vaporizers don’t really do that much for me,” this may be the product to change your mind.

Perhaps the most unique part of the 1 PUFF line is its cannabinoid formulas, most specifically its brand-new cannabiol (CBN) formula. CBN, along with CBD and THC and several other compounds, is one of the cannabinoids that create the properties of cannabis. Up until now, most cannabis researchers have kept their cannabinoid focus on isolating THC and CBD. 1 PUFF’s Sleep product, however, brings us the first CBN product to hit the market.

According to Adams and his team of researchers, CBN brings on a non-psychoactive, purely physical effect similar to CBD, but with a level of effect on the body that is nearly 10 times the amount of THC. It is their hope that this product will be helpful for a wide variety of users, from those just looking to relax to those seeking a way to deal with serious physical pain.

With its new CBN formula, 1 PUFF is opening up an entirely new branch in the study of cannabinoids, and with it is just beginning its dive into the potential future benefits of CBN.

1 PUFF products are currently available in select stores, and their batteries come with a lifetime warranty. See their full line of products at their website, 1puff.com.

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Welcome to L.A. Weekly's Movie Guide, your look at the hottest films in Los Angeles theaters this week — from indie art-house gems and classics to popcorn-perfect blockbusters and new movies garnering buzz. Check here every week before you make your big-screen plans.

Wide release
Friday, Feb. 1

Gerardo Naranjo’s 2011 Mexican melodrama Miss Bala was based on the true story of a woman kidnapped by gang members and forced to act as a munitions runner in Guadalajara. Columbia Pictures acquired the rights to the story and enlisted Catherine Hardwicke to direct a remake. This Miss Bala redux is a high-octane action flick starring Gina Rodriguez (star of TV’s Jane the Virgin) as a makeup artist whose best friend is kidnapped by a vicious drug cartel. A female-empowerment narrative nested within a kickass thriller, the movie is bordered on all sides by a strong supporting cast, including Ismael Cruz Córdova and Anthony Mackie. Also opening Friday, Feb. 1: The Wild Pear Tree; Arctic; Outlaws; This One’s for the Ladies; Piercing; Then Came You; Sharkwater Extinction; Braid; Daughter of Mine; The Unicorn; St. Bernard Syndicate.

Limited/art-house
Friday, Feb. 1

Horror Noire: A History of Black Horror is Shudder TV’s first foray into original documentary filmmaking. Based on the scholarly book by Dr. Robin R. Means Coleman, the film takes a long view of black Americans in Hollywood, specifically with regard to horror films of the counterculture. The American Cinematheque is offering a peek at this new doc, directed by Xavier Burgin, with a special introduction by author and educator Tananarive Due. Egyptian Theatre, 6712 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood; Fri., Feb. 1, 7:30 p.m.; $12. (323) 466-3456, americancinemathequecalendar.com.

The Iron Giant feels more and more Spielbergian with each viewing, which is appropriate, since it was Spielberg who helped launch the career of its director, Brad Bird, who got his first writing and directing gigs on Amazing Stories. This nostalgic, sentimental 1999 animated feature about a boy’s friendship with a gigantic robot from outer space is based on the book by erstwhile British poet laureate Ted Hughes. It’s the first night in a series honoring Bird’s accomplishments in the field of animation. The director will appear for a Q&A following the screening. Aero Theatre, 1328 Montana Ave., Santa Monica; Fri., Feb. 1, 7:30 p.m.; $15. (323) 466-3456, americancinemathequecalendar.com.

Liberating Hollywood, UCLA’s ambitious retrospective showcasing the work of female directors during the 1970s, continues with a double feature by filmmaker Jane Wagner. Moment by Moment is a delicately photographed, star-powered romance about a Malibu-dwelling woman (top-billed Lily Tomlin) approaching middle age who enters into a relationship with a hot-to-trot hustler (John Travolta, in an about-face from his Saturday Night Fever persona). The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe, for which Wagner wrote the screenplay, is based on Lily Tomlin’s one-woman show, which collected a Tony Award in 1977. It is, among other things, a precious record of a brilliant comic performance. UCLA’s Billy Wilder Theater, 10899 Wilshire Blvd., Westwood; Sat., Feb. 2, 7:30 p.m.; $10. (310) 206-8013, cinemaucla.edu.

Saturday, Feb. 2

Tales From the Hood, a neglected horror gem from 1995, is an African-American spin on the DC Comics anthology cycle, mixing gore and gallow humor with social issues. The American Cinematheque offers it as a chaser to its Horror Noire presentation. Director Rusty Cundieff and writer Darin Scott will take the stage to discuss the making of this cult classic. This will be followed by a 35mm screening of Tales From the Crypt: Demon Knight, Ernest Dickerson’s spinoff of the popular HBO horror series. Egyptian Theatre, 6712 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood; Sat., Feb. 2, 7:30 p.m.; $12. (323) 466-3456, americancinemathequecalendar.com.

When The Incredibles came out in 2004, deconstructing the superhero genre was not a new exercise (see Shyamalan’s Unbreakable), but this lively Pixar comedy about the domestic challenges of a family with extraordinary powers had a freshness that made it one of the biggest hits of its year. It marked a career highpoint for director Brad Bird, who is being honored by the American Cinematheque with a three-night tribute. Incredibles 2, released last summer, was similarly greeted with enthusiasm. Both movies will screen at the Aero, with Bird in person in between films. Aero Theatre, 1328 Montana Ave., Santa Monica; Sat., Feb. 2, 7:30 p.m.; $15. (323) 466-3456, americancinemathequecalendar.com.

Lynne Littman will be the center of attention Saturday night at the Hammer Museum, which hosts UCLA’s Liberating Hollywood retrospective. Number Our Days, which earned Littman an Academy Award for Best Documentary Short Subject, is a compassionate study of a group of elderly Jewish refugees living in the beach community of Venice, California. The second film of the evening, Testament, details in naturalistic terms the effect of a nuclear holocaust on a California family. Jane Alexander garnered an Oscar nomination for her superb performance as a mother who administers comfort to her children as they grow sick. This devastating scenario is brought to full emotional life by Littman’s sensitive direction. UCLA’s Billy Wilder Theater, 10899 Wilshire Blvd., Westwood; Sat., Feb. 2, 7:30 p.m.; $10. (310) 206-8013, cinemaucla.edu.

Sunday, Feb. 3

Fatso is the final film of the weekend to salute the achievement of women directors in 1970s Hollywood, and it’s the only feature film written and directed by Oscar-winning actress-singer Anne Bancroft. Dom DeLuise plays the titular character, a big man with a big heart who vows to curtail his food intake when he meets and falls in love with an antiques dealer (Candice Azzara). Bancroft, who also co-stars, loaded the crew with professional women, including cinematographer Brianne Murphy, the first female to shoot a major studio film. UCLA’s Billy Wilder Theater, 10899 Wilshire Blvd., Westwood; Sun., Feb. 3, 7:30 p.m.; $10. (310) 206-8013, cinemaucla.edu.

The search for signs of intelligent life in the universe, for which Wagner wrote the screenplay, is based on Lily Tomlin’s one-woman show, which collected a Tony Award in 1977. It is, among other things, a precious record of a brilliant comic performance. UCLA’s Billy Wilder theater, 10899 Wilshire Blvd., Westwood; Sun., Feb. 3, 7:30 p.m.; $10. (310) 206-8013, cinemaucla.edu.
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LA WEEKLY
40 YEARS OF PUNK

Gang of Four ask America if we’re happy now

BY BRETT CALLWOOD

Let’s not mince words here. *Entertainment!*, the 1979 debut album from Leeds, England, band Gang of Four, is one of the best post-punk albums born across the pond. In fact, scratch that. It’s one of the best punk albums (period) that came from anywhere. Somehow soulful and also mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as mechanical in that sexy, Berlin-esque way, the band wrote progressive lyrics that are as

When John “Gaoler” Sterry, formerly of London band Gaoler’s Daughter, wandered into the studio and ended up singing on multiple tracks. He’s now Gang of Four’s vocalist on a full-time basis, and that has taken some longtime fans a bit of getting used to. “If you have a different singer, that’s a speed bump for a lot of people to get their heads around,” Gill says. “I don’t want to repeat the sound of *Entertainment!* I don’t want to keep going over old ground. That’s never been Gang of Four’s style. It is about moving forward, it’s about not repeating a formula, it’s about looking at things afresh. That’s always been my feeling and it’s the way I go. The reception that I see is very positive. I think the first six months of Gaoler singing, there’s a certain amount of, ‘Oh, he’s too young, he doesn’t fit in.’ I don’t really care what age somebody is in the band. It’s an interesting quirk.”

Naturally, it’s taken the current lineup (completed by bassist Thomas McNeice and drummer Tobias Humble) a bit of time to settle. But, as Gill says, McNeice has been in the ranks for a good decade, with Gaoler joining in 2012. “I think you do need that kind of period of time to bed things in, to find out what their strengths are and all of that,” Gill says. “I think *What Happens Next* was not as good a record as this one, partly because I was feeling my way, and when I started that record, I had the idea that it could be collaborations. Herbert Grönemeyer singing, Alison Mosshart, Robbie Furze.”

“After I recorded several things and then Gaoler wandered into the studio, I started working with him. So that was a little bit of a transition. But now, I don’t want to do those collaborations. I think one of the main differences here is that I was very determined to work with other people in the studio, other producers. Music is often at its best when it’s collaborative.”

The new album he’s referring to is *HAPPY NOW*, which will be released in the United States on March 1, and it follows last year’s *Complicit* EP. Not only is it musically fascinating, an accomplished slab of work, but the lyrics are typically insightful. The *Complicit* EP featured Ivanka Trump on the “cover” (they still included art despite it being download-only). This time, they have a song called “Ivanka: My Name’s on It.” Clearly, the shitshow we’re currently living in has an impact on the band. “I think it is inspirational,” Gill says. “We’re in interesting times, and that sometimes means not necessarily the best times. We found ourselves in those positions before, in the ‘80s, if of a different kind. I think you don’t always live in the best times, and I think I didn’t particularly want to just take shots at Donald Trump. He does a great job of displaying his unpleasantness on his own, without help from me. I think the thing that was interesting about Ivanka was that here was this wonderfully overblown act of nepotism — he gives his daughter an office in the White House and gives her various roles, including being an apologist. I didn’t have to do anything, I just had to note down what he said and there’s your song. This Shakespearean drama is taking place in front of us and you just have to take a few snapshots of it.”

The title of the new album, stylized in uppercase, seems to be a statement, and also a question. Popular vote and Russian interference aside, the election went the way of Trump. Ditto Brexit in the U.K. The people made this mess. Are we happy now? Gill says that the title is both a statement and a question, adding, “It would be a bit crass to put *HAPPY NOW* and then a question mark.”

As the Gang of Four prepare to arrive on these shores for a short U.S. tour, Gill considers the old songs that he thinks Gaoler sings best in the live environment. “There’s a few that I think he does well,” he says. “I think he’s great live and does it justice. There are a couple of songs from *Shrinkwrapped*, like ‘I Parade Myself,’ which is one of my favorites, and I think he does it really well. You could pick any of them. ‘To Hell With Poverty,’ ‘At Home He’s a Tourist’ — he does them well and puts everything into it.”

The West Coast, the East Coast and Chicago were early adopters of the Gang of Four, Gill says, so he enjoys coming to L.A. This is a mini tour — the band will be back in the fall for a longer stay that will include some of Gill’s favorite spots in the South. For now, they’re performing two local sets — on Feb. 4 at Marty’s on Newport and Feb. 6 at the Roxy. The guitarist says they’ll be mixing up the sets up.

“We always do five or six songs from *Entertainment!* and we’ll do four or five songs from the new album, and some old favorites in between,” Gill says. “One of the things that we all enjoy is the way we can do a song from literally 40 years ago, and then you do one from last year, and they complement each other. They sit next to each other. It’s quite odd but works really well.”

After that, more recorded music, and more touring. “When we finalized the album, I had 17 songs and I picked the 10 I thought worked best together,” Gill says. “So I’ve got nearly another album ready and I’m going to be finishing that off. After America, we have a week off in London, then we’re doing Japan, China, Australia, New Zealand. Then back after that and doing festivals and stuff. Busy boy.”

Gang of Four play at 9 p.m. on Monday, Feb. 4, at Marty’s on Newport, and at 9 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 6, at the Roxy.
**Go Hear**

**FRI 2/1**

Seun Kuti @ ZEBULON

Like his older brother Femi Kuti, singer-saxophonist Seun Kuti inherited a lot from their legendary father, Fela Kuti. Both sons were schooled in the funky rhythmic intricacies of their dad’s tight Afrobeat music, but they also developed their own sciences to incorporate Fela’s political activism and outspokenness in their own music. Seun also carries on the tradition of Fela’s old band Egypt 80, which features many of the same musicians who toured with Fela — and who also had to struggle against the harassment and corrupt practices of Nigeria’s military and police, which did everything they could to censor Fela’s music. Seun Kuti shares with Bob Marley the ability to create madly intoxicating music that’s simultaneously joyful and energetic, even as it’s layered with inspirational messages of freedom. —FALLING JAMES

Olafur Arnalds @ THE ORPHEUM

Concerts at the Orpheum usually are shot through and riddled with razzle-dazzle and stark naked theatricality, but if you’re looking to take a break from that and just luxuriate in the simple pleasures of watching a man play three pianos at once, then Olafur Arnalds is your man and this is your night. The Icelandic ambient composer has a new album on Mercury Kx titled remember, composed by a new technological advance named Stratus, which involves two specially equipped pianos triggered by Arnalds’ own piano playing. When he hits a note, they make two other notes, meaning that he can open up new fields of melody and harmony. With Stratus, he also has the breathtaking acoustics of the Orpheum as yet another instrument with which he’ll transport you to yet another world — but gently, gently. —DAVID COTNER

**SAT 2/2**

Suckerpunch @ THE VIPER ROOM

Formed in 1994, Suckerpunch are arguably better known for the bands that the members came from or later joined than their own music; that’s understandable but a bit of a shame. Tim Mosher (Broken Glass, Junkyard), Mike Dimkich (The Cult, Bad Religion, Steve Jones Band), Pat Muzingo (Junkyard, Decry, Speedbuggly) and Gary Ivon (Glimmer, London Quireboys) put out an awesome self-titled debut in ’96 via MCA, and then split shortly afterward. And that was it — the guys went their separate ways, and made beautiful music elsewhere. But now, they’re getting back together to revisit those past glories. It should be a special night — Suckerpunch retain a small but enthusiastic fan base, and the band are fired up and ready to go. Fur Dixon, The Gitas and Brainspoon also play. —BRETT CALLWOOD

**MON 2/4**

Adrienne Lenker @ PICO UNION PROJECT

As leader of the four-piece Brooklyn band Big Thief, Adrienne Lenker caught the attention of listeners and critics alike with a pair of special albums, Masterpiece (2016) and Capacity (2017), on the venerable Omaha, Nebraska, indie label Saddle Creek Records. (Founded in 1993, Saddle Creek notably maintains a 50/50 profit-sharing split with its artists.) Last year, Lenker delivered a new solo album, abysskiss. The sparseness of the songs — ruminations on heartache and loss — belied the sophistication of Lenker’s arrangements and her gift for unique melodies, and abysskiss found its way onto year-end lists from Pitchfork to NPR. —MATT MINER

**TUE 2/5**

Vera Sola @ THE LOVE SONG

“l found myself a new world/sailed around its ring/I brought myself a country/ and I crowned myself its king,” Vera Sola declares on “The Colony,” from her 2018 debut album, Shades. The singer’s personal kingdom is a windswept landscape of austere drums and bass and subdued guitars through which Sola, who also plays with Elvis Perkins, wanders with her languid, solemn phrasing. “See, I came out of your body/I was attached to your spine/I was a...
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Gregory Porter
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Peter White
piece of your rib cage,” she purrs on “The Cage,” but with its eerie keyboards and Sola’s shell-shocked delivery, the song is not a starry-eyed romantic tribute as she continues, “I am a fraction of/I am subtracted from/I am you.” With Shades, Sola builds on the promise of her 2017 EP, Last Caress, in which she subversively transformed Misfits covers into glassy, spectrally enchanting ballads. —FALLING JAMES

le butcherettes
@ Marty’s on Newport
Mexican garage-punk band Le Butcherettes were formed by the wonderfully wild though enigmatic Teri Gender Bender in 2007, and they’ve released four albums, with bi/MENTAL dropped on Feb. 1. Jello Biafra and Alice Bag pop up on the new record, which is typically thrilling; raw and lyrically intense, all framed by Gender Bender’s Kate Bush–esque vocal coos. Talking Heads’ Jerry Harrison produces, so the big punk names can be found everywhere, but this record is all about Le Butcherettes. The garnishes help but don’t override. Rather, this is a band that has really hit its stride now, and each release feels like a gift. This Tustin gig with Stars at Night should be insane. —BRETT CALLWOOD

WED 2/6

Nikki Lane
@ The Fonda Theatre
Nikki Lane’s 2012 single, “Gone Gone Gone,” is one of those rare modern country-pop songs that’s suffused with an air of mystery and enchantment that does more than just mimic classic roots music. The febrile tune is a haunting idyll with the Nashville resident’s heartfelt, dreamy vocals draped over rich, echoing shimmers of guitar. On Lane’s latest album, Highway Queen, the singer stakes her claim as an important country artist in the now. “Sixty thousand miles of blacktop, countless broken hearts between,” she confides on the autobiographical title track. “You can tie her down with a Marlboro Light, but the highway queen don’t need no king. ”

THU 2/7

Warpaint, SWIMM
@ Echoplex
Warpaint are such a uniquely compelling combination of influences and musicians that it takes a two-day festival to unwrap all the different permutations of the band and their extended community of simpatico musical allies. The enigmatic L.A. quartet bring the third edition of their Love You Down festival to the Echo and also downstairs in the adjoining Echoplex. Warpaint and gauzy electronic-pop explorers SWIMM headline both nights, with performances by such SoCal indie-rock luminaries as Gardens & Villa, Sego, Goldensuns and Jeffertitti’s Nile, plus DJ sets from Devendra Banhart, The Kills’ Jaime Hince and David Orlando, among others. Even more intriguing, Warpaint’s members branch out into various projects, including singer-guitarist Emily Kokal collaborating with Deadfame, singer-guitarist Theresa Wayman reprising TT, drummer Stella Mozawa and Boom Bip appearing as Beef, and bassist Jenyyee taking the stage in her solo persona. Also Friday, Feb. 8. —FALLING JAMES

King Princess
@ The Fonda Theatre
“I hate it when dudes try to chase me, but I love it when you try to save me ‘cause I’m just a lady,” King Princess confesses on “1950,” a forlornth celebration of queer love on her 2018 EP, Make My Bed. Miakela Straus, a 20-year-old native of Brooklyn, sings unabashedly mainstream, piano-driven pop tunes that are marked by her bold yet contemplative lyrics. “I rule with the velvet tongue,” she says fittingly enough on “Holy,” a yearning electro-pop reverie. “I’m dressed like a fucking queen, and you’re begging ‘please.’ ” King Princess reveals added depth on her heartfelt new cover of “I Know” by Fiona Apple, which reflects her admiration back to the pop wunderkind by harmonizing and playing piano. —FALLING JAMES

Sat. February 2

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FRIDAY, FEB. 1

ELTON JOHN: 8 p.m., $59.50-$249.50. The Forum, 3900 W. Manchester Blvd., Inglewood.

JOE: With Rei Brown, 9 p.m. El Rey Theatre.

JOSH JOHNSON: 4 p.m., free. Union Station.


TRITONAL: 9 p.m. Hollywood Palladium.

SATURDAY, FEB. 2

ANDY GARCIA & THE CINESON ALL-STARS: 8 p.m. Luckman Fine Arts Complex.

ARTURO O’FARRILL & THE AFRICAN LATIN JAZZ ORCHESTRA: 8 p.m. The Soraya, Northridge.

ELTON JOHN: 8 p.m. The Forum.

THE KNOCKS: The Novo.

ROCK & WOOF: With Bobby Kimball, Rudy Sarzo, Brent Carver, Frank Banali, Ellis Hall, Mike Pinera, Larissa Wohl, Sean McNabb, Eliot Lurie, 7 p.m., $75. Santa Monica Bay Woman’s Club.

SOULECTION EXPERIENCE: With Monte Booker, Andre Power, Sasha Marie, J. Robb, 7:30-9 p.m. Shrine Auditorium & Expo Hall.

THE VOID: 8 p.m. The Wiltern.

TUESDAY, FEB. 5

THE LEMON TWIGS: With Jackie Cohen, 8:30 p.m. El Rey Theatre, 5515 Wilshire Blvd., L.A.

YAN MORRISON: 7 p.m. The Wiltern.

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 6

BLACKBERRY SMOKE, NIKKI LANE: 8 p.m., $40. The Fonda Theatre. See Music Pick.

CAMILA CABAO: 8 p.m. The Orpheum Theatre.

YAN MORRISON: 7 p.m. The Wiltern.
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THURSDAY, FEB. 7

ATMOSPHERE: 8 p.m. The Novo by Microsoft.

GO A BOWIE CELEBRATION: With Evan Rachel Wood, Mike Garson, Earl Slick, The Orpheum.

GO KING PRINCESS: With Banoffee, 8 p.m., $25.

The Fonda Theatre. See Music Pick.

GO: 7 p.m. The Wiltern, 3790 Wilshire Blvd., L.A.

MICHAEL FRANTI: 8 p.m. El Rey Theatre.

PINK: 7:30 p.m. Hollywood Palladium.

PORTER ROBINSON: Shrine Auditorium.

SAN CHA: With La Victoria, Yanga, 8 p.m. Vibiana.

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GO L.A. PHILHARMONIC: Australian conductor Simone Young summons forth Richard Strauss’ Also sprach Zarathustra and Benjamin Britten’s Four Sea Interludes from Peter Grimes and Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings, featuring tenor Michael Slattery, Fri., Feb. 1, 8 p.m.; Sat., Feb. 2, 2 p.m.; Sun., Feb. 3, 2 p.m. DiaoQiang Opera Troupe and violinist Ray Chen are on hand as Elim Chan conducts works by Saint-Saëns, An-Lun Huang and the world premiere of Du Yun’s Thirst, Wed., Feb. 6, 8 p.m.; Thu., Feb. 7, 8 p.m. Disney Hall.

GO PAUL JACOBS: The organist rolls out sonatas, fantasies and variations by John Weaver, Bach, Mozart, Ives and Liszt, Sun., Feb. 3, 7:30 p.m. Disney Hall.

—FALLING JAMES

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