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A survey and fashion show for out and influential designer Rudi Gernreich, the avant-garde Ojai Music Festival, the FEMMEBIT Festival, and more to do and see in L.A. this week.

Profiles of local LGBTQ figures from all walks of life leveraging their platforms to improve SoCal. BY MICHAEL COOPER.

Former boybander Lance Bass brings pride to Rocco’s WeHo. BY MICHELE STUEVEN.

From recession to a senator’s ire, Highways has survived it all and thrived. BY SHAMA HYS DAMBROT.

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won six Tonys in 2017, and characters from one of the greatest sitcoms ever, namely Jerry, George, Kramer and Elaine, and the ridiculous situations they constantly found themselves in. As the name suggests, this isn’t just a reading, but a mini concert. With help from a live band and music by Michael Teoli, cast members Lewis, Lauren Holt, Heather Woodward, Matthew Patrick Davis, Brock Baker, Ari Sidiham, Dahlya Glick and Joe Fria sing original songs to the tune of ’90s alt-rock, as well as integrate trademark Seinfeldisms or phrases, whether it’s close talkers or “What’s the deal with…” UCB Inner Sanctum, 5419 W. Sunset Blvd., East Hollywood; Fri., May 31, 8-10 p.m.; free. (323) 908-8702, ucbtheatre.com. —TIRAN BABAYAN

ART

Fierce Design
Pride Month kicks off with the Skirball Center’s Late Night! Pride in Fashion, an evening of performances following after hours walk-throughs (6-10 p.m.) of their exhibitions Black Is Beautiful: The Photography of Kwame Brathwaite and Fearless Fashion: Rudi Gernreich. The Gernreich exhibit celebrates the influential designer and his work — which included the introduction of the “monokini,” the thong, unisex caftans, and pantsuits for women, to name a few of his innovations. The exhibit explores how this visionary defied style norms and championed authentic expression in fashion, and his life was no different; the designer was an out and proud gay man who championed homosexual rights at a time when doing so was neither easy nor simple. Skirball’s popular style survey is a fitting and fun way to mark Pride Month, with dancers from Luminario Ballet modeling the designer’s iconic costumes, plus Hello DJ on the decks, food trucks and a cash bar. The Getty, 1200 Getty Center Drive, Bel-Air; Fri., May 31, 6-10 p.m.; $5, free for members. skirball.org/programs/special-event/late-night-pride-fashion—LINA LECARO

DANCE

Not Your Average Commute
In Transit Dances III, instigator Donna Sternberg returns with four dance troupes to surprise and delight riders along a Santa Monica stretch of the Expo light rail line. The event is free with a Metro ticket. The fun begins at the 26th Street/Bergamot station and moves west to the 17th and the 4th Street stations. At each stop, tour guides lead audience members to a performance site and after the performance the audience boards the train and travels on to the next stop. Though focused in Santa Monica, the participating performers reflect SoCal’s extraordinary diversity including New Zealand dance from Nga Anahera Maori, Bollywood from Blue 13, and contemporary dance from both B. Dunn Movement and host company Donna Sternberg & Dancers. Route details and map at Santa Monica Expo Line, begins at 26th Street/Bergamot Metro Stop, Santa Monica; Sat., June 1, noon & 1 p.m., free with metro ticket. disdancers.com. —ANN HASKINS

BOOKS/FILM

Lessons of Experience
Wondering what John Waters is up to these days? The inimitable Book Soup presents the inimitable John Waters in conversation about his new memoir Mr. Know-It-All: The Tarnished Wisdom of a Filth Elder. He’ll gab with renowned comic Merrill Markoe about his life as a famous person, all the famous people with whom he’s worked who are now dead, and why marking your territory with your own sensibilities is both nauseating and necessary. In other words: the usual chortlesome wisdom from John Waters, but, admittedly, words that should be repeated regularly and with emphatic enthusiasm. Renberg Theater, Los Angeles LGBT Center’s Village, 1125 N. McCadden Place, Hollywood; Sat., June 1, 7 p.m.; $35 (includes book). (310) 659-3110, eventbrite.com/e/john-waters-in-conversation-about-and-signing-mr-know-it-all-the-tarnished-wisdom-of-a-filth-elder-tickets-60140190930. —DAVID COTNER

The Other Arts District
Altadena and Pasadena are lovely, historic neighborhoods in the city’s eclectic ethos; and increasingly, the area is home to a diverse population of artists. Open Studios has been organizing their ranks for years, conceiving exhibitions, receptions, community events and sometimes, such as this weekend, self-guided art tours. Participation is up to over 70 artists organizing their ranks for years, conceiving exhibitions, receptions, community events and sometimes, such as this weekend, self-guided art tours. Participation is up to over 70 artists, performing open studios, architectural adaptations, and collectives, many of which have live music, food and other secret sauce in store for visitors. Fans of painting, sculpture, ceramics, photography, textile, and design objects — not to mention fans of working studios, architectural adaptation, and creative enclaves — can download the map, or better yet, pick up a printed copy at one of three locations, such as the always exuberant McGinty’s Gallery at the End of the World. McGinty’s, 869 E. Mariposa St., Altadena; Sat.,
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PHO LEGEND
**FILM**

**Life on the Margins**

“The city is crammed of memories and nostalgias that are my own and not my own — the bus route straight up Broadway, the sweet screech orchestrations of summer cicadas, the low-stakes quality of its place in the world,” journalist Brian Jahas Smith muses about Tucson in director Maggie Smith’s documentary *Tucson Salvage.* “It’s inviting when you’re broken; you’re getting by on longing.” The increasing economic divide between the rich and the poor requires a new generation of Studs Terkel–like essayists and Dorothea Lange–style documentarians, and former Beat Angels vocalist Brian Smith portrays the difficult lives of a disabled graffiti artist, a trans ex-con, a tragedy-scarred mixed martial arts fighter, a resilient scrap-metal worker and two formerly homeless junkies in his book, *Tucson Salvage: Tales and Recollections From La Frontera,* which has been adapted into his wife Maggie’s poignant film, *The Hudson Theatres: 6539 Santa Monica Blvd., Hollywood; Sun., June 2, 4:30 p.m. (323) 856-4249, hudsontheatre.com. —FALLING JAMES

**TUE 6/4**

**BOOKS/MUSIC**

**Underground History**

John Doe scored a best-seller with his tome, *Underground History,* a tome that explores one of the largest public art collections in the U.S. Take a free guided art tour led by volunteer docents in Metro stations. See calendar of upcoming tours at metro.net/art.

June 1, 11 a.m.-6 p.m. & Sun., June 2, noon-7 p.m.; free. (626) 797-1135, openstudios.gallery.

—SHANA NYS DAMBRO T

**MON 6/3**

**TV/COMEDY**

**Time Loop**

*Orange Is the New Black* airs its final season this summer, but fans of star Natasha Lyonne have been watching the actress in another Netflix hit, *Russian Doll.* In the new series, which premiered in February, Lyonne plays Nadia Vulvokov, a wise-cracking N.Y. party girl (and a video-game coder) with a riot of red curls and permanently smudged eyeliner. Nadia and a friend find themselves caught in a time loop where they keep dying in various circumstances — in an elevator, suicide, etc. — and spend each episode looking for explanations for their repeated deaths. Make sense? The drama-comedy is one of those up-to-viewer-interpretation shows, but if you still have nagging questions, UCB hosts *FYC @ UCB: Russian Doll,* a panel discussion with cast and crew, including Lyonne and co-executive producers Amy Poehler and Leslye Headland. UCB, 5419 W. Sunset Blvd., East Hollywood; Mon., June 3, 7 p.m.; $12. (323) 908-8702, ucbtheatre.com.

**TUE 6/4**

**BARNES & NOBLE**

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**MEET FRANK DeCARO**

Panel Discussion / Book Signing

Tuesday, June 4th, 7pm

189 Grove Drive

Los Angeles (323) 525-0270

In this collection of essays, the radio and TV personality explores the history of drag and celebrates the groundbreaking artists who changed pop culture around the world.

This is a wristbanded event. See bn.com for details.

---

**Explore one of the largest public art collections in the U.S.**

Take a free guided art tour led by volunteer docents in Metro stations.

See calendar of upcoming tours at metro.net/art.
Under the Big Black Sun, a revealing personal account (and part oral history) about the L.A. punk scene, but there was clearly more to tell. Continuing his insightful chronicling of the pivotal time in Los Angeles, his latest, More Fun in the New World: The Unmaking and Legacy of L.A. Punk, features influential figures sharing personal stories that reflect the era between 1982-1987, when underground music broke into the mainstream and splintered into various sub-genres and inspired other art forms. Doe and co-writer Tom DeSavia are in the midst of an unconventional book tour, with the book’s contributors reading alongside them at each. The L.A. shows are, of course, particularly stellar. On Tuesday, June 4, at the Grammy Museum, Doe and DiSavia are joined by book contributors Keith Morris (Black Flag, Circle Jerks, Off!) and filmmaker Allison Anders. On Wednesday, an even larger group joins the pair, including performer, writer, punk figure (and longtime L.A. Weekly contributor) Pleasant Gehman, skateboard legend Tony Hawk and Go-Gos guitarist Charlotte Caffey. The Grammy Museum, 800 W. Olympic Blvd., downtown; Tue., June 4, 7 p.m.; $30. Largo at Coronet, 366 N La Cienega Blvd., Beverly Grove; Wed., June 5, 7 p.m.; $35. theejohndoe.com/live – LINA LECARO

WED 6/5
See Tuesday.

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**LOYALTY POINTS ON NEXT BOUTIQUE
PURCHASE OF RESTYLANE

FALLING JAMES

THU 6/6

Cutting-Edge Sounds
You could very loosely describe the annual Ojai Music Festival as a Coachella for classical and new-music fans. Since 1947, the festival has been the West Coast’s preeminent gathering for adventurous chamber-music and avant-garde sounds, and over the decades such luminaries as Igor Stravinsky, Pierre Boulez and Aaron Copland have served as music director amid the bucolic Ojai setting. This year’s music director is the subversive Canadian vocalist-conductor Barbara Hannigan, who has memorably transformed György Ligeti’s eerily arty Mysteries of the Macabre into a wickedly brilliant schoolgirl fantasy and has been a charismatic force via provocative roles in Lulu, Pelléas et Mélisande, and in L.A. Phil’s 2016 world premiere of Gerald Barry’s daft and demented opera Alice’s Adventures Under Ground. The festival’s Thursday opening centers on a performance of Stravinsky’s The Rake’s Progress. Libbey Bowl, 210 S. Signal St., Ojai; Thu., June 6, 1-10:30 p.m.; Fri., June 7, 8 a.m.-10:30 p.m.; Sat., June 8, 8 a.m.-mid.; Sun., June 9, 8 a.m.-6:30 p.m.; $20-$150. (805) 646-2053, ojaifestival.org.

—FALLING JAMES

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THE L.A. PRIDE ISSUE

The L.A. Pride celebration took place, helping LGBTQ community. There are many LGBTQ figures using their platforms for change in L.A. and beyond. Despite not all being rich and famous, there are countless people making huge contributions to LGBTQ life in L.A.

By Michael Cooper

Religion has been used as a guise for prejudice and intolerance — but fighting to overcome for centuries, but thankfully, we have LGBTQ who identify as genderqueer, and serves as the director of JQ Inclusiveness, and religion.

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PRIDE IN OUR PEOPLE

Profiling the local LGBTQ figures using their platforms for change in L.A. and beyond

BY MICHAEL COOPER

It's hard to believe that the Stonewall Riots in New York City, an event that most mark as the birth of the gay rights movement, was only 50 years ago. The year after Stonewall, the first L.A. Pride celebration took place, helping to solidify the fight for equality that had been brewing even before that, when the L.A. gay community protested the police raid at queer hangout the Black Cat Tavern in Silver Lake on New Year's Eve, 1967. The LGBTQ community of Los Angeles has always been strong, vigilant and outspoken, and as the city continues to diversify and grow, so too does the gay community.

As a gay man myself and the writer of L.A. Weekly’s LGBTQ column “Time For Tea,” I can’t begin to express how I am proud of our L.A. LGBTQ community. There are many LGBTQ people throughout the city who are working for change in their respective fields and with their specific talents. Whether these people are making contributions to the greater LGBTQ community in religion, politics, community, trans rights, entertainment or art, they are promoting tolerance, representation and acceptance in their own unique ways. And these people aren’t all rich and famous, either. In addition to those with large platforms, there are everyday people making huge contributions to LGBTQ life in L.A.

In the spirit of this year’s LA Pride, L.A. Weekly spotlights local figures who are truly making a difference for the betterment of Los Angeles’ LGBTQ community. Of course, there are, thankfully, countless people doing so each day, so this is by no means a comprehensive list. Pride isn’t just about celebrating who we are as individuals, it’s about doing so for our whole community, who are facing the same challenges and prejudices — but fighting to overcome for all of us. Here, we present a few noteworthy citizens from different cultural spheres who have done so and created change in the process.

Religion
The LGBTQ community has always had a strained relationship with religion, especially the religions of Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Of course, there’s that infamous Leviticus verse from the Old Testament about men lying with other men being an abomination. Many religious conservatives have used these ancient biblical passages as a license to discriminate against the LGBTQ community, when in reality, they’re picking and choosing what to follow. The Bible also “commands” not to eat shellfish (Leviticus 11: 9-10) and to kill anyone who disobeys their parents (Exodus 21:17) or any woman who loses her virginity before marriage (Deuteronomy 22: 20-21).

Religion has been used as a guise for prejudice for centuries, but thankfully, we have LGBTQ religious leaders throughout Los Angeles who preach love and tolerance, rather than hate. Like Rabbi Rachel Bat-Or, who identifies as genderqueer, and serves as the director of JQ International Helpline and Inclusion Services, the premiere LGBTQ Jewish organization in L.A. “At JQ, we celebrate the lives of LGBTQ+ Jews by helping Jewish communities embrace us for who we are and what we need and want,” says Rabbi RBO. “We do this by providing LGBTQ+ education, inclusive resources, support and community building events. If I had stopped to envision my ideal organization, it would have been JQ. Being a queer rabbi adds even more meaning for me. I can bring all parts of me to JQ.”

Specifically, Rabbi RBO contributes to the L.A. LGBTQ community by answering JQ Helpline calls, teaching inclusion trainings and providing speakers to Jewish organizations. Rabbi RBO also has a valid and more contemporary interpretation of those Leviticus chapters. “These, as well as most commandments in the Hebrew Torah, are aimed at teaching the Israelites not to behave in the unholy ways of the pagans and have nothing to do with the LGBTQ+ relationships we are building today in our community,” Rabbi RBO says, adding that “people are willing to disobey the commandments that say to open their hearts to all people so they won’t have to question their own personal prejudices.”

Moving from Judaism to Islam, Maya Jafer’s story illustrates the nuances that lie between religious and sexual identity. Born to a religious Muslim family in India, she was assigned the male gender at birth. But when she came to the US in 2000 for her second doctorate in natural medicine, she began to struggle with her identity and even tried to commit suicide twice. After joining a support group and seeing a psychologist, she finally began her physical transition in 2009 and two years later had her gender confirmation surgery in Thailand. Right before, her UCLA student had reached out about filming the process for a documentary short called Rites of Passage, which was...
I feel like I have a more powerful voice when on the ballot and the performer also comes in full drag to add a spiritual aspect of Islam. “I decided to run as a drag queen because wearing drag is being gender fluid, so Maebe is a part of my identity, not just a costume.”

I am a spiritual Muslim and I do continue to pray to my Allah everyday, but I’m not a religious Muslim at all. In Islam, there’s the religious type and the Sufi. The Sufism is the spiritual aspect of Islam.”

Jafer’s hopes that by putting her story out there, other trans Muslims will also be inspired to accept themselves for who they are, explaining, “The intention was to bring awareness to our transgender people and thereby hopefully bring about equality.”

Politics

With the Trump administration and the new wave of conservatism spreading across not only the country but the world, the LGBTQ community is under attack, and the progress we’ve made is being threatened like never before. Legislative leaders, both local and national, are working to protect our existing rights and to gain new ones as well (it is still legal to get fired for your job or denied housing just because you’re LGBTQ). These are some of the Angelinos devoting themselves to the political fight.

Maebe A. Girl (aka Georgie Pudlo) is the first drag queen elected to public office in California. “When the current administration entered office, I, along with many others, was extremely disheartened and started making my drag performances more political — often incorporating political satire and critique,” says Pudlo. “I decided the best way I can help my community, especially the LGBTQ community, was to run for office and represent. LGBTQ representation and visibility are essential.”

The name “Maebe A. Girl” appeared on the ballot and the performer also comes in full drag to all of her meetings and public events as a seat holder on for Region 5 of the Silver Lake Neighborhood Council. “I decided to run as a drag queen because I feel like I have a more powerful voice when in drag,” says Maebe, who is in the process of forming a committee for the council focused on LGBTQ-related issues, including safety, inclusivity, resources and outreach. “For me, dressing up and being feminine is a part of my gender identity. I identify on the trans spectrum as being genderfluid, so Maebe is a part of my identity, not just a costume.”

Fullerton City Councilman Ahmad Zahra did not enter the political sphere until recently. Originally a doctor in Syria before coming to the U.S. to pursue his dream of being a filmmaker, Zahra first ran for office in December 2018. He is the first gay person elected in Fullerton and the first LGBTQ Muslim elected in the U.S. “I’m more aware of the specific issues that affect both the Muslim and LGBTQ communities, especially since I’ve experienced these issues myself,” says Zahra. “This allows me to bring specific policy ideas that could hopefully help address these issues. I’m also an immigrant and have a bicultural Syrian-Mexican family which gives me a broad sense of understanding of the struggles of immigrants and minority communities in our country.”

Zahra has already brought about change to Fullerton. He just participated in a ceremony where the city flew the Pride flag for the first time ever, and he’s also set up meetings for the city manager, chief of police and other staff with the director of policy at the LGBT Center OC to offer sensitivity training for city staff and to improve public safety in the city. “Flying the Pride Flag in Fullerton, knowing the history of the city from the days of John Briggs [who sponsored a proposition in 1978 that attempted to remove all LGBTQ employees and their allies from their jobs], was crucial for me,” says Zahra. “We are a diverse city and we need to embrace this diversity in a positive way. [The flag will] fly annually from Harvey Milk Day [on May 22] through Pride Month.”

Community

Those who bring the gay community together socially have as much impact as political figures in terms of improving the visibility and viability of the equality message. Whether it’s running nightlife spots or organizing large community events like Pride celebrations, street fairs or festivals, these people are using their ties to the community to improve the lives of LA’s LGBTQ population.

Andres Rigal is a producer of queer nightlife who’s helped throw some of the biggest LGBTQ events around the city. His outdoor water park event, Summer Tramp, enters its ninth year this Sunday, June 2, at The Escondite Bar downtown. Rigal, along with co-producer Ollywood, is also behind the EVITA party every Friday night in WeHo, which has showcased many RuPaul’s Drag Race queens. And perhaps most importantly, Rigal is the co-founder, creative director and a board member of DTLA Proud, downtown’s annual Pride celebration that’s held in August. He also has a new DTLA space, French Exit & Bar Menagerie, due to open in late 2020. “As a producer of queer nightlife, I feel that it is my responsibly to create content that not only entertains, but more importantly, connects and elevates the community at large,” says Rigal. “It has always been my objective to create compelling and creative brands that we as a community can build out and grow together.”

Organizing events such as the Venice Pride Sign Lighting & Block Party on Saturday, June 1, as well as public art installations like the Venice Pride Flag Lifeguard Tower, executive director Grant Turck is spreading LGBTQ pride to the Westside full force.

“As the first Pride celebration west of the 405, it’s super fulfilling to see other pride groups pop-up like Santa Monica Pride and Pride on the Port,” Turck says. This year, Venice Pride will also feature “Stonewall On the Street” which will turn a parking lot into a beer garden, and he’s added a little color to the neighborhood too, right in front of the resurrected LGBTQ bar Roosterfish. “We couldn’t be more proud to announce that on Friday, June 28, the 50th anniversary to the day of the Stonewall Uprising...we will be unveiling the new Rainbow Crosswalk at Abbot Kinney Boulevard and Cadiz Court,” says Turck. “The crosswalk is modeled after the rainbow crosswalks in the Castro.”

Moving from Venice to Silver Lake, married couple Charlie Matula and Hunter Fox continue to keep their ties to the S.L. community leather-bound strong. The owners of gay fetish bar The Eagle created the Off Sunset Festival in 2013, with a mission that reads, “We
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Matula echoes these sentiments. "Eagle LA is not just another leather bar. It also has a very neighborhood–bar vibe, as well as [being] an events gathering place for the LGBTQ community," he says. "The Off Sunset Festival is a means to take that to a much higher level by recognizing and celebrating our LGBTQ history, the progress we have made and the future that lies before us."

And can’t talk about community contributions without a nod to the community grand marshal of this year’s LA Pride parade, Phill Wilson. And LA-based activist whose career began after he and his partner were diagnosed with AIDS in the early ’80s, Wilson has served as the director of policy and planning for the AIDS Project, AIDS coordinator for Los Angeles, co-chair of the Los Angeles HIV Health Commission and a member of the Health Resources and Services Administration AIDS Advisory Committee. He founded the Black AIDS Institute in 1999 and was appointed to President Obama’s advisory council on HIV/AIDS.

"I am honored to be a part of this year’s Pride celebration. The LGBTQI community has come a long way in the last 50 years. It has not been without heartache, pain, sacrifice and growth,” Wilson said in a statement. “I am humbled to be among such a powerful and diverse group of grand marshals. Together we represent how much stronger we are when we celebrate all of what we are.”

Trans Rights

While the LGBTQ community as a whole has made some noteworthy progress in recent years, the trans community specifically is perhaps the most marginalized and at risk still. Thankfully, activists like the ones below are historically the most marginalized and at risk still. Activists like the ones below are leading the charge for change.

Allison VanKuiken has done a lot for Los Angeles, trans community as executive director of Trans Can Work, whose mission is to advance workplace inclusion for trans people through training strategies and workforce development. "In 2017, the Williams Institute did a study that revealed 27 percent of California youth between the ages of 11-17 identify in the ‘grey space’ of gender," says VanKuiken. "We need more gender variant folks in the workforce helping lay the groundwork for our changing society. Trans Can Work is doing that work now.

One of VanKuiken’s highlights in her role was a career fair in partnership with St. John’s Well Child & Family Center, which helped bring together over 70 inclusive employers with over 600 transgender job seekers. "We have an amazing team with big hearts, who love the work," says VanKuiken. "From this, we’ve been able to develop a model jobs program that is helping people, that is ready to grow. And [with] that, we will be able to set even more people up for success."

Similarly, Ashlee Marie Preston is a leading trans activists in Los Angeles. Formerly homeless, she rose to become the first trans person to be named editor-in-chief of a publication, for Wear Your Voice magazine. She’s served in the Transgender Service Provider Network of Los Angeles, as well as chair of communications and media sponsorship for LA Pride and as a community outreach member with the Human Rights Campaign. Preston also worked on the advocacy for the #ThriveOver35 campaign, which calls into attention the average lifespan of black trans women in the U.S. A powerful voice for equality via appearances and her Twitter account, her latest pinned tweet reads: “Thank you to the millions of everyday Americans who support a trans person’s basic human right to access safe housing despite HUD & Trump’s attempt to block that.”

Entertainment

The LGBTQ community has not seen itself reflected on mainstream television networks or in blockbuster movies as much as we’d like, but things are changing. The tired stereotypes are fewer these days, and thanks to the rise of streaming services more diverse people are making more content. More valuable and positive representation is out there thanks, in part, to the following figures.

One can’t properly discuss LGBTQ representation in entertainment today without discussing RuPaul’s Drag Race and the three gay men behind it: RuPaul of course, and Fenton Bailey and Randy Barbato, executive producers and co-founders of World of Wonder, the production company behind the show and the recent DragCon. RuPaul has been fighting the fight against intolerance and has been preaching for love and acceptance on a national scale since the ’90s; 25 years later, his hit show features the most LGBTQ figures on screen at any one time, sometimes upwards of 14 or 15. The show does a fantastic job at telling their stories, humanizing the gay men’s plight, such as child abandonment and body image issues. "Drag is all about constructing an identity, about making fun of popular culture while also celebrating it. You only have to look at the current political climate with its ethos of hate and fear and building walls, and Drag Race and DragCon almost by definition are the exact opposite of that," says Bailey. "It’s about inclusiveness. I think Drag Race and DragCon have become for many people the sharp end of resistance.”

Much like Drag Race, actress Alexandra Billings has used both her work and her personal voice to advance the LGBTQ community, particularly trans people and those who are HIV positive. "I am a 57-year-old, mixed-race, transgender, queer, bisexual, gay, lesbian, recovering addict [and] former [female] sex worker living with AIDS, who loves Lucy and Judy and chocolate cake,” Billings says. "I am also an American citizen.” Most known for her role as Davina on Transparent, Billings was the second openly transgender woman to play a transgender character on television.

“When I was 16 years old, I sat in the edge of my bed with a fistful of pills I took from my mother’s medicine cabinet. I assumed I was crazy, that the voices in my head were never going to leave and that I was the only one of my tribe,” says Billings, who recounts seeing trans guests on Phil Donahue and to President Obama’s advisory council on HIV/AIDS.

Anyone who thinks representation in media doesn’t matter should look no further. Billings become a vocal activist for trans and HIV issues and was awarded the Human Rights Campaign Visibility Award in 2016. "My job on the planet is to remain in service of others," she says proudly.

Thanks to the cast and creators of Pose (which premieres its second season on FX June 11), LGBTQ representation has hit an all-time high. The show follows the lives of fictional characters within the New York City ball scene of the late ’80s/early ’90s. I called it the most groundbreaking LGBT show ever last year during its first season. It made history by featuring the largest number of openly trans actors in lead roles ever in a TV series: Blanca (Mj Rodriguez), Angel (Indya Moore), Elektra (Dominique Jackson), Candy (Angelica Ross) and Lulu (Hailie Sahar) – and openly gay characters and actor of color, including Pray Tell (Billy Porter) and Damon (Ryan Jamaal Swain). The show also has openly trans directors, producers and writers like Janet Mock, Our Lady J and co-creator Ryan Murphy, who portrays complex LGBT characters in all his work, from American Horror Story to Glee.

Pose’s other creator is queer, Afro-Latinx Steven Canals, who moved to LA from New York seven years ago. “Historically, we’ve not seen TV shows portray LGBTQ people positively. We’re the sassy friend, the fetish, the punch line or the victim. What is the message being sent when that is the depiction of our lives?” Canals says. “Pose is an authentic portrayal of Black and Latinx queer and trans people. It is a celebration of life — a show about family, resilience and love. Pose is a reminder that we are all so much more alike than we are different, and we all want similar things: to be accepted, to be embraced, to be loved, to be affirmed.”

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**TASTE OF QUEER HISTORY**

Former NSYNC sensation Lance Bass brings LGBTQ friendly Rocco’s Tavern to WeHo

BY MICHELE STUEVEN

Lance Bass has been coming to West Hollywood for more than half of his life, since he was the bass singer of the teen pop sensation NSYNC. It was the place where he was first able to be himself and come out as a gay man. When the Rocco’s Tavern group reached out to him to partner in the newly opened Rocco’s WeHo in the heart of West Hollywood, the former Dancing with the Stars finalist jumped at the chance.

“I have a lot of loves in my life, but art, music and food are my favorite things, and we’ve been able to put those all together in one place,” Bass tells L.A. Weekly on a personalized tour of the airy 5,000-square-foot space designed specifically for the neighborhood.

“It was a no-brainer when the guys came to me. Years ago I’d always go to the Studio City location to watch my football games, and I just loved the guys. When they told me that they got this spot — which is the best corner in West Hollywood — I couldn’t believe it. I knew how many people were fighting for it and the fact that they got it, I had to be involved. I hopped on board immediately.”

The corner spot at Santa Monica Boulevard and San Vicente Boulevard, where the two rainbow crosswalks meet, seats about 200 with indoor and outdoor dining and will be offering live music, brunch and burlesque. The bar food menu that includes the famous Rocco’s Tavern New York pizza and spicy wings has added a vegan pizza and vegetarian options to adjust to the neighborhood’s healthy appetite as well.

“We’re working on a Southern-style Sunday brunch,” Bass says. “I’m from New Orleans, so I want live blues to come to the strip, a bluesy brunch with some of my favorite Southern recipes, BBQ and biscuits. I want the live music to spill out onto the street on sunny Sundays from the outdoor patio. It reminds me of being in New Orleans or Austin.”

Artist James Kirtley collaborated with ONE Archives and Bass’ husband Michael Turchin to leverage their artistic background and create a visual representation of the LGBTQ+ movement through photography, graphic designs and paintings. A black-and-white timeline wall at Rocco’s WeHo represents the LGBTQ and civil rights struggles and victories from the 1940s through today.

“I’m super excited about the art here, which is all of my husband’s work and is basically his gallery now,” says the heartthrob who recently celebrated his 40th birthday at Rocco’s WeHo surrounded by his former NSYNC bandmates. “One side of the wall is a different vibe from the other and adds some needed pops of color. Each image was curated for this neighborhood — Madonna, Britney. It’s very LGBTQ-centric and loves of the community. This wall will be ever-changing and bringing in different artists and showcasing a lot of great LGBTQ artists.”

The images decorating the West Hollywood location are meant not only to serve as a history lesson of how far the movement has come, but also a reminder that remaining vigilant is crucial. A haunting photo of Matthew Shepard figures prominently on the black and white wall. But not all of the artwork inside Rocco’s is serious; there are fun vintage posters and comical ads framed throughout. Rocco’s wants to remind their patrons of the importance of love and that pride is victory.

“I came to the space and it told me what it needed,” says Roger Toussaint who has designed all six of the Rocco’s Tavern locations and transformed the former Citibank building that nobody wanted to touch for years. “I don’t design for a look; I design for a feel. The look comes from how you want it to feel. All of our taverns have an open air feel, no matter where you’re sitting you feel like you are outdoors, that’s a really important feeling. All the glass doors to the patio open for that indoor/outdoor feel.”

“We’ve been looking at this five-block area for the last 10 years,” says co-owner Leo Amari of going from bank to bar and Roger’s vision. “Where ever we go, we inundate ourselves into the neighborhood and try to put ourselves in as an important piece of the community. In Studio City there are a lot of schools, so we get involved in the charities there. We find out the needs of the community and try to help out. In Pasadena we get involved with the little leagues.” Other locations developed by the Rocco’s team from New York include Culver City, Westwood Village and West Hollywood and the 901 Bar & Grill by USC.

There are a lot of great memories in the neighborhood for Bass, who discovered it more than 20 years ago for the first time with a girlfriend. “So many of the amazing places here have survived the test of time which is hard to do,” he says. “But it shows how much of a community this is. People love their places and are naturally supportive. Rage across the street was the first gay bar I ever stepped foot into and it’s still going strong. A lot of places come and go because they forget about the neighborhood. We want to make sure that doesn’t happen here. We want this to be the local spot. So far, so good.”

Rocco’s West Hollywood, 8900 Santa Monica Blvd., West Hollywood; (424) 343-0123. See laweekly.com for an exclusive video tour.
Celebrating 30 fearless years of LGBTQ creativity at The Dark Bob, Paul McCarthy, George Carlin, John Fleck, Beth Lapides, Barbara T. Smith, legends to its stage over the decades, like /They made space and sites for a deeper civil discourse, staging provocative work and creative pieces, from multiple points of entry. But to have a truly engaged democracy, sustained community organizing and storytelling is needed. “We need to build alliances, not see one another as competitors or one group vs. another. I hope that group organizing continues,” says Fleck. “We want to bring people together.”

Fleck, currently the artistic director of Highways, is past executive director of Los Angeles Contemporary Archive, and once a performance intern and volunteer for the Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs. Fleck is the curator of Rough Trade and has presented work by performances such as Oyer’s “Calling All Divas,” an interdisciplinary work with a performance of the work since his death continues to tour and be performed. This year marks the 20th anniversary of The Dark Bob, an event Fleck was a part of, and this year Highways will be celebrating the 30th anniversary of its founding, including a two-month celebration and a new space in Koreatown, with its current home at Wilshire Center.

Highways has welcomed once and future members of the Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs and once a performance intern and volunteer for the Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs. Danielle Brazell, currently general manager and COO, has been at Highways since 2003 and is an active member of the gay community, having served in leadership roles for many years. She has also been an active member of the broader arts community, serving on various boards and committees. She has been involved in many of the events and projects that have taken place at Highways, including the 30th anniversary celebration.

Highways is also the home of My Queer Body, a performance that premiered at Highways in 2003 and am moved by the sacredness of the politics, by the transformations, by the intimacies of family and community. The performance was a response to the AIDS crisis and was founded in 1989 in direct response to the AIDS crisis and continued to exist for over a decade. It was supported by the National Endowment for the Arts and was a part of the engine that made this incredible collection of queer performance possible.

Beginning with Tim Miller, “of course!” Garcia might remember those early days. Highways was the first free performance work space in the city to host a workshop or artists whose early works we’ve presented,” says Garcia. “We give people an opportunity with artists whose early works we’ve presented.”

My Queer Body premiered at Highways in 2003 and has been performed in many venues since then. It was a response to the AIDS crisis and was supported by the National Endowment for the Arts. It was also a part of the engine that made this incredible collection of queer performance possible. Highways is proud of about their tenures. Oyer’s “Calling All Divas,” an interdisciplinary work with a performance of the work since his death continues to tour and be performed. This year marks the 20th anniversary of The Dark Bob, an event Oyer was a part of, and this year Highways will be celebrating the 30th anniversary of its founding, including a two-month celebration and a new space in Koreatown, with its current home at Wilshire Center.

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H    

ighways Performance Space was founded in 1989 in direct response to the AIDS crisis and the urgent need for a venue to present the LGBTQ community’s relevant, progressive works of theater, performance and storytelling. Through three decades of challenges, triumphs and upsetting Sen. Jesse Helms, this core mission has only expanded, never wavered and resulted in upwards of 1,000 works for the stage.

Danielle Brazell, currently general manager of the Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs and once a performance intern and later the artistic director of Highways, is passionate about the soulful legacy of the place. “They made space and sites for a deeper civil discourse, staging provocative work and creating communities across multiple generations,” she tells the Weekly. “And this is really hard work, to research and develop theatrical pieces, from multiple points of entry. But to have a truly engaged democracy, sustained discourse is required. We need ideas! This is where Highways excels — not the commerce of creativity, but rather, the freedom of it.”

Highways has welcomed once and future legends to its stage over the decades, like Raoul, Dave Trudell, Tim Miller, Leo García and Ron Dennis. Besides intimacies, produced in Highways’ first season, Kearns shares new monologues tracing his career in the context of LGBTQ politics in America.

Back in May, theater artist Tim Miller (a founder and original co-artistic director of Highways) kicked off Behold! with a performance from A Body in the O: Performances of LGBTQ politics in America. Miller performed as the first openly HIV-positive actor in Hollywood (The Waltons, Cheers, Body Double), assembles a diverse cast to deliver the stories in wet hankies — Wanda-Lee Evans, Dean Howell, Dale Raoul, Dave Trudell, Tim Miller, Leo García and Ron Dennis. Besides intimacies, produced in Highways’ first season, Kearns shares new monologues tracing his career in the context of LGBTQ politics in America.

For his part, Leo García first came to Highways to see Tim Miller’s performance of My Queer Body in March of ’92, with his then-boyfriend who knew Miller’s work from New York. “I remember sitting in the audience and feeling that something great was going on here,” García says. He recalls visiting Highways again two months later, on May 2, 1992 — the fourth day of the L.A. riots. L.A. was in trouble, and “there was no place to go but Highways,” he says. “I’d heard of Annie Sprinkle, who presenting that night, so instead of watching the continuing horror of the riots on T.V. I drove to Highways. No one was at the door and I peeked through the side curtain and saw Sprinkle presenting Post Porn Modernist. There were like seven people in the house. I kept coming back after that. It was the closest thing to a black box experience I could find in L.A. — and it was open during military occupations!”

García might remember those early days with a bit of dark humor, but he turns pensive when contemplating the magnitude of its legacy. “I think of Highways as a durational work of 30 years, the longest running performance in history,” he says. “I have seen every performance (except one, maybe two) since 2003 and am moved by the sacredness of the space, by the creation process, by the freedom expressed, by the exploration, by the spirit, by the politics, by the transformations, by the flesh, by the discovery of all things human. When the performance is done, I will name it.”

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**Opening wide**

Friday, May 31

*Godzilla: King of the Monsters* takes its title from the original 1954 classic (the American version, featuring Raymond Burr inserts) and is the 35th film in the franchise featuring the world’s most lovable reptilian monster. Gareth Edwards, who helmed 2014's Godzilla (its immediate predecessor), left the project, resulting in one of its screenwriters, Michael Dougherty, being promoted to director. The premise involves a plethora of oversized beasts, including such familiar favorites as Mothra, Rodan and King Ghidorah, and their fight for supremacy. The outcome is a foregone conclusion considering the spoiler embedded in the title. Kyle Chandler and Vera Farmiga, looking reasonably concerned about the future of the human species, provide human star power, but *Stranger Things* fans might be more excited to see Millie Bobby Brown in her first starring role in a big movie.

In *Ma*, Octavia Spencer is cast against type as a crazed loner who lures teenagers to her secluded house with the promise of booze and privacy, eventually revealing herself to be a stalker and potential murderer. Blumhouse produced this psychological thriller on a relatively lavish budget of $5 million, and the “R” rating will not deter it from achieving four times that amount at the opening weekend box office. Tate Taylor, who directed Spencer in her Oscar-winning turn in *The Help*, takes charge for his first flat-out horror movie.

*Rocketman* received a standing ovation at Cannes when it premiered there in May, moving its star, Taron Egerton to tears. Now the Elton John biopic gets a wide release in America. Dexter Fletcher, who took over the reins for Bryan Singer on *Bohemian Rhapsody*, directs this long-gestating project from a screenplay by Lee Hall. John’s turbulent life is charted from his days as a student at the Royal Academy of Music to his passage into rock-and-rolllegend, with pit stops for substance abuse and inner demons along the way. An official soundtrack features several hit songs performed by the cast and, as a bonus, a brand-new song written and co-performed by Elton himself.

**Limited/art-house**

Friday, May 31

*Domino* is a Danish-French-Italian-Netherlands co-production helmed by that most baroque practitioner of B-movie violence, Brian De Palma. It will play exclusively in L.A. while being released simultaneously on VOD. Nikolaj Coster-Waldau (Jaime Lannister from *Game of Thrones*) plays Christian, a Danish detective with a close-knit relationship with his older partner, Lars (Søren Malling). A domino effect is set in motion when Christian carelessly leaves his service weapon at his apartment, eventually leading to an altercation with a violent suspect that puts Lars into a coma. His license suspended, Christian resolves to avenge the murder of his partner, Tarsi (a physically fit Salah Al Din before he can perpetuate more dirty money after witnessing a heist, and who must deal with the fallout. Complicating things is the fact that the driver, who holds a doctorate in philosophy, is by his own admission not cut out for a life in crime. *Laemmle Royal* (also playing at the Playhouse 7 and Town Center 5), 11523 Santa Monica Blvd., Sawtelle; Fri., May 31, various showtimes; $13. (310) 478-3836, laemmle.com.

Roy Halston Frowk, known simply as *Halston*, is the American fashion designer responsible for defining that ’70s look favored by groovy discotheque patrons. He is also the subject of Frédéric Tcheng’s documentary portrait, which opened at Tribeca earlier this year. Beneath all the cashmere and ultrasuede is a parable about the frailty of American success. When Halston announced a deal with J. C. Penney, he moved “from class to mass” and shocked his fans in the process. Viewers might be attracted to privileged glimpses inside Studio 54 and interviews with Liza Minnelli, Joel Schumacher, and Halston’s niece and confidante Lesley Frowk. *Nuart Theatre, 11272 Santa Monica Blvd., Sawtelle; Fri., May 31, various showtimes; 89-12. (310) 473-8530, landmark-theatres.com.*

**Sunday, June 2**

As L.A. gears up for Jim Jarmusch’s zom-com this June, the American Cinematheque has prepared a double feature consisting of two of the director’s earliest films, co-presented by Beyond Fest. *Stranger Than Paradise*, a shoe-stringer shot in grainy black-and-white, is one of the essential films of the 1980s. A minimalist comedy featuring John Lurie as a N.Y. hipster, it’s his own admission not cut out for a life in crime. *Laemmle Royal* (also playing at the Playhouse 7 and Town Center 5), 11523 Santa Monica Blvd., Sawtelle; Fri., May 31, various showtimes; $9-$12. (310) 473-8530, landmark-theatres.com.

The latest Kaiju extravaganza clashes with Elton John biopic, *Rocketman*

**BY NATHANIEL BELL**

The latest Kaiju extravaganza clashes with Elton John biopic, *Rocketman*

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*Godzilla: King of the Monsters*

Film

The latest Kaiju extravaganza clashes with Elton John biopic, *Rocketman*

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GO WEST FEST, YOUNG MAN

L.A. transplant and pop artist Troye Sivan brings curated festival to LA Pride

BY BRETT CALLWOOD

Born in South Africa, raised in Australia and now living right here in L.A.—pop singer Troye Sivan has already squeezed so much into his 23 years. Ten years ago, he even played the role of “young Wolverine” in X-Men Origins: Wolverine, instantly earning himself points from the rabid comic book community.

Last year though, he blended his music and movie careers to far more serious effect. He provided the song “Revelation” to the soundtrack of the film Boy Erased, which stars Nicole Kidman, Russell Crowe and Lucas Hedges, as well as Sivan, and tells the story of the son of a Baptist preacher going through the horrors of gay conversion therapy. The song earned Sivan a Golden Globe nomination, which provided him the opportunity to discuss this very serious issue on the biggest of stages.

“Any time you get that sort of recognition from such an important institution, it feels really nice,” he says. “It’s a nice ego stroke. [It] lets you know you’re on the right track, I think. For me, that song was so important because it really pointed to a much bigger issue — conversion therapy. To be able to walk the carpet and do these big press interviews and stuff like that, and have an opportunity to speak on that issue in such a public way, I’m really thankful for the nomination because of that.’

Sivan came out publicly in 2013 via YouTube, three years after telling his family; conversion therapy is an issue that is close to Sivan’s heart, though he admits that he had no idea how widespread the problem was prior to beginning work on the film and song.

“Even for me, knowing that it existed and knowing that it was still happening, I had no idea how prevalent conversion therapy still is,” he says. “Reading the script and then doing my research really fired me up.”

Boy Erased was released in the same year as Sivan’s second studio album, Bloom, the follow-up to 2015’s Blue Neighborhood. Sivan says that the new material marks a clear level of growth.

“The biggest thing for me was just a gained sense of confidence in studio and on music video shoots,” he says. “With the first album, it was a lot about learning how to

He says that it all came from his desire to celebrate queer artists that are making amazing music.

“As a music fan, I saw an opportunity to curate a lineup that I think is going to put on a really incredible show for everyone,” he says. “Following immediately after, the main goal of this is to give back to the community in real, tangible ways, so we’re working with GLAAD on the event, the LGBT Center — we’re gonna have a lot of independent LGBT artists selling prints, paintings and t-shirts, pretty much whatever you can think of, so we’re supporting them in that way. We’re working with the Tom Of Finland Foundation to sell some of their prints and give back to them. I just wanted to put together this huge party that felt artful and interesting, cool and fun, like a big party. You can buy your ticket knowing that this is legitimately going to serve our community.”

Despite living here now, this will be Sivan’s first time performing at LA Pride and he says that he’s super excited, adding that some of his best memories are from Pride events around the world.

“I feel like any time you can get together and visibly look out and see people who you know are there to support you for whoever you are, after existing for so long in a world where that just wasn’t the case, everyone can walk in and breathe a deep sigh of relief and let loose for the night, that’s really special,” he says.

Sivan says that his own set at Go West Fest will offer “banger after banger,” and he’s excited to see the other performers, including Charli XCX. The show takes place at the Wiltern, one of his favorite L.A. venues, and he says that it will feel more like a buzzing club night than a regular music festival.

“We’re sure he’ll do the city and his community proud.

Go West Fest takes place at 7 p.m. on Thursday, June 6 at The Wiltern as part of LA Pride.
Sacred Reich
@ THE REGENT THEATER
Phoenix thrash metal pioneers Sacred Reich have been battling away since ’85, but for a hiatus between 2000 and 2006. From the very start, the aim for frontman Phil Rind was to create socially conscious, politically motivated lyrics, and he did exactly that with albums such as Ignorance and The American Way. All too often, metal is viewed as the stomping ground of the suburban republican white kids, but Sacred Reich crushed that stereotype with pro-Obama messages and, more recently, by publicly calling Trump an embarrassment. There’s a new album on the way this year, appropriately titled The Awakening. Meanwhile, drummer Dave McClain, who left in ’95 to join Machine Head, is back in the ranks. Good times. — BRET CALLWOOD

Claudia Lennear & the New Ash Grove Players
@ MCCABE’S GUITAR SHOP
Claudia Lennear is a powerhouse of a vocalist, and in the past she has launched her fiery singing with such performers as Ike & Tina Turner, Leon Russell, Joe Cocker, Humble Pie, Delaney & Bonnie, Taj Mahal, George Harrison and Elton John, among others. David Bowie paid homage to her in his song “Lady Grinning Soul,” and Lennear was also the inspiration for The Rolling Stones’ “Brown Sugar” and Russell’s “A Song for You.” For years, she’s been performing with her local band, The New Ash Grove Players, and she is equally at home belting out bluesy versions of “Stagger Lee” and funky tunes like “Everything I Do Gonna Be Funky.” Lennear was also spotlighted in the 2013 documentary 20 Feet From Stardom. — FALLING JAMES

Blackboard Jungle
@ THE VIPER ROOM
It’s become an annual event at this point. Blackboard Jungle were hardly one of the main players on the Sunset Strip rock & roll scene of the ’80s, but they did develop a cult following, tour with Faster Pussycat, and appear on the much loved Hollywood Rocks box set. They get together once a year to celebrate their past, and the Viper sells out every time. This year, they’ve expanded the festivities, with Jetboy performing the night before. That’s a lot of ’80s rock to love, and they always put together a great bill of friends/bands too. Swingin’ Thing, Leather Duchess, All Is Useless and special guests to be announced play with Jetboy on Friday, while Fizzy Bangers, Stars From Mars, Old Man Crawford and special guests TBA play with Blackboard Jungle on Saturday. — BRET CALLWOOD

Tijuana No!
@ LEVITT PAVILION AT MACARTHUR PARK
Overlooked by most white audiences during their heyday, Tijuana No! were one of the great punk bands of the 1990s, blending the social activism of The Clash with the hardcore subversion of The Dead Kennedys and the frantic ska rhythms of The Specials, and mixed further with rap, psychedelia, reggae and traditional Latin music. The Mexican band were unique in that they featured three distinctively charismatic lead singers — the clownish punk provocateur Luis Güereña, the more pop-minded Ceci Bastida and stalwart percussionist/flutist Teca García. Tijuana No! have never been quite the same after Güereña died in 2004, although García continues to perform with slashing guitarist Jorge Jiménez, agile drummer Alejandro Zúñiga and ace bassist Jorge Velázquez. Bastida has backed Julieta Venegas and found success as a solo artist, and she makes a rare return at this free show. — FALLING JAMES

Detroit rapper Esham is one of the pioneers of the sub-genre known as horrorcore — pushing the violence in the lyrics to the max, often controversial extremes. For better or worse, he had a huge impact on fellow Detroit artists Eminem and the Insane Clown Posse, and in fact he was signed to ICP’s Psychopathic Records for a while. Three decades into his career, he put out his 20th album (by our count) last year — Dead of Winter — and it’s typically subversive. Live, he’ll grab you by the throat (metaphorically, of course), and shake you till you smile. Despite frequent accusations of satanism, it’s all just fun and games, so soak it up. — BRET CALLWOOD

“Going back to nature” used to be a fairly popular motivating factor in the creation of
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art in the 20th century. It suggested a kind of primitive, truer focus, increasingly erased in an era of mechanization and impatience. And yet returning to that selfsame nature also implied that there were a greater understanding of human nature yet to be unearthed and perceived through immersion in art and creation. One of the most evolved masters of this 20th-century aspect of enlightenment is electronic music maestro Hans-Joachim Roedelius. Embodying a body of work that is at once pastoral and forward-thinking, Roedelius forges ahead into his 85th year as an artist with an inexhaustible discernment that continually unveils itself by appreciating time. Also tonight: Ippei Matsui & Aki Tsuyuko, Xambuca, DJ Carlos Niño. —DAVID COTNER

Mon, Emma Ruth Rundle  
@HOLLYWOOD FOREVER

Mono open a Pandora's box of strange sounds on their latest album, Nowhere Now Here. The ambient opening track, “God Bless,” quickly segues into the harder passages of “After You Comes the Flood.” What follows is indeed a veritable flood of monumental, metallic, mostly instrumental riffage intercut with gentler vocal interludes such as “Breathe,” which serves as a momentary sonic oasis before the thunder returns again. The dualities of noise and beauty, and quietude and loud volume, wax and wane throughout the record. The 11-minute title track encapsulates the album's contrasts, as its languid intro eventually shifts into a heavy storm of guitars, which begin to swirl dizzily as the Tokyo quartet build to a shoegaze climax. Emma Ruth Rundle sets the mood with her own convulsive variations of shoegaze climax. Emma Ruth Rundle sets the mood with her own convulsive variations of shoegaze climax. Also tonight: Ippei Matsui & Aki Tsuyuko, Xambuca, DJ Carlos Niño. —FALLING JAMES

Andrew Bird  
@THE WILTERN

Andrew Bird belies the seemingly sarcastic title of his new record, My Finest Work Yet, with a set of contemplative songs that take a look at the current political and emotional climate via “themes of current-day dichotomies and how to identify a moral compass amidst divisive times.” On the album-opening “Sisyphus,” the local songwriter declares, “I’d rather fail like a mortal than fail like a god/I’m a lightning rod/History forgets the moderates for those who sit recalcitrant and taciturn.” The musical settings range from the jazzy, space-cabinet piano idyll “Bloodless” and the aching ballad “Cracking Codes” to the full-band dramatics of “Olympians” and the elegant string-laden chamber “Archipelago.” Amid the Biblical floods of “Proxy War,” Bird muses about love: “She don’t have to get over him, with all their words of “Proxy War,” Bird muses about love: “She don’t have to get over him, with all their words.

John Corabi  
@WHISKY A GO GO

In the wake of the Netflix movie The Dirt, there’s a lot of interest in all things Mötley Crüe again. Whether that translates to some love for John Corabi, who fronted the band for one self-titled album in the mid ‘90s following Vince Neil’s departure, remains to be seen. Corabi does appear in the movie (portrayed by an actor) for a brief moment, though he doesn’t say anything. But here’s the thing — Corabi is an extremely talented singer, guitarist and songwriter. His work with The Scream and Union is exceptional, and that one Crüe album is criminally underrated. More recently, he has been fronting rock & roll supergroup The Dead Daisies, and his solo shows are superb. Corabi is far more than Mötley Crüe’s forgotten man, and everyone should remember that. —BRETT CALLWOOD

Sebadoh  
@THE ROXY

You have to hand it to Lou Barlow. As a founding member of both Sebadoh and Dinosaur Jr., not to mention The Folk Implosion, Barlow played a huge role in pioneering the lo-fi, fuzzy alt-rock style that was so big in the ‘90s and beyond. For many years, Barlow has balanced Dinosaur Jr. and Sebadoh in particular, and to his enormous credit neither of them ever felt like a side project. He has just dropped the ninth Sebadoh studio album, Act Surprised, as well as the “Celebrate the Void” single. Thirty-three years into a career that has seen them influence so many, there’s plenty to celebrate. Flower also play. —BRETT CALLWOOD
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