TALES FROM THE UNDERTOW

Ten essential books that capture the pulse of L.A., including John Doe's latest

BY CHAD BYRNES
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A host of Pride-themed events throughout L.A. County, Phantom of the Opera, Kaiju-Con and more to do and see in L.A. this week.

FEATURE...9
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ART

The Truth Is Relational
Human Resources is a safe space for boundary-blasting visual and especially performance art, with all material experimentations and paradigm-smashing modalities welcome. This weekend, HRLA welcomes the cross-platform project Stalgia Grigg: is a weapon and we, the first U.S. solo show for this artist, and by the looks of it maybe his first in this time-space dimension. With a witty, quirky and slightly ominous sensibility, the artists’ activities bore into the arcane structural roots of societal political discourse and frustration, positing a kind of futuristic counterfactual history in which access to the fractal vagaries of digital logic promise to break the cognitive wheel of Left/Right polemics and cultural crossfire. The need is urgent; the results are unpredictable. Human Resources Los Angeles, 410 Cottage Home St., Elysian Park; opening reception: Fri., June 14, 7-10 p.m.; Sat., June 15-Tue., June 18, noon-6 p.m.; free. humanresourcesla.com. —SHANA NYSDAM BROST

DANCE

British Invasion
Commissioned in 2017 for Liverpool, England’s 50th anniversary of the Beatles’ groundbreaking (and mind-bending) recording, Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band, Mark Morris Dance Project’s Pepperland finally arrives here. Known for his deep musicality, his terrific dancers and his always eye-catching moves, expect this inventive choreographer to bring humor and a 21st-century take on the album’s iconic songs, including “With a Little Help from My Friends,” “Within You Without You,” “Penny Lane,” “A Day in the Life,” “When I’m Sixty-Four,” the title track and several new compositions inspired by the original. Segerstrom Center for the Arts, 600 Town Center Drive, Costa Mesa; Fri., June 14, 7:30 p.m.; Sat., June 15, 2 & 7:30 p.m.; $29-$119. scfta.org/events/2019/pepperland-mark-morris. —ANN HASKINS

MUSIC

Tunes in a Tunnel
The Dog Star Orchestra not only presents some of the most interesting chamber-music experiments in the city, the collective tends to stage them in unusual locations. On Friday at Automata, Dog Star hosts a concert of “text and graphic scores that directly engage with nature and natural environments,” with works by such composers as Christian Wolff, Katherine Koopman, Heather Lockie and Jack Langdon. On Saturday, Lockie, Carolyn Chen, Laura Steenberge, Stephanie Astorga and Argenta Walther lurk in the pedestrian tunnel at the Southwest Museum to intone new pieces for voice and objects. A related, earlier subterranean piece by Lockie, Song to Be Performed in a Tunnel in Your Town, was a mesmerizing weave of vocal exhalations that resonated eerily through time and space at a 2018 Dog Star performance. Automata, 504 Chung King Court, Chinatown; Fri., June 14, 8 p.m.; $15. (213) 819-6855. Southwest Museum, 234 Museum Drive, Mount Washington; Sat., June 15, 8 p.m.; $15. (323) 221-2164, dogstarorchestra.com. —FALLING JAMES

ART/FILM

Father of Monsters
In conjunction with Kaiju vs Heroes, an in-depth exhibition (on view through July 7) celebrating the legacy of kaiju (monster) master Mark Nagato, JANM is hosting the day-long Kaiju-Con. As the dazzling exhibition traces the explosive cultural history and modern obsessions of the monster genre in art and cinema — and of course, toys, toys, toys — so today’s all day confab combines screenings of vintage Godzilla, with hands-on illustration and toy workshops, conversations, vendors, exhibition tours and a higher than usual tolerance for folks showing up in costume. The day’s events are ticketed and include exhibition admission; the outdoor screening of the 1964 kitsch-tastic masterpiece Mothra vs. Godzilla is free. Japanese American National Museum, 100 N. Central Ave., Little Tokyo; Sat., June 15, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.; $20-$30. janm.org. —SHANA NYSDAM BROST

ART/CULTURE

Irish Spring
The newest art house in Los Angeles is the CICA LA, the Contemporary Irish Arts Center, opening this weekend at Bergamot Station. Its debut program centers on a site-specific environmental sculptural installation by Amanda Coogan, The Ladder is Always There, which will be periodically activated through July 5 with performance art stagings. In a second gallery at the site, a series of performance art events and conversations, Care. Complicity. Critique., invites both Irish and Los Angeles-based practitioners like Thinh Nguyen, whose work is on display in the gallery as well, to present their works in an international context — including Bloomsday. Opening weekend includes a design and literature symposium, and the fully stocked calendar goes on to include drawing workshops, a conversation on sustainable art practices, music, cinema, poetry, dance, comedy, social hours and more art. One thing CICA LA seems set to prove is that contemporary Irish culture is a robust and eclectic world full of beauty, edge and plentiful surprises. CICA LA, Bergamot Station, 2525 Michigan Ave., Suite B1, Santa Monica; opening reception: Sat., June 15, 6-9 p.m.; Wed.-Sun., 1-6 p.m.; free. cica.la.com. —SHANA NYSDAM BROST

SUN 6/16

FATHER’S DAY

Fears and Fun
Mother’s Day is about flowery fawning but Father’s Day is looser. In general, most daddies don’t take it as seriously, but that doesn’t mean you can’t do something special or different. Zombie Joe’s Underground Theatre Group (known for its creepy Halloween theater shows) are definitely doing something uh, different. DAD: A Paternal Immersive Experience is a dramatic, interactive show in which “courageous participants” see what it’s like to be a papa in all its gritty, gory glory. Child rearing from various facets are explored with a wild cast of characters, all coming of age at different stages, providing a funny, freaky holi-
day happening you probably won’t soon forget. Directed by Brandon Slezak and produced by Zombie Joe, this 18+ performance should be a hoot for (most) dads and quite possibly serve as a scared straight-like experience for non-dads. Zombie Joe’s Underground Theatre, 4850 Lankershim Blvd., North Hollywood; Sun.-Mon., June 16-17, June 23-24 and Mon., July 1, 8:00 p.m., 8:30 p.m., 9:00 p.m., 9:45 p.m. & 10:15 p.m. $15. zombiejoes.tix.com. — LINA LECARO

The History of Pride Art

Gilbert Baker created the rainbow flag (originally with eight colors, now six) in San Francisco in 1978 as a visual representation of gay pride. Like McDonald’s, Nike, Starbucks and Apple, Baker’s creation has gone on to become one of the most iconic and enduring images of all time. Andy Campbell’s new book, Queer X Design: 50 Years of Signs, Symbols, Banners, Logos, and Graphic Art of LGBTQ, which he signs tonight, traces the modern LGBTQ movement’s artistic milestones across five decades, from the 1970s to the 2000s, preceded by the pre-gay liberation of the ’50s and ’60s. Campbell, an assistant professor of critical studies at USC, breaks down the history and social and political impact of the Pink Triangle, AIDS Quilt, ACT UP’s Silence=Death and Ribbon Project, as well as imagery associated with some of today’s millennial brands and causes, including NOH8 and Grindr. Book Soup, 8818 Sunset Blvd., West Hollywood; Mon., June 17, 7 p.m.; free. (310) 659-3110, booksoup.com. — SIRAN BABAYAN

A Night Out on the Town

L.A. Opera’s latest revival of Marta Domingo’s presentation of Giuseppe Verdi’s classic opera La Traviata, in which the director/designer relocates the action to the Roaring ’20s, should make for a suitably glittery and glamorous setting for the civil-rights organization Equality California’s “Night OUT at the Opera” as the opera company celebrates the local LGBTQ community. After a special performance of the opera, which stars Romanian soprano Adela Zaharia as Violetta, participants can hang out in the BoardRoom Lounge for a reception with cocktails and a DJ. Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, 135 N. Grand Ave., downtown; Wed., June 19, 7:30 p.m.; $126-$284. (213) 972-0777, laopera.org. — FALLING JAMES
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LA WEEKLY
Ten essential books that capture the pulse of L.A., including John Doe’s latest history of Angeleno punk

BY CHAD BYRNES

When one thinks of “Los Angeles,” the first thing that comes to mind, other than maybe our weather and our traffic, is Hollywood: movie stars, red carpets and the mystique of glitzy lifestyles. But Los Angeles, of course, has a lot of more underneath the surface, and one area in particular happens to be our rich history of literature. Lit, you say? Like in books? Yes, books. Incredible books. We may be a city synonymous with movies and television, but as any avid reader will agree, L.A. has made an indelible mark on literature. This city has attracted and produced a wealth of remarkable writers for the same reason it gave rise to some of the best punk bands — wherever you find glamour, you’ll find the dejected. If there’s a shiny surface, there’s also an undertow. Writing — at least lyrical, gritty, honest writing — comes from that undertow.

L.A.’s literary scene has also historically resembled punk rock in how it invaded the world’s consciousness. Bukowski, Fante, Ellroy, Didion, Easton Ellis, Mosley, all L.A.-based, all outsiders who forced people to look at the place others call Tinseltown in a new way. Likewise, punk rock was a voice of the streets, a platform for proletarian storytelling. L.A. continues to crank out some of the most subversive and interesting writers of both nonfiction and fiction, especially in the last few decades. In this list of L.A.’s best contemporary authors and their seminal works, you will not find a Raymond Chandler or Charles Bukowski. You’ve already read those lists. These are L.A.’s newer voices, voices that have made an impact the last 30 years or so, who, like their much admired predecessors, were born and bred in the undertows and dark shadows, tending to look outward. Of course, lists of this kind are always incomplete in some way; this is by no means definitive, but anyone who has read the following should be able to agree, these books evoke this town in their own unique ways. If you haven’t read some of them, add them to your essential reading list now.

**More Fun in the New World: The Unmaking and Legacy of L.A. Punk**

**John Doe and Tom DeSavia, 2019**

Beginning where their last book *Under the Big Black Sun* left off, Doe and DeSavia continue the tale of the infamous L.A. punk scene. Far from just merely an addendum however, there is a method to the authors’ madness in this follow-up. While *Big Black Sun* focused on the advent of punk rock in the City of Angels, *More Fun in the New World* is both a dark meditation on the scene’s demise and a demonstration of how punk created a platform for other artistic endeavors. As a result, *More Fun* not only includes essays by musicians who planted the seeds of punk, such as John Doe, Billy Zoom, Mike Ness and Jane Wiedlin, to name a few, but also includes pieces by artists directly inspired by the punk ethos, such as actor Tim Robbins, artist Shepard Fairey, director Allison Anders and skater/entrepreneur Tony Hawk. *More Fun* opens up the punk narrative, demonstrating that punk wasn’t merely a club with a few members, but an intellectual and artistic manifestation which altered the American psyche as we know it.

What distinguishes Doe and DeSilvia’s books from others regarding L.A.’s punk history are the breadth and passion of their contributors’ essays. These are personal stories, not merely quips and quotes spread throughout the pages. *More Fun* is also darker than its predecessor (as if that were possible), since this time we’re delving into punk’s eventual demise. The Go-Go’s Charlotte Caffey’s essay about her battle with heroin and punk’s eventual demise. *The Go-Go’s* Charlotte Caffey’s essay about her battle with heroin and punk’s eventual demise. /T_This is by no means definitive, but anyone who has read the following should be able to agree, these books evoke this town in their own unique ways. If you haven’t read some of them, add them to your essential reading list now.

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**Things That Happened Before The Earthquake**

**Chiara Barzini, 2017**

It’s 1992, a few weeks after the L.A. riots and a couple years before the Northridge earthquake, when Eugenia and her family move from Italy to the barren streets of the San Fernando Valley in *Things That Happened, a genuine existentialist coming-of-age novel. But don’t expect bland contrivances in this portrait of a girl’s loss of innocence set against a city’s slow demise. Barzini’s writing is restrained and ethereal, knowing that life in Los Angeles can be both surreal and capricious at the same time. “The sunlight diluted into a thick polluted haze and I knew home was somewhere beyond those freeways.” Barzini also hits all the right notes in describing the San Fernando Valley’s strange, arid existence. From the endless liquor stores and nondescript curio shops to the graffiti-strwn boulevards, we follow Eugenia as she quickly embeds herself into this outlaw landscape. Attending Van Nuys High, Eugenia dates a gang member, befriends a lonely soul in Chris and becomes entranced by Delva, who takes her back to her mystical, but maladjusted home in Topanga Canyon. Things start to take shape for our protagonist, until the 1994 earthquake rocks the city and her newly evolved persona to its core.

**Sick City**

**Tony O’Neill, 2013**

Where are all the downtrodden junkie writers of yore? Did they die and leave us with teen vampires, superheroes and millennial bloggers? Not to worry. There is hope. Enter the deranged universe of Tony O’Neill. This former junkie and keyboard player for The Brian Jonestown Massacre cleaned up, moved to Los Angeles and proved to be the voice for the disenfranchised. *Sick City* is an intravenous shot into L.A.’s motel rooms, derelict houses and dingy streets, filled with drug addicts, pushers, pimps and overall human vermin. Depressing, right? Not even a little bit. The gutter is O’Neill’s funhouse. Where else would you read about a psychotic meth head who tortures his victims to Phil Colins’ “Against All Odds”? Or two pathetic junkies trying to pawn a sex tape of a deceased celebrity just to get another hit? Just check out guitarist Slash’s endorsement: “A disturbingly twisted ride through Hollywood’s underbelly with a degen-
LA WEEKLY has written nearly 20 novels and attends Red signifiers, reminding us of an elusive past. "This is especially apparent in The Liberace biopic, Johnson’s as an unremitting dread for the present. As an has created a nostalgia for the past and as well as bleached, concrete stage for his players to reach Echo Park to the deep valley, he creates a sun-mavericks, all of whom make horrible decisions on the streets, with the criminals. We’re talking schemers, low-rent bank robbers and desperate schemers, low-rent bank robbers and desperate side, until there’s nothing left but bloody scars. His novels are outrageous, disgusting, most definitely offensive and filled with piti-ful, desperate souls, willing to do anything to have their faces plastered on the big screen. If they’re already famous, their trajectories are more debauched. Wagner’s style is whimsical and grotesque (he makes Bret Easton Ellis look tame), but if you’ve lived in Los Angeles long enough, you’ll realize there’s a moral compass in his stories. Dead Stars, one of his nastiest, features celebrity appearances, self-amelioration, drugs aplenty and psychotic breakdowns, all of which feel like jolts from the electric chair. Who said something about killing what you love? Well, Wagner loves Hollywood, and he massacres it.

Dead Boys (Richard Lange, 2007)

Lange gave the noire genre a much-needed kick in the pants with the hard-boiled stories of Dead Boys. Stark realism and inured style harkens back to writers like Jim Thompson and Newton Thornburg here, and like these rebels of the genre, Lange ripped noir from the hands of the pretty politicians and detectives and put it back on the streets, with the criminals. We’re talking schemers, low-rent bank robbers and desperate mavericks, all of whom make horrible decisions and end up paying dearly. Lange describes Los Angeles with a frightening authenticity. From Echo Park to the deep valley, he creates a sun-beached, concrete stage for his players to reach their bottom, and occasionally find redemption.

In the Not Quite Dark (Dana Johnson, 2016)

These tightly wound, esoteric tales about womanhood, race and our inability to connect with each other have a stark quality that’s hard to shake. Most of Johnson’s tales are set in downtown Los Angeles, where rampant gentrification has created a nostalgia for the past and as well as an unremittting dread for the present. As an African-American and L.A. native (and an associate professor of English at USC), Johnson’s approach to race is so acute and textured, you’ll think about her characters’ nuances for days. This is especially apparent in “The Liberase Museum,” where a young inter racial couple, Charlotte and Heath, drive cross country to visit his parents in Mississippi. Although Heath’s parents seem pleasant, when the father boasts that his family owned their land for 150 years, Charlotte can’t help but recall: “Charlotte had watched fireflies flicker in the darkness and between the trees like small, distant torches... She wondered if the slave quarters used to be out there, among the fireflies.” For Johnson, ghosts aren’t merely monsters here to haunt us, but signifiers, reminding us of an elusive past.

West of Sunset (Stewart O’Nan, 2015)

OK, I’m cheating a little. Stewart O’Nan, who has written nearly 20 novels and attends Red Sox games with Stephen King, is not an L.A. writer. He hails from Pittsburgh. Still, West of Sunset, his reimagining of novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald’s tragic demise, is such a spectral reamination of Hollywood’s extreme highs and lows, I think it’ll be considered a classic one day. As you might know, Fitzgerald spent his last few years in Los Angeles as a failed screenwriter before his untimely death at 44 from alcoholism. Having moved here with a hopeful contract with MGM, the famed nov-elist of The Great Gatsby quickly realized that Hollywood could be a deadly compromise. He also discovered that in order to survive in this town, you must reinvent yourself, or die trying. O’Nan describes 1930s Los Angeles with such an embroiling art of romanticism, you understand its temptation, even as Fitz-gerald reaches for that second act.

Dead Stars (Bruce Wagner, 2012)

The best way to eviscerate Hollywood is from the inside out. At least that’s how novelist Bruce Wagner has approached Hollywood and its absurdist celebrity culture. Taking cues from satirical novelist Nathaniel West (The Day of the Locust), Wagner has made a career out of dissecting Hollywood’s dark side, until there’s nothing left but bloody scars. His novels are outrageous, disgusting, most definitely offensive and filled with piti-ful, desperate souls, willing to do anything to have their faces plastered on the big screen. If they’re already famous, their trajectories are more debauched. Wagner’s style is whimsical and grotesque (he makes Bret Easton Ellis look tame), but if you’ve lived in Los Angeles long enough, you’ll realize there’s a moral compass in his stories. Dead Stars, one of his nastiest, features celebrity appearances, self-amelioration, drugs aplenty and psychotic breakdowns, all of which feel like jolts from the electric chair. Who said something about killing what you love? Well, Wagner loves Hollywood, and he massacres it.

Permanent Midnight (Jerry Stahl, 1995)

During the ’80s Jerry Stahl was a successful television writer, penning episodes of Moonlighting, Twin Peaks, and yes, ALF. He made upwards to five grand a week. The problem was he supported a heroin habit that matched upwards to five grand a week. The problem was he asked us to make the performances as real as the songs. Our lyrics talked about real people, actual events, true landscapes of Los Angeles, heartbreak, death, and, later, influences of our lives on tour. The music was tight, short, sweet, and hard. It blended and hied in all manner of American roots music that DJ, Billy, Exene & I had soaked up in our twenty-plus years of listening and playing in good or shitty bands.

In 1982, with Ray’s encouragement, we included decidedly un-punk rock elements after we signed to a major label and played saxophone, so we put sax on a song, “Come Back to Me,” about Exene’s departed sister, Mireille. This tragic event—she was killed instantly when the VW bug she was riding in was struck by a hit & run driver—forever changed our lives. Maybe because of the tradition of tragic-death songs in the fifties, I wrote music inspired by fifties doo-wop for “Come Back to Me.” But that writing came after the moment when I distinctly remember standing outside X’s tiny office space, a rehearsal studio on Hollywood Blvd., when I heard the melody and words for the chorus of the song. To make things even more unpunk, DJ played marimba, so with Ray’s encouragement, we put that on the same song. Exene wrote a song about the hard times of working-class people & drinking, “The Hate Notes.” The music inspired by seventies rock & roll echoed the sound of bar bands we had played in before X. We were inspired by Bo Didley, the reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone, and American Indians and made a song about Exene’s and my relationship with all of those elements called “The Hungry Wolf.” We finally had a better studio and time to play around. Pulling in a few more breakneck speed songs and romance in others, somehow it still remained punk rock.

—BY JOHN DOE

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EYE FOR AN EYE

Legendary Bad Brains frontman H.R.’s latest art show is all about maintaining positivity in trying times

BY ALEX DISTEFANO

On Saturday, June 1, downtown L.A. art gallery Lethal Amounts hosted a gathering for the first night of an exhibit featuring the visual artwork of a man better known for his music. Iconic frontman from the legendary hardcore punk group Bad Brains, H.R. (Paul Hudson), also keeps up painting practice. The bold, brash works of raw wit and shape-shifting, zine-inflected verse currently on view were made in collaboration with his wife, Lori Hudson. Collaborating within your family is cool.

L.A. Weekly: How long have you been painting?
H.R.: Like music, art has been with me all my life. I was, then and now, observing other people's groove-ons. The Most High is not a celestial or terrestrial creature that we know, but an Angel of the Light.

Tell us about the art show at Lethal Amounts, and how it worked as a collaborative effort with your wife Lori?
Sometimes my wife wants to spend a little time on herself. She's found herself working on just my stuff and neglecting her own personal desires. She's a very creative woman and paints and draws very artistic pictures. Collaborating within your family is cool.

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When Bad Brains formed in the late 70s, did you know how inspirational your music would become?
No, but we were into having a positive mental attitude (PMA). When we played, those shows were for fun. We were very determined but we still didn't know much about the music business at that time. A lot of friends encouraged us, and after that we read a book called *Think And Grow Rich*. We got on our knees and prayed for a future in the business.

Can you explain the struggle to maintain PMA despite current events or personal problems people may face?
Well, it's best to go to God with that negativity. Put your faith in Him and into your career. Everybody feels like the burden is solo, and a lot of people think that they can't decide their future, but there is a way to find a better tomorrow. The attitude to remain positive comes into your consciousness and anything that the mind can conceive and believe, the mind can achieve. People are living in a radical world and everybody has trials but going to the right people at the right time can help you to be a better person. Don't take negative things into your mentality. Conquer your fears and go to Rasta. His life reflected that we should not deal with war.

Do you have any future plans for more art and music releases or live performances?
H.R.: Who knows what's in the future? I'm hoping that through my music I can inspire my wife and others to keep it cool. And keep that PMA.

Lori Hudson: We can announce that H.R. will be performing in Finland in mid-June, in the Midwest in July, and in the United Kingdom at the beginning of August. So touring is in the future. He has a new album coming out this summer, which will be released on colored vinyl by Hardline Entertainment. The presale is scheduled for late June.

Will Bad Brains perform shows in the future or do any future tours?
As we move forward, we become closer friends. Yeah, sure. God willing, there will be more shows with Bad Brains.

Until that day arrives, get a taste of H.R.'s original punk sensibility in visual form, as H.R.'s art exhibit will run through early July at Lethal Amounts (i Against i | HR + Lori art), 1226 W., 7th St., downtown.
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FILM

GIVING MILLENNIALS THE SHAFT

The latest incarnation chooses mindless action over substance

BY KEVIN BENAVIDES

Times are tough. Old-school sensuality and romance seem to be on the verge of extinction. We’re living in digital bubbles, swiping for soulmates on our phones. You know what we need? “Yeah, damn right...” We need Shaft! Reflecting the early ’70s, when progressive ideas and exploitation cinema intermingled like long-lost lovers, Shaft’s steady reserve and not-so-subtle eroticism made it a classic.

In the 1971 original, Richard Roundtree was swagger incarnate, donning a leather trench coat and coiffed afro as he walked the dirty streets of New York to an Isaac Hayes soundtrack. A ghetto-raised private dick with a penchant for loving the ladies, Roundtree delivered lines that’d make a pimp blush.

In 2000, Samuel L. Jackson formidable took up the mantle as Shaft’s nephew in the hit sequel, so it’s been nearly 20 years since Jackson put on the trench coat, and dammit, we need him back. This Shaft loses the heavy drama of Jackson’s first stab at the character, going straight for an absurdist comedy/action film. A good choice indeed, since nobody infuses badassery with humor as well as he does.

Getting more insight into the character is really fun to watch too. Unfortunately, the filmmakers also add a lot of trite, nauseating action sequences to mix that aren’t really necessary.

Shaft opens with the titular character’s ex-wife, Maya (Regina Hall) as she raises their son, John “JJ” Shaft Jr., on her own. Although Shaft’s not around for his son’s upbringing, Junior keeps receiving mysterious gifts in the mail, such as a box of condoms for Christmas or a stack of nude mags for his college graduation.

Wonder who they could be from? Soon enough, Junior (Jessie T. Usher) gets a job as an analyst for the FBI, wearing skinny jeans and approaching the world with apprehension and propriety. He takes constant grillings from his boss and is in love with his childhood pal, Sasha (Alexandra Shipp), although he’s too scared to admit it. When Junior suspects his best friend was murdered, he enlists the help of his private eye father, John Shaft II (Jackson) to help him solve the case.

When Shaft and son finally meet and start working together, Shaft works too, setting the stage for a comedic generational divide that makes for a war of ideas in which Jackson’s old-school flamboyance and his son’s millennial logic go head to head. Usher holds his own as a bumbling nerd who’s consistently shocked by his father’s lack of propriety, and Jackson shines as usual, showing movie-goers why he’s a national treasure and an enduringly bankable movie star. With a simple roll of his eyes or silent groan, Jackson says volumes about how ridiculous we’ve all become in this day and age where everything is PC policed. Yes, in many ways Shaft is an illustration of bygone attitudes probably better left in the past, but he’s also a reminder of what we’ve lost — carefree attitude, grit, and unapologetic expression, especially when it comes to sexuality.

Too bad Shaft only dabbles with this great premise and takes the easy route, devolving into a series of drawn-out, clichéd gun battles and action sequences, complete with CGI bullets skimming the air in slow-motion (really?). You get the feeling someone got anxious and thought, OK, enough talking, let’s shoot guns! Consequently, Shaft sacrifices its humanity and soul to appease a dull, adolescent contrivance. Unlike action/comedies of the past like Beverly Hills Cop or Lethal Weapon, which took time in establishing character and plot before plunging headlong into action, Shaft feels rushed, as if two different scripts were mashed together. One of those scripts is good, the other, not so much. By the time the majestic Richard Roundtree shows up, you’re so bludgeoned by hackneyed action sequences, it’s tough to notice. What a shame.

Shaft, as we’ve come to know him, probably wouldn’t approve of this cartoonish, bombastic nonsense, either. Hell tell the filmmakers to relax, take it slow, let the story simmer a bit, before blowing everything up. After all, a slower-paced seduction is always best.
T was murdered, he enlists the help of his private boss and is in love with his childhood pal, Sasha. He takes constant grillings from his propriety. He approaches the world with apprehension and enough, Junior (Jessie T. Usher) gets a job as an education. Wonder who they could be from? Soon or a stack of nudie mags for his college graduation mail, such as a box of condoms for Christmas.

Junior keeps receiving mysterious gifts in the son, John "JJ" Shaft Jr., on her own. Although his wife, Maya (Regina Hall) as she raises their sequences to mix that aren't really necessary. Shafts also add a lot of trite, nauseating action sequences, complete with CGI bullets skimming the air in slow-motion. Consequently, shoot guns! Consequently, what we need? "Yeah, damn right..." We need humanitatem we appease a dull, adolescent logic go head to head. Usher holds his own as school flamboyance and his son's millennial lost — carefree attitude, especially when everything is PC policed. Too bad Shaft, as we've come to know him, probably needs him back. This coat, and dammit, we Jackson put on the trench for an absurdist comedy/character, going straight into the world with a pen. Jackson's first stab at the profession, especially when roundtree shows up, you're so bludgeoned by not so much. By the time the majestic Richard Shaft took time in establishing character and plot together. One of those scripts is good, the other, rush, as if two different scripts were mashed before plunging headlong into action, dashed gun battles and acrobatics. Despite all this, Shaft delivers lines like long-lost lovers, blistering the heavy drama of hip-hop with humor. Dabbles with this great dandy badassery with humor as well as he does. Indeed, since nobody in the Shafts would tell the filmmakers to reprint or a stack of nudie mags for his college graduation mail, such as a box of condoms for Christmas.

In 2000, Samuel L. Jackson loses the heavy drama of Roundtree delivered lines like long-lost lovers, blistering the heavy drama of hip-hop with humor. Dabbles with this great dandy badassery with humor as well as he does. Indeed, since nobody in the Shafts would tell the filmmakers to reprint or a stack of nudie mags for his college graduation mail, such as a box of condoms for Christmas.

What a shame.

BY KEVIN BENAVIDES

THE LATEST INCARNATION CHOOSES MINDLESS ACTION OVER Substance. THE GIVING MILLENNIALS...
Despite forming in 1983, the forward-looking British rockers The Cult are now revisiting their iconic 1989 album Sonic Temple, the band’s fourth. It celebrates the 30th anniversary of that groundbreaking album — the album that many fans consider to be the band’s best. The Cult will be touring with special guests Prayers, Zola Jesus, and VOWWS, and the concerts are described as epic opportunities to embrace the entire DNA of the band.

To be honest, I haven’t revisited Sonic Temple until it kind of fell into my path, says singer Ian Astbury. This time, Astbury has handpicked songs from the album to be performed on tour. He’s found some songs that he was not sure of at the time, but de/finitely was of its time. I always think of it as a part of our heritage, he says. Sonic Temple is a special album — one that was a turning point for The Cult, as we now have 10/uni studio albums. In many ways we’ve achieved these incredible milestones, career milestones, and special. That’s what they did, never afraid to outdo what you were doing before. To outdo what you were doing before.

Sonic Temple is constructed in the studio and once it was done, it was done. We never have. That’s hurt us at times. Sometimes you’ve got to say no. We’re long overdue, Astbury says. We do it for artistic virility. And it doesn’t stop. The ethos is very much like post-punk. The subject material is far more romantic, ethereal, cinematic, darker, powerful, harder, more intense, and tough. The subject material is far more than just today. It’s a reflection of the past. At the time that it was recorded, the singer’s father was sick with cancer, and it felt like the weight of the world was on our shoulders.

Bob Dylan, Neil Young, and Iggy Pop come to mind when thinking about The Cult’s sound. These were artists who were never content to stand still. They were artists who were always looking for their next step. For this tour, Prayers, Zola Jesus, and VOWWS have been added to the lineup to join The Cult.

“We’re long overdue,” Astbury says. “We do it for artistic virility. We do it for the fans. We do it for the band. It was never to be around for 30 years. It was to be a special event, and Astbury is excited to see those three other bands.

The Greek Theatre promises to be a special event, and Astbury is excited to see those three other bands. There’s something in the water right now, he says. The whole evening at the Greek promises to be a special event.

All of that said, even Astbury has to accept that their past is there for the fans to enjoy — they don’t shy away from it. They’re reissuing the band’s fourth album — the album that many fans think is the band’s best. The whole evening at the Greek promises to be a special event.

The Cult plays with Prayers, Zola Jesus and VOWWS at 6:30 p.m. on Saturday, June 15 at the Greek Theatre.

PHOTO BY TIM CADIENTE

BY BRETT CALLWOOD
THE CULT OF THE FUTURE

Despite forming in 1983, the forward-looking British rockers aren’t resting on their laurels

BY BRET CALLWOOD

On Saturday, British rockers The Cult will transform the magnificent Greek Theatre into A Sonic Temple, an epic event that simultaneously celebrates the 30th anniversary of that ground-breaking ’89 album (the band’s fourth). It also recalls frontman Ian Astbury’s Gather-into A Sonic Temple, an epic album this year, so we thought it was an opportunity to embrace the entire DNA of The Cult, with Sonic Temple being an entry point. It’s probably our best known record, but definitely was of its time. I always think of things more in the live context. I’m not really an archaeologist. I don’t sit around going through the broken pottery, trying to discern what our intention was at the time and all that kind of thing. In many ways, it doesn’t really serve the present moment. I mean, I can pick up some, go back and hear them — the live stuff is actually more informative than the actual record because the record is constructed in the studio and once it was done, it was done.”

That will make complete sense to anyone familiar with The Cult. Astbury and guitarist Billy Duffy in particular have always been keen to keep moving forward, while happily accepting that their past is there for the fans to enjoy — they don’t shy away from it.

“I never listened to [Sonic Temple] after we made the record really, except for maybe lyric references or something,” Astbury says. “But the intention with this was to set a new chapter for The Cult, as we now have 10 studio albums. In many ways we’ve achieved these incredible milestones, career milestones, which again wasn’t the intention of getting the band together. It was never to be around for 40 years. To me, it was always the next thing. Still is really. I know it’s a bit of a cliche with a lot of artists: ‘You don’t understand — what I’m doing now is the most important work I’ve ever done.’ I truly believe the best me at least, probably more so with individual artists than bands, they’ve produced some of their best work in their later years. Iggy Pop is one of the artists Billy and I bonded over. We opened for him in ’87 and he appears on Sonic Temple, guest vocals on ‘New York City.’”

All of that said, even Astbury has to accept that Sonic Temple is a special album — one that he describes as a watershed for the band. At the time that it was recorded, the singer’s father was sick with cancer, and it felt like friends were dropping like flies. It was a tough time, but they looked to Bowie again, and realized they had to do something new and special. That’s what they did, never afraid to get out of their comfort zones.

“Being a rock & roll band in the broadest sense of the word, we hit on every genre you could possibly put a guitar on,” he says. “I think we’ve even hinted at country somewhere. Blues, post-punk, psychedelic, acid rock, borderline metal in places, but definitely hip-hop was an underlying theme in the DNA, working with Def Jam and being around Beastie Boys, LL Cool J and Run DMC — that was quite an influential period as well. It all gets wound into the narrative of the band.”

The whole evening at the Greek promises to be a special event, and Astbury is excited to see those three other bands.

“There’s something in the water right now,” he says. “Prayers are a two-piece, VOWWS are a two-piece. It’s very much ‘do it yourself.’ The ethos is very much like post-punk in that sense. The subject material is far more romantic, ethereal, cinematic, darker, scratching beyond the belly of the dystopian dragon that’s flying around. That’s a more comfortable place for me. I don’t really have a desire to try to compete with the top 200 on Billboard. We never have. That’s hurt us in some ways. There were definitely times when it could have been an easier path by just saying yes. Sometimes you’ve got to say no.”

In fact, The Cult said “no” to two of the songs on the album — “Soldier Blue” and “Medicine Train” (the latter a bonus track anyway) — because they felt that they didn’t fit into the set, even when that set is geared around the album. “We listened through them and those songs really were part of a moment, and that moment is gone,” Astbury says. “I guess they didn’t age as well as some of the songs. We didn’t feel like the sentiment fit into the set very well. But we haven’t played ‘Soul Asylum’ in 30 years and it sounds really fresh. The stage goes black, we play Sonic Temple straight out of the gate, and then we go into songs from Beyond Good and Evil, the eponymous record, of course Electric [and] Love — we wanted to choose songs that had a direct lineage to Sonic Temple.”

The Cult plays with Prayers, Zola Jesus and VOWWS at 6:30 p.m. on Saturday, June 15 at the Greek Theatre.
Oddisee & Good Compny, Sudan Archives
@ FIGAT7TH
"I was born with small access to big dreams, to detached homes, and Lazy Boy couches were fit thrones that would sit kings/Lion statues on the fences larger than the castles they guarded," Oddisee muses on "Built by Pictures," from his 2017 album, The Iceberg. "I just looked at the pictures/Didn't have a manual to build this, just assemble it from feeling." The Maryland rapper assembles a lot of thought-provoking verses scratched up from feeling as the musical backing segues from straight-ahead rap into groovier funk workouts. Oddisee and his nimble band Good Compny are billed with Sudan Archives, the project of singer-violinist Brittney Parks, whose recent record, Sink, shape-shifts hip-hop into arty experimentation suffused imaginatively with layers of psychedelic vocals. —FALLING JAMES

L.A. Guns
@ WHISKY A GO GO
The saga of L.A. Guns and the on-again/off-again relationships between the members past and present wasn’t only threatening to become laughably ludicrous — it busted through that door with a shit-eating grin. For years now, there have been two versions of the band touring, throwing shade at each other in the process. In a spectacularly bizarre turn, guitarist Tracii Guns and vocalist Phil Lewis buried the hatchet and rejoined forces a couple of years ago, but drummer Steve Riley continued with his own version of the band. No matter — Lewis and Guns are L.A. Guns, and this year they returned with The Devil You Know album — a hard-hitting, relentless beast of a Hollywood rock & roll record. These two sets at the Whisky (also Saturday) will likely see them pull from that, as well as their impressive back catalog. —BRETT CALLWOOD

Nicky Blackmarket is one of the key figures in the formation of drum & bass out of the genre’s rave-y breakbeat roots. The longstanding DJ, who gets his name from the defunct record store in the bustling Soho neighborhood of London, England, created a hub for the music before there was a name to put to it. For almost three decades, in the basement of Black Market Records, Nicky was a conduit to discovering new music and schooling the junglist masses. You may not be able to go down those famed steps and personally get handed a white label by Nicky, but as the respected DJ that he is, he continues to lead, both with his historic knowledge and the freshest tunes. He is joined by four other headliners, including one-time member of Roni Size’s Reprazent, DJ Suv, who brings his organic sounds into the mix. —LILY MOAYERI

Glen Matlock
@ ALEX’S BAR
Sid Vicious might have been a good stunt double and looked more the part of a surly punk rocker, but Glen Matlock did more of the musical heavy lifting as bassist of The Sex Pistols. After coming up with much of the Pistols’ music, he went on to write some good songs in Rich Kids, his power-pop band with Midge Ure. He’s continued with other variously engaging projects, including The Spectres, The Philistines and the local all-star group The International Swingers, and has had stints with Iggy Pop, The Damned and even The Faces. Matlock’s latest release, Good to Go, ranges from energetic pub rock and lightweight rockabilly affectations to credible power pop and competent blues rock that’s unfortunately marred by a profusion of lyrical clichés that keep the songs from ever really meaning it, man. —FALLING JAMES

Betty Who
@ THE FONDA THEATRE
Rarely has an artist been so perfectly named. "Betty Who" is an appropriate moniker for the Australian synth-pop artist, not because she’s an anonymous figure in the modern, brutal pop world but because she seems to have been spending the first few years of her career discovering herself, working out what she wants her signature sound to be and, of course, growing up. Hence, her last EP was called Betty, Pt. 1 and her new album is called Betty, despite the fact that they’re preceded by two albums and two EPs for RCA Records. She’s an indie artist now, going it alone, and she’s at the beginning of a new chapter. Loote opens, and Betty Who also plays Saturday, June 15. —BRETT CALLWOOD
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**Sports Team**

**BAROOTH**

**Six-piece super-English indie rock band Sports Team are an interesting outfit. Led by Alex Rice, the 12-legged beast met at Cambridge University and it looks like they’ve held onto their rowing culture, based on the fashion choices. Regardless, the music is playful and witty — self-effacing and mildly caustic in that gloriously British way. They sing about what they know, with lyrics about (in their words), “English Summers, hosepipe bans, overgrown hedgerows and frayed tempers.” There’s a hint of Weezer about their knowing “wink-wink” nerd-out vibe, as well as the super-catchy, so-uncool-they’re-cool tunes, and that will stand them in good stead as they hit the U.S.** —BRETT CALLWOOD

**Beach Bunny**

**EL CID**

**Chicago’s Beach Bunny is less a band and more the stage name of singer/songwriter Lili Trifilio. Sure, she’s flanked by Matt Henkel (guitar) and Jon Alvarado (drums), but Beach Bunny is her baby, a vehicle for her “sadgirl” alt-pop tunes. It’s a personal project too, as she writes about sexism in the music scene, her brother’s battle with cancer and general struggles. The songs are huge too — lo-fi indie gems that appear deceptively low-key at first before building and generally exploding into melodic awesomeness. Musical journal entries such as “Prom Queen” and “Boys” will shine at an intimate venue like El Cid. Ariel View also play.** —BRETT CALLWOOD

**Dead Meadow**

**THE ECHO**

**Dead Meadow have always been a band that are as pulverizing as they are psychedelic, and on their latest album, *The Nothing They Need*, they continue to trip out, but they vary the dynamics with more mellow and hazily languid songs. There are still plenty of heavy stoner rockers with bluesy, boxy riffs such as “Nobody Home” and the wah-wah guitar frenzy of the six-minute-plus “Keep Your Head.” “I’m So Glad” is a driving, rootsy ride on the rails in which guitarist Jason Simons’ vocals are disguised nicely with fuzzy effects. “This Shaky Hand Is Not Mine” is another heavy song, but it stumbles along at stubbornly slow pace, with Simons’s sleepy, druggy vocals contrasted by his savage lunes up and down the guitar neck.** —FALLING JAMES

**Summer Cannibals**

**THE SATELLITE**

**“I can see through you/I can see through them/Go play your false anthems of empowerment,” Jessica Boudreaux sneers on “False Anthem,” from Summer Cannibals’ upcoming album, *Can’t Tell Me No*. “Hate who they are/You say you hate what they do/but you love all the things/That they promise you.” She’s just as defiant on the album’s title track, repeating “Can’t tell me no” like it’s a mantra during the straight-ahead punk-rock choruses. But the song also switches into more mysteriously weird post-punk parts that take the song away from typical punk brattiness into something more pleasingly strange. These occasional shifts into indie pop, psychedelia and grunge also made for a similarly engaging combination on the Portland, Oregon, group’s 2016 record *Full of It.*” —FALLING JAMES

**Cancerslug**

**WHISKY A GO GO**

**Since 1999, Cancerslug has been the horror punk project of Alex Story, who has more recently been seen fronting Doyle of the Misfits’ solo band. That makes complete sense — Cancerslug are clearly disciples of the Misfits, right down to Story sharing vocal similarities with Danzig. Live, he did Misfits classics proud while fronting Doyle. But this night at the Whisky is all about his day gig, and if recent video “Sassy For Satan” is anything to go by, they haven’t been slouching around. Knowing and funny, while also crunching and heavy, it’s a killer song and proof that Story is an excellent singer, songwriter and performer in his own right. The Mother Vines, Mr. E and the Filthy Devils, Delphic Sibyl, Gypsy Priest and The Sobers also play.** —BRETT CALLWOOD
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   - Position requires a Bachelor's degree in accounting and at least two years of experience in accounting.
   - Apply online at accountant.com

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