The Dr. Maya Angelou High School Mural Festival highlighted social justice and deep community roots

by jordan riefe
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A rooftop Gypsy party to kick off summer, the unveiling of Dolores Huerta Plaza, a celebration for toys of everyone’s favorite monster, and more to do and see in L.A. this week.

**FEATURE...11**
Dr. Maya Angelou Community High School’s recent dedication of more than two dozen murals strengthen its roots to South Central and help redefine the neighborhood’s reputation to outsiders. **BY JORDAN RIEFE.**

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**MUSIC...21**
Satanic doo-wop duo Twin Temple are deadly serious in their subversiveness. **BY KATHERINE TURMAN.**
GO LA

FRI 6/21

ART
Design Block Party
L.A. Design Festival is an annual citywide pageant of creative maker culture, with its HQ at ROW DTLA's streets, suites and storefronts for four days. There will be exhibitions, talks, workshops and demos, shopping and installation experiences, and off-site tours and events across the city. At ROW DTLA itself, highlights include speakers like journalist and walkability advocate Alissa Walker, KCRW's DNA producer Avishay Artsy and host Frances Anderton, award-winning architect Elena Manferdini, artist Jackie Amezcua, artist and architect Peter Zellner, and literally dozens of other local design universe luminaries. Also of note, the curated group show of California design all-stars, 'INTRO/LA' and of course Friday night's Design Block Party featuring special group and outdoor exhibitions, dublab, dancers and dessert. ROW DTLA, 777 Alameda St., downtown; INTRO/LA: Thu-Sun., June 20-23, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; free. Block Party: Fri., June 21, 6-10 p.m.; $20. ladesignfestival.org.

SAT 6/22

ART
Under the Big Blue Roof
Once a church but you could say still a sacred space, Blue Roof Studios is an artist studio complex with 10 studios abundant and architecturally intriguing public spaces for workshops, cooking and exhibitions, which from to time they put to good use. So it is at this afternoon's free summer solstice Arts Festival, which somehow fits several group art shows, a slate of music sessions and performance art pieces, hands-on ceramics and mural painting, screenings, and food into just five hours. Highlights include the group show about appetites and afflictions, "Let Me Eat Cake," West African drumming, toy theater from Wild Art Group, outdoor sculpture, video art presented by Los Angeles Nomadic Division, chalk drawing, and modern dance. Good thing it's a big roof. Blue Roof Studios, 7329 S. Broadway Ave., Florence; Sat., June 22, noon-5 p.m.; free. blueroofstudios.org. —SHANA NY DAMBROT

CULTURE
Celebrate the Solstice
You'll be sure to want to stay in one place, irrationally enough, when you ascend to the sainted pleasures on-high of tonight's Rooftop Gypsy Party. Over one epic night of revelry and revelation, you'll experience the gypsy jazz of Axon Orchestra, the ethnic deep house of Lito, various dancers, copious draughts of wine and beer, and of course the favorite food of Gypsies everywhere: crêpes! It's Summer Solstice — the longest day of the year — so celebrate the Sun as it passes over all the warmth and enjoyment this party at the top of the world has to offer. Héritage Fine Wines, 467 N. Canon Drive, Beverly Hills; Fri., June 21, 6 p.m.; $10-20. (310) 888-8042, eventbrite.com/e/rooftop-party-gypsy-night-tickets-62098306707. —DAVID COTNER

SUN 6/23

ART
Abstract Tropical
For painter Carolyn Castaño, the idea of weaving disparate threads together is more than a visual strategy, it is also a complex and nuanced historical commentary. By paring down and recombining elements culled from European and American hard edge abstraction, indigenous Latin American textiles, pre- and post-colonial historical commentary. By paring down and recombining elements culled from European and American hard edge abstraction, indigenous border-blurring botanical biomes, Castaño achieves a perspective that is ambiguously meta, and also quite lovely. Her patterns and images unfurl and intertwine, overlap and surround one another, while her textures vibrate with a vulnerable variegation, fluttering like flags of a parallel nation. The Lair Gallery, inside Fred Segal, 8500 Sunset Blvd., West Hollywood; Sun., June 23, 3-5 p.m.; free. thelairgallery@gmail.com, facebook.com/thelairgallery. —SHANA NY DAMBROT

DANCE
Conjoined Ballet
Although perhaps best known for the topless swimsuit and championing androgynous fashion, Rudi Gernreich spent a decade as a dancer, dance teacher and costume designer with L.A.'s legendary Lester Horton Dance Theater. Horton's inclusive company welcomed Alvin Alley (who later left for New York, but that's another story) and gay men like Gernreich, and where he met Horton's muse Bella Lewitzky. Despite sounding a bit like the "begats" part of the book of Genesis, Gernreich's time as dancer cemented his concept of freedom of movement in fashion and also forged his friendship with Lewitzky that decades later led to multiple collaborations, the most famous of which was the "Duotard," a stretchy, bright red costume inhabited by two dancers for Lewitzky's Inscape. That duotard as well as that iconic swimsuit are part of a current exhibit exploring the Gernreich fashion legacy and in a special performance, Luminario Ballet performs Lewitzky's Inscape with Gernreich's costumes and dancers, coached by John Pennington, a respected Lewitzky alumn. The 3 p.m. show is a shortened, family friendly version, free with museum admission. The longer evening show is ticketed. Skirball Cultural Center, 2701 N. Sepulveda Blvd., Brentwood; Sun., June 23, 3 & 6 p.m.; $15. skirball.org/calendar/2019-06-23tid=4. —ANN HACKINS

FILM
Everyone's Favorite Monster
The original 1954 Godzilla is one of the mothers of horror movies, a tale of a mythical creature set in post-WWII nuclear Japan. What was a cult film has now become the longest running franchise in cinema history — 33 movies. Peekaboo Gallery and Gallery Nucleus co-present this tribute to the fire-breathing, building-crushing and tail-swerving monster with Vinyl Conflict: The World of Godzilla Toys. One of the world's largest displays of Godzilla merchandise will include sofubi (soft vinyl) toys and memorabilia by makers Bullmark, M1-Go!, Marmit, Bandai and Marusan, as well as the collection of late film editor Mark Livolsi (The Jungle Book, Wedding Crashers, The Blind Side and The Devil Wears Prada). The organizers will project clips of various Godzilla versions, in addition to vintage Japanese commercials from the 1960-80s, while Yo Gabba Gabba!'s DJ Lance Rock spins retro Japanese pop. If that's not enough, you can snap Insta-worthy photos with a roaming, costumed character and sip kaiju (monster)-themed drinks at the bar. Gallery Nucleus, 210 E. Main St., Alhambra; Sat., June 22, 7-11 p.m.; $10. Sun., June 23, noon-8 p.m.; $5. (626) 458-7477, gallerynucleus.com. —JIRAN BABAYAN
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Breaking Genre Barriers

Elliott Sharp is a longtime composer and guitarist in the avant-garde music scene in New York City who has always sought to dismantle the barriers between jazz, No Wave, classical and experimental music with a cerebral, improvisational mindset. He applies that same open-ended approach to Irrational Music, his new memoir on Terra Nova Press. Among other things, Sharp “dodges fake cowboys’ real bullets by the side of a highway near Colby, Kansas; is called on the carpet by a prickly, pompadoured Morton Feldman (‘Improvisation … I don’t buy it!’); [and] segues from Zen tea to single malt with an elfin John Cage.” Book Soup, 8818 Sunset Blvd., West Hollywood; Tue., June 25, 7 p.m.; free. (310) 659-3110, booksoup.com. —FALLING JAMES

Serious Reflections

L.A. is a spooky town, and not just because of all the serial killers, crazy cults and goths who inhabit it. Everyone’s got a story about some strange encounter, creepy experience or dangerous situation, and that’s just in the mortal world. Add paranormal activity and our city’s many haunted locales, and it’s a recipe for a riveting story time. Macabre Mondays at Chloe’s Speakeasy inside Golden Road Brewery invites guests to share murderous tales, true crime-related yarns and other frightful stories — both of the personal nature and of the overheard variety. Taking place the last Monday of every month, this gathering is exactly what the name implies — a haunted locales, and it’s a recipe for a riveting story.

Wet and Wild Fun

As seen on America’s Got Talent, The Human Fountains are exactly what the name implies — a group of guys who use their mouths and bodies to emulate water fountains. Sounds simple and sort of questionable as entertainment, but trust us, it’s not. The fellows (best friends from Denver who made a splash on AGT season 13) create true waterfalls of wonder, with choreographed spitting — yes, spitting — routines that are as chuckle-worthy as they are challenging. They consider themselves a comedy group, but they are much more than that, and H2O is only one of the ingredients. Sure, watching the group share experimental liquids and bodily fluids is funny, but the clever presentations (just watch them have “breakfast”) is what makes this wet and wild show something special, and a perfect offering for the Hollywood Fringe Festival which continues now through June 30. This is the second night of their five night engagement with the fest. The Actor’s Company, 916 N. Formosa, Fairfax; Tue.-Wed., June 25-26, 8:30 p.m., Thu., June 27, 9 p.m., Fri., June 28, 3:15 p.m., Sat., June 29, 12:45 p.m.; $15. humanfountains.com/upcoming-shows. —LINA LECARO

THU 6/27

FOOD&DRINK/ART

A Feast for the Eyes and the Stomach

The one-night-only dining trend may be taking over restaurants, but Brandon Hurley and Olivia Alvarez are doing more than just pairing food with beverages. Following last year’s pop-up in August, Composite will combine a curated menu, drinks and art exhibit all-in-one experience. The group show features paintings and installations by Andrew Davis, Olympia Altimir Galvez, Jared Yamahata, Natalie Wong, Kenny Malone, Steven Yu, Lloyd Thompson and Hurley, whose recent “In Bloom” works feature paintings of spray-paint cans with flowers. Sean Benedict will be mixing ‘90s-themed concoctions with names like “Thin Mint” and “Ten Dollar Sunglasses,” while L.A.-born Alvarez, who’s worked at kitchens at The Culver Hotel, Los Angeles Athletic Center and Skylight Gardens, will create one-of-kind dishes, including pork belly tacos and coconut mango popsicles. START Los Angeles, 2270 Venice Blvd., Harvard Heights; Thu.-Sat., June 27-29, 7-11 p.m.; facebook.com/compositeLA. —SIRAN BABAYAN

Spoken Word

Making Sense of a Contradictory World

L.A. Press founder Linda Ravenswood celebrates and confronts the ever-evolving and bittersweet contradictions of life in Southern California with “Gen X Summer,” in which the poet is joined by fellow spoken-word artists Peggy Dobreer, Chelsea Rector, Emily Joyce, Andrew Wetmore, Koe San, Bernadette McComish and others. “In times where the landscape of Los Angeles has changed so much, opportunities have shifted, things are much more congested, with a graphic sense of desperation — and, for some people, a real sense of hopelessness and degeneration — how do we negotiate our big dreams for our town and for each other?” Ravenswood says to the Weekly about the group reading. Beyond Baroque Literary Arts Center, 681 N. Venice Blvd., Venice; Thur., June 27, 8 p.m.; $10. (310) 822-3006, beyondbaroque.org. —FALLING JAMES
ART AROUND THE WAY

Dr. Maya Angelou High School Mural Festival highlighted social justice and deep community roots

BY JORDAN RIEFE

While large-scale murals and a proliferation of new high profile street art can often be a harbinger of gentrification, that is emphatically not the case when it comes to Dr. Maya Angelou Community High School at East 53 Street and Towne Avenue in South Central Los Angeles. There, 30 artists gathered last month to beautify the campus with over two dozen murals thematically linked to the school and the deep roots of the community around it.

"You know how South Central is known to be a bad neighborhood, but if we show our true colors, South Central can be a good place," says high school senior Noe Vargas, who turned out to interview some of the artists for his senior project. "This place can be known to be very creative."

It was not the usual empty plaza after-school scenario at the campus during the paint-in, but rather a buzzing scene with artists and students working together and, inch by inch, walls coming to life. In the eye of the hurricane was Rabi, half of the street art duo Cyrcle, this time teaming up with prolific French artist JR, who was absent, though his Inside Out truck was on site.

Inside the truck is a mobile photo studio that produces large-scale portraits of sitters through a slot on the outside of the vehicle. The east wall of the quad is wallpapered with these images of students' faces as a backdrop to Rabi's chromatic image of a silhouetted girl with Angelou's caged bird centering the composition.

"'[I Know] Why the Caged Bird Sings. ' It's impossible not to associate Maya Angelou with that poem," Rabi explains. "I didn't want to make something super literal and obvious and bang-bang-bang-bang you over the head with cliché Maya Angelou stuff. The bird silhouette, that was as literal as I wanted to go."

Around the corner, Shepard Fairey works from a 1969 photo of Angelou by photographer Chester Higgins Jr., applying his signature graphic style with roughly 45 gallons of acrylic paint and 1,200 cans of aerosol to complete the 160-foot long mural.

L.A. duo the Perez brothers capture in their mural the spirit of low-riding and skate culture popular in the area, and Miami-based Spanish artist Axel Void takes inspiration from a family barbecue he photographed only a few blocks away, with "We are all immigrants" written across the image.

L.A. artist Zuco went with a small-world theme, depicting the planet ringed by people of all colors and cultures holding hands. Nearby, "They tried to bury us. They didn't realize we were seeds," reads a wall by Tochtlita that shows women and children growing with the grass and flowers out of the ground. Artist Huge spells the poet's name in his trademark balloon-like letters, while Portuguese artist Diogo Machado, known as Add Fuel, spells out a bilingual call for unity: "Somos uno. We are one."

"More than anything, we're frustrated," says Andi Xoch of the East Side women's art collective Ni Santas, from the mantra that translates to "Not sluts, not saints, just women." Their mural features images of music legends old and new, like Nipsey Hussle, Billie Holiday and Roy Ayers, over an image of the intersection of Central and Slauson, along the city's Historic Jazz Corridor.

"Trump in office has pushed people to not only mourn, but I see it as a funeral," continues Xoch. "Every time there's a tragedy in a family, it only brings people together and makes people hold onto each other and support each other as much as we can. So, I feel like we're feeling that in our community. We're seeing that in our collective, we're seeing injustice, we're seeing inequality — not just with women, but with brown women. We're being targeted. It's not only frustrating, but it's also pushing us to do more."

Principal Hugo Carlos grew up in the community and has witnessed firsthand the transition from a mostly African-American area, a

PHOTO BY JORDAN RIEFE

PHOTO BY WISEKNAVE

PHOTO BY JORDAN RIEFE

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Principal Hugo Carlos grew up in the community and has witnessed firsthand the transition from a mostly African-American area, a
few decades earlier, to a predominantly Latinx neighborhood. "I've seen the evolution of it," he says, noting, "we're a community that invests dollars and time on projects to inspire our kids." He did just that when he reached out to Warren Brand of Branded Arts, which partners with clients who want to beautify their buildings.

Branded Arts made headlines with their work with LAUSD, initiated in 2016 at Robert F. Kennedy Community School in Koreatown, especially when some in the neighborhood objected to artist Beau Stanton’s depiction of actor Ava Gardner with a sunbeam halo, which Korean residents felt resembled the Rising Sun flag of Imperial Japan, colonizers of Korea from 1910 to 1945. A peaceful resolution involving the artist, who never intended offense, was reworking the image in consultation with the neighborhood.

"We had a steering committee for the past year and a half that consisted of all these different groups that vetted the imagery," says Branded Arts president Warren Brand, describing a process for the Dr. Maya Angelou School that includes community members, LAUSD officials and faculty, as well as the company’s curatorial team. "We also had town hall meetings and student committee meetings for the past four months every couple of weeks."

The input from the students is what artist Rob Hill enjoyed the most as they helped lay down his abstract black and red (school colors), triangle design over the rooftop basketball court. "Their enthusiasm, their work ethic, kids showing up every day on time to come help, and prove their hand in the whole project," says Hill, still buzzing from the experience. "Art is a universal thing. It speaks to everyone and it comes from everyone, from all shapes, different colors, sizes. I feel like art is the basis for many things. It definitely needs to be exposed more and exposed to the kids a lot more. It’s inspiration for them."

For three days, the campus lit up with opening weekend symposiums featuring speakers from LACMA, NASA’s Jet Propulsion Lab, Darryl "DMC" McDaniels, who talked about his upbringing in New York City, and folks from Self Help Graphics, a Boyle Heights community art center and meeting place for Ni Santas. But no doubt the student body was a bit more amped by the spoken word poetry slam followed by a performance by Grammy Award-winning R&B artist Miguel, who talked about meditation and mindfulness before playing an acoustic set.

Until the 1970s, California had one of the nation’s leading arts programs. But a state law passed that year eliminated arts requirements from elementary teacher training, and eight years later Proposition 13 resulted in deep cuts in school art and music programs. Since then, 2002’s No Child Left Behind Act put so much emphasis on reading and math tests that subjects like art were scaled back. At its height in 2007, LAUSD invested $32 million in arts education, with another $46 million coming from state grants. During the recession, funding plummeted to $19 million but by 2015 the arts budget bounced back slightly, to $26.5 million.

"Launch Intention," by L.A. artist Griffin Loop, is a large-scale steel paper airplane, one of the few sculptures, on which students wrote their “life intentions.” Ideally, it will inspire future generations and serve as a touchstone for those who one day return to reflect.

"It shows everybody's perspective on what they see," says high school junior Johana Vargas, sitting by JR’s Inside Out truck. "An artist just took a picture of someone and pasted it up there. Everything's art, I guess. It helps us be more creative in the future and have an open mind."

Taking pictures and talking to teachers for a class assignment, Lyzxxy Quincanilla agrees, "It’s actually beautiful. You express yourself in a lot of different ways." And Maria Cruz, a senior, thinks art helps students explore greater options. "It’s really great. It’s making our school more beautiful and vital. I like new things."

Celine Figueroa takes pride in the school’s new look. "Usually we just have solid colors. So now we have more colors and it makes our school unique. I think a mural has a meaning."

Principal Carlos is delighted the initiative he took three years ago has finally come to a successful culmination. "It was inspirational. And these are things we wanted for most of the murals, something related to Dr. Angelou and social justice, and also touching on the history of the community. It’s a positive feeling. When you walk, kids are proud of the work and also because some of the artists are local artists and I think it speaks to them."

For more information: brandedarts.com/portfolio_page/mayaangelou
FOOD business management. For classes on restaurant development and did their homework. Kathy went to UCLA success. But they didn’t just go in blind, they attribute family and the ability to select a great chance with Kathie at branching out. They’re fussy about what they eat and a passion for northern Italian cuisine.

When they started, only good business acumen which disappeared, I have no idea why. But little calamari soup with Parmesan and garlic

don’t want a lot of fat. There was also a fabulous order it. They’re fussy about what they eat and a passion for northern Italian cuisine.

L.A. Weekly. “One of my favorites is radicchio

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delle, plans to fill the menu with a fresh breath of Toscana’s sister restaurant S.Y. Kitchen in Santa Ynez, who aside from being famous for his lamb shank and wild mushroom pappar-...
TOSCANA TURNS 30

Italian eatery celebrates by reviving the original menu items that got the celebrity hot spot and local favorite started

BY MICHÈLE STUEVEN

It was 30 years ago this week that Mike and Kathie Gordon quietly opened the celebrity hotspot Toscana at the urging of their dear friend and legendary trumpeter Doc Severinson. It was the first of a soon-to-be boom of Italian restaurants along San Vicente Boulevard and quickly became a paparazzi magnet.

It’s where Tom Cruise took Nicole Kidman on one of their first dates and has been the Sunday dinner tradition for the Affleck family over the years. More recently, composer and music producer David Foster needed a place for a last-minute respite for friends Andrea Bocelli, Josh Groban, Barbara Streisand and others following a long day of rehearsal for the Grammys and brought them to Toscana to relax and share a Tuscan supper.

Still going strong, the Gordons will be on the floor greeting guests and giving a month-long nod in to the original 1989 menu that started the story. The kitchen will offer classic dishes like salsicce all’uccelletto; ravioli radicchio; scampi e fagioli; pollo al mattone; costolette d’agnello alla trevisana; and fiorentina ala bra- scampi e fagioli; pollo al mattone; costolette d’agnello alla trevisana; and fiorentina ala bra- scampi e fagioli; pollo al mattone; costolette d’agnello alla trevisana; and fiorentina ala braccio, among others that were featured at the opening of the restaurant. They’ve also installed a new executive chef, Luca Crestanelli of Toscana’s sister restaurant S.Y. Kitchen in Santa Ynez, who aside from being famous for the Grammys and brought them to Toscana to relax and share a Tuscan supper.

“Because Mike and I are not in the kitchen or on the floor, we can’t recall why some original items floated off the menu,” Kathie tells L.A. Weekly. “One of my favorites is radicchio ravioli. It’s so delicious, but it’s made with a lot of cream and people in Brentwood just don’t order it. They’re fussy about what they eat and don’t want a lot of fat. There was also a fabulous little calamari soup with Parmesan and garlic which disappeared, I have no idea why. But we’re bringing them back for the anniversary.”

The couple — who have been married 32 years — had no restaurant experience at all when they started, only good business acumen and a passion for northern Italian cuisine. Mike’s day job was being a CPA and he took a chance with Kathie at branching out. They attribute family and the ability to select a great team both in the kitchen and the front to their success. But they didn’t just go blind, they did their homework. Kathy went to UCLA for classes on restaurant development and business management.

Toscana, 11633 San Vicente Blvd., Brentwood, (310) 820-2448, toscanabrentwood.com. Mon.-Thu., 11:30 a.m.-3 p.m. & 5:30-10:30 p.m.; Fri.-Sat., 11:30 a.m.-3 p.m. & 5:30-11 p.m.; Sun., 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m. & 5-10 p.m.
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**CULTURE**

**EASTSIDE CULTURAL CAPITOL**

Since its humble origins in 1970, Plaza de la Raza has been about the people and representing what makes L.A. unique.

BY SHANA NY'S DAMBROT

Plaza de la Raza translates to Place of the People, but in a true sense, it is also by the people, and for the people too. Its multidisciplinary, all-ages performing and visual arts coursework and public programs occupy a historic headquarters in a renovated 1912 boathouse augmented with original construction in Lincoln Park (once known as Eastlake Park), on Mission Avenue northeast of downtown. Their instructions in visual art, dance, music and theater — offered at all levels, from novice to advanced "conservatory level" — make up the only such school serving the neighborhoods of L.A.'s Eastside.

But of course, like society itself, the importance of Plaza de la Raza is about more than the arts; it is a powerful symbol of living history and community autonomy as it also supports civic activism and advocacy on behalf of the neighborhood — especially its kids. Their original and hosted events and status as a natural gathering place for both celebration and demonstration touch on issues from immigration policy, voting and civil rights to gentrification, literature and food. Plaza's array of exuberant heritage traditions have come to exemplify the best, most vibrant parts of L.A.'s pluralistic uniqueness as a city.

Plaza's poetic origin story has the cinematic ring of apocrypha. In 1970, when, as their materials recount, "With little more than a decayed boathouse and a purpose in their lives, Margo Albert, an actress, and Frank Lopez, a trade union activist..." had an almost divine spark of inspiration.

The old boathouse in Lincoln Park was built in 1912, but later fell on hard times and was slated for demolition (indeed, the entire park faced closure) in 1969. But Lopez, Albert and a small but passionate group of local residents had a better idea, and by spring of 1970 the city had agreed in principal to their plan to establish Plaza de la Raza. The same year, they incorporated — and here's where it reads like a screenplay again — the nonprofit registration fee of $36 was "raised by Ann Lopez, wife of union activist Frank Lopez...by knitting a poncho and selling it for $36."

Since then a lot of other magic has been at work at the site — but it's all true — and from almost the moment the city of Los Angeles officially handed Plaza de la Raza an initial 25-year lease, classes began, even in the park "under the trees" while the school's new buildings were being constructed. A powerful and telling moment came early in the Plaza story, when in 1971 David Alfaro Siqueiros portrayed murdered journalist Ruben Salazar in the piece "Heroic Voice" and donated it to the Plaza, setting a clarion tone for the support of ambitious important art as well as for fearless political engagement, the value of protest and community closeness, and the central role of arts and journalism in a healthy democracy.

Their 1987 Frida Kahlo exhibition will always hold a place of distinction as being the first solo exhibition of Kahlo's work in Los Angeles, and for welcoming more than 30,000 visitors to experience it. In addition to their school and original public programs, Plaza hosts eclectic engaged events like July's Concha-Con, loads of outdoor concerts, and of course, La Bulla and El Velorio — Antonio Pelayo's annual art and mayhem spectaculars. L.A. Weekly is honored to help present this weekend's Lucha Libre-themed art and music festival, and we are already looking forward El Velorio's Dia de los Muertos exhibition in October.

But first, La Bulla. A major part of why Antonio always does these cultural events at the Plaza is just simply what a well-appointed, uniquely styled outdoor location it is. It is a true oasis in the urban sprawl and worth noting that part of Plaza's contribution to the area beyond its own programs has been the rejuvenation of the park itself as a place to want to be, and a natural place to throw a multidimensional party. But for Pelayo, another factor as been that by having the events at the Plaza, it affords everyone the ability to contribute to its economy. For example, proceeds from the sale, as well as from ticket and bar takes, will directly benefit the school.

On Saturday, June 22 from 6 p.m.-2 a.m., La Bulla will offer a kaleidoscope of entertainment, including Lucha Libre headliners Tinieblas Jr. and Alushe, live music from El Conjunto Nueva Ola, Sergio Arau and Los Mex, DJ ChrisRox, Decalifornia, DJ Oskr, and emcee Ozzy Ramirez. There's also a car club show featuring Uniques and curated by Rafa Pelayo, a fashion show by Wardrobe Divas and, of course, food.

But just to make sure every part of every sense gets tickled, a major highlight of the night is an art show curated by Pelayo and the artist Vyal Reyes, in which over 100 artists were each given identical wood panels carved in the shape of a luchador mask, and asked to do literally whatever they want. The range of responses is breathtaking in its eclecticism, ranging from the whimsical to the perfectionist, conceptual, abstract, political, feminist, romantic, cartoonish, and edgy. All are for sale, and as mentioned, about half that money goes directly to the Plaza. Just a few of the artists taking part are Jorge Gutierrez, Lalo, Vyal, Man One, Reyna Espinoza, Salomon Huerta, and actor David Arquette, who is, oddly enough, a pretty good painter.

Plaza de la Raza, 3540 N. Mission Road, Lincoln Heights; plazadelaraza.org.
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TV

ROASTING THE DEAD

Historical Roasts has enjoyed a meteoric rise from a local comic book store to Netflix comedy series.

BY NICK WALKER

Taking the classic structure of an old school Comedy Central-style roast, Netflix's new show Historical Roasts with Jeff Ross places its crosshairs on long-dead historical figures played by some of your favorite comedians and actors, making for one of the most original programs the streaming service has ever aired. And while it tackles plenty of historical moments, there's one history you don't get while binging: the history of the show itself. For an idea that's brought out the likes of comedians like Gilbert Gottfried and Bob Saget, its beginnings are much more humble — this one came to life in the back of a local comic book store.

Creators Ryan Pigg and Eddie Furth met several years ago, when they were both interns at NerdMelt theater — a comedy cellar of sorts in the back of Los Angeles' Meltdown Comics. The theater was created in association with the popular podcast The Nerdist, and “it was this place comedians could put something up — not only go up and try new material out but also try new shows,” Pigg tells L.A. Weekly. “The formats were very different.”

Indeed, the NerdMelt stage can be credited for the creation of several shows. The two most popular included: The Meltdown with Jonah Ray and Kumail Nanjiani on Wednesday nights, and a popular Comedy Central series lasting three or four seasons, and Dan Harmon's HarmonTown.

Finding themselves in a place brimming with alternative content, Furth and Pigg's own creative minds got to work. Says Furth, “I looked at Ryan and I asked, 'What's missing from this schedule?'”

Pigg's answer? A roast. Unfortunately, this simple idea had its roadblocks. “There was no one to roast that we could book, that would draw an audience,” Pigg admits. Luckily, this challenge sparked genius. If they couldn't bring in living people to roast that would draw a crowd, why not turn their focus on the dead? And thus, Historical Roasts was born.

“It's a Dean Martin, celebrity-style, Friars Club, Comedy Central roast — but instead of Bruce Willis, it's Abe Lincoln,” Furth explains. The two interns quickly got to work, and NerdMelt gave them an opportunity to try it out at the Nerdist Improv School next door.

A year later, the duo began pitching the show to networks. About a year after that, OBB Pictures and Michael Ratner took the show on, and shortly thereafter, Jeff Ross joined the party. “When you're doing a roast show, you want Jeff Ross,” Pigg says.

The show was quickly picked up by Netflix, and so, Furth and Pigg found themselves completing a process that could only be described as the Hollywood Dream: starting from small beginnings in a comedy cellar, and working their way up to streaming worldwide on one of the biggest platforms of all time.

So, what's next for the roasters? Fictional Roasts, for one, taking on characters from Star Wars, Back to the Future and Harry Potter. The duo are also focused on expanding the live show that started it all. It’s been moved from Meltdown to the much larger Comedy Store.

“This is sort of a whole rebirth for us,” says Furth. “We're hoping the Netflix show draws a whole new audience to the live show. We're four and a half years and 70 roasts in, and we still have historical figures we want to roast. We would also love to take the show on the road and tour the country, take it to Canada, take it to the U.K., to Australia, anywhere that would have us. Obviously season 2 is the big thing on our minds, so we will see.”

Historical Roasts with Jeff Ross is on Netflix now. The Historical Roasts live show is at The Comedy Store, 8433 Sunset Blvd., West Hollywood; Wednesdays, July 17 and August 14 at 10:30 p.m. Also at Dynasty Typewriter, Tue., August 6 at 8 p.m. Fictional Roasts will be at Dynasty Typewriter, 2511 Wilsire Blvd., on July 9 at 8 p.m. More info at thecomedystore.com and dynastytypewriter.com.
When you're doing a roast show, you want Jeff and shortly thereafter, Jeff Ross joined the party. About a year later, OBB Pictures, the Nerdist Improv School next door. The two interns quickly got to work, and Nerdist took the Nerdist Club, Comedy Central roast— but instead of was born.

Historical Roasts
living people to roast that would draw a crowd, challenge sparked genius. If they couldn't bring in alternative content, Furth and Pigg's own creation. Historical Roasts
With Jeff Ross is on Netflix Historical Roasts

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ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

Dead to Me

— netflix.com
L
ike, you know, Satan’s not my daddy,” quips Twin Temple front goddess Alexandra James, deadly serious, but delivered with Cali-girl energy: TT wrote the new song “Satan’s a Woman” to address an inequity that pisses her off: “It’s sort of annoying, because why do we assume that every god is automatically a man? I didn’t get into this to worship yet another patriarchal daddy. I just felt like it was very exclusionary.”

By “into this,” she means Satanism, which is one of the driving visual and lyrical principals of the band — and life — she shares with husband/guitarist Zachary James. “I wrote the song basically from the perspective of a woman being like, ‘Hey, let’s look at this a different way. Can we stop always talking about Satan as a man?’”

“Satanism is like a Pied Piper for the outsiders,” she says. As such, the fans flocking to see the talented doo-wop band perform favorites “Lucifer, My Love” and “The Devil Didn’t Make Me Do It” are faithful to the dark duo, who will soon open an arena show for another creepy crew who made it big: Ghost. Twin Temple are not dissimilar to Ghost’s layered heavy pop inflections or image vs. music discreteness. Thanks to the specter of TT’s black-clad gothic style, onstage blood-drinking and hex-casting antics, though, the uninitiated may presume the lineup would be of a heavier musical bent.

“One of our friends brought his friend, who’s super death metal and metal, to one of our shows. She saw our whole Satanic altar set up before we walked on stage and was like, ‘Oh, hell yeah! I haven’t been one of the really heavy, brutal shows in a long time.’ And we come on sounding like a ‘60s girl group,” says Alexandra with a laugh. “They’re like, ‘wow, WHAT?’ I think people have like a definite cognitive dissonance between what they expect us to sound like [and] what we actually sound like.”

While the couple don’t like to dwell on past musical projects, the pair are no strangers to the L.A. scene, playing both separately and together in more glittery — both musically and visually — lineups, earning rave reviews, TV appearances and shows at SXSW. “We could go through baby photos if you want,” laughs Alexandra. “I mean, I started my first band when I moved to L.A. [from the Bay Area] when I was 17, so it’s over a decade that I’ve been playing music. I think this is my seventh band or something like that.”

It’s the first one to gain major purchase, however, thanks in part to the re-release of Twin Temple Bring You Their Signature Sound… Satanic Doo-Wop via metal label Rise Above Records. Yep, that title pretty much says it all. While reviews of previous projects have likened Alexandra to Tina Turner, her powerful, timeless voice is well-suited to the horns-augmented classic doo-wop stylings that Twin Temple purvey.

“We love classic ‘50s and ‘60s rock and roll,” Alexandra says, with Zach adding, “there are a few bands in the area who do a real kind of throwback, period-correct [doo-wop] thing. But we’re so off-kilter with our interpretation. I don’t think they want anything to do with us.”

Initially there was no target audience or major goal; TT was for the pleasure its creators, though clearly, they’d be perfect for David Lynch films like Blue Velvet or Wild at Heart, or any Tarantino project. They did, however, figure that anyone who was into vintage music or stylings would dig the band. Says Zach: “And people who like punk and metal…”

“…And who are down with Satan,” adds Alexandra. “And/or anyone who marches to the beat of their own drum, and free thinkers; people who don’t really pay much mind to traditionalism.” There haven’t been many bands of the this ilk; the only one that comes to mind is the ‘80s-‘90s L.A. lineup Radio Werewolf, started by Nikolas Schreck, then joined by his wife, nee Zeena LaVey, daughter of Church of Satan founder Anton Szandor LaVey.

“We don’t view Satan as an actual person,” they clarify. “We view it as a symbol for freedom and subverting societal norms and individualism.” As for people who call the project a gimmick: “No. This is our lives and this is our spirituality and this is who we are. A gimmick means that you’re kind of adopting something with a very superficial knowledge of it,” says, Alexandra noting that she leans toward being a “green witch,” essentially working with the elements to harness the energy of the natural sources. “We’ve both sort of gravitated towards the occult and magic since we were little kids; long before we were really creating music, we were dabbling with exploring that side of ourselves.”

While Twin Temple songs are clever and rife with gallows humor, lyrics are at once open-ended and serious about individual freedoms, especially when it comes to “punishing women for being sexual beings, policing our bodies and our sexual lives.” Along with lyrics like “I just don’t understand the patriarchy,” and “I’m sorry women are necessary / To the survival of humanity,” Twin Temple put their money where their blood-dripping mouths are.

The James — perhaps a Lux Interior and Poison Ivy for a new generation? — are determined to act against oppression in a way that is also concrete and actionable, and recently did a fundraiser that benefited Planned Parenthood and the Yellowhammer Fund, with other charitable projects on tap. Twin Temple also offer fans 18 and older the opportunity to “Join the Coven” (a Patreon site) for $6.66 a month to receive “secret writings on Satanism … how to practice Magick…” along with the chance to “commune with fellow likeminded heretics.” Lyrics about Lucifer including “You’re a much better kisser than Jesus,” and a twisted love song about a fateful demise, “Let’s Hang Together,” display a melding of music and belief set that’s serious and sublime, but oftentimes delivered with a wink.

Any blowback — and there has been some, including from far right Info Wars radio host Alex Jones — doesn’t bother the couple. “The project, which Alexandra refers to as their “magickal child” — “gives our personal beings an opportunity to express ourselves in a way that we weren’t able to in the past,” explains Zachary. “It enables different parts to come together. I think that’s what people are sensing,” he says. “Twin Temple also gives them an opportunity to express something they haven’t been able to before; it’s bringing together those binaries.”

Twin Temple play a sold-out show at the Roxy on Sunday, July 23.
MUSIC

GO HEAR

FRI 6/21

Y&T
@ WHISKY A GO GO

Having formed in Hayward up in Alameda County in 1974, the band with the full name of Yesterday and Today put out the self-titled debut and Struck Down sophomore album in the '70s, but it was in the big hair days of the '80s that saw them really thrive. Albums such as Earthshaker, Black Tiger and Mean Streak saw their profile rise, and then In Rock We Trust put them on the Billboard 200. They took a break in 1991 but were back by '95, ready to have another go in the brutal backdrop of the '90s. The core members have kept the band alive with some impressive releases and a killer live show. The Hard Way, 3TB and As Is also play. —BRETT CALLWOOD

Team Dresch
@ THE BOOTLEG THEATER

Although Team Dresch have reunited occasionally over the past 15 years since their heyday in the 1990s, it's still a welcome jolt to hear "Your Hands in My Pockets," their new single and first new song in nearly two decades. With Donna Dresch's surging power chords and bassist Jody Bleyle's yearning vocals, "Your Hands" is a winsome romantic anthem crowned by guitarist Kaia Wilson's harmonies and driven hard by drummer Marcó Martínez's relentless punk energy. Formed in Olympia, Washington, in 1993, Team Dresch have long been a queercore supergroup, with Martinez (Calamity Jane, The Vegas Beat), Wilson (The Butches, Adick-did), Bleyle (Lovebut, Hazel, Family Outing, Amy Ray) and Dresch (Phranc, Loïs, Some Velvet Sidewalk, Screaming Trees) involved in numerous side projects and riot-grrrl bands. —FALLING JAME

SAT 6/22

Lucas Abela
@ COAXIAL ARTS FOUNDATION

Remember that time you licked a window-pane when you were a kid? What might have seemed the strangest stimulus since you sucked on a penny, is for Australian artist Lucas Abela that electrifying sensation that is both a way of life and a dance with death. For the better part of 25 years, Abela has traveled the world — sometimes as Justice Yeldham and the Dynamic Ribbon Device, sometimes as Peeled Hearts Paste, sometimes as DJ Smallcock — playing jagged amplified shards of glass with his mouth and face, coming down fast like the greatest avant-garde beat-boxer never born. Captivating, terrifying and transformational, so powerful is his unique and spectacular sonic art that experiencing it will truly change your life — with just the right amount of power, for exactly the right amount of time, in precisely the right way. —DAVID COTNER

Cardi B — BET Experience
@ STAPLES CENTER

The BET Experience is back and better than ever! Every year, all the hip-hop elites and anyone in the entertainment industry conjoin in Los Angeles for the BET Awards. In addition, concerts and shows take place all day, every day from Thursday, June 20 through Sunday, June 23. This year, the Staples Center show on Saturday sees Cardi B headlining, one of the hottest artists in the rap game, period. In addition to her breakout single "Bodak Yellow," fans can see Cardi performing her recent cuts: "Please Me" with Bruno Mars, "Press," "Money," and more. Migos, Lil Yachty, Lil Baby, City Girls and Trippie Redd will be supporting. —SHIRLEY JU

SUN 6/23

Tashaki Miyaki, Taylor Locke, Jake Troth
@ GOLD Diggers

An excellent triple bill at Gold Diggers, this one. Local band Tashaki Miyaki formed in 2011 and very quickly found themselves getting some serious attention from publications across the pond such as The Guardian, NME and Mojo — the Brits know their stuff. Clearly influenced by the Laurel Canyon and later paisley underground scenes, The Dream album came out in 2017 and we're hungry for more. Meanwhile, Taylor Locke will be known to many in this region as the co-founder and guitarist of Rooney. The title of his debut Time Stands Still was inspired by Kim Fowley, so make of that what you will. Finally, North Carolina man Jake Troth specializes in lyrics that aim straight for the heart. —BRETT CALLWOOD

MON 6/24

Brass Box
@ THE ECHO

I can’t wait till we’re buried in the ground," singer-bassist Ammo Bankoff confides dreamily against a backdrop of Neil Popkin’s shimmering guitar on “Waves,” from Brass Box’s new album, The Cathedrals. The lovely pop idyll is morbidly enchanting, much like the other passages on the record. Such throbbing tracks as “Bats” and “Ivy Skies” marry post-punk darkness with a swirling maelstrom of shoegazer noise. “Surrender” is a romantic entreaty emerging from goth shadows as Bankoff’s beguiling vocals burn through the foggy haze of Popkin’s guitar. Popkin and fellow guitarist Matt Bennett are former members of War Tapes, while drummer Pablo Amador has also played with Popkin in Rituals. As Bankoff’s lulling vocals are serenely into “the blue mirrors of fantasy” on “Laxency,” Brass Box stir up an ominously beautiful backdrop of enchanting sounds. —FALLING JAME

The Slackers
@ LA SANTA

An intimate, free show from infamous skankers The Slackers at this bar/diner in Santa Ana! Count us in! The Slackers formed in New York in ’91, but such is the popularity of their brand of ska-punk in these parts, perhaps particularly in Orange County, they’ve always had a rabid fanbase here. We’re due some new material, mind you. The self-titled 14th (by our count) studio album came out in 2016 and, while the live shows are always riotous affairs, their fresh work rarely disappoints. Frontman Vic Ruggiero has a number of other projects on the go, and that’s always great too, but it’s time for more Slackers. In the meantime, have a meal and watch them in Santa Ana. —BRETT CALLWOOD

TUE 6/25

Dido
@ THE WILTERN

At some point, English singer and songwrit- er Dido because almost as synonymous with "uncool" as Enya. And we can’t really put out finger on the reason. After all, she was a part of the awesome ’90s British trip-hop scene, thanks in part to her brother Rollo being a member of Faithless. Her song "Thank You" was of course sampled by Eminem on “Stan.” But more important than her connections, her own albums are really beautiful. The debut No Angel, featuring the aforementioned “Thank You,” and the follow-up Life For Rent, are both packed with heartfelt, electro-roots tunes and, while the two records didn’t get the same attention, this year’s Still on My Mind proves that she’s back on top of her game. Dido is super-cool, as far as we’re concerned. —BRETT CALLWOOD

Tacocat
@ BOOTLEG THEATER

In spite of this era’s sometimes dark and divis- ive political climate, Tacocat’s “New World,” from their latest album, This Mess Is a Place, is a surprisingly uplifting tune. “I woke up today and everything was different/Didn’t have to feel bad for a change,” Emily Nokes declares over Eric Randall’s rousing and rousing, driving bass lines. Nokes envisions a sunny planet with “No ugly buildings in my eyes/No paperwork, no jerks, no parking tickets.” Tacocat contrast other seemingly breezy pop-punk songs like “Rose-Colored Sky” with less starry-eyed but still engagingly poppy tracks such as “The Joke of Life” and “The Problem.” Tacocat’s tour mates are the local garage-rocking combo The Paranoys, whose upcoming single on Suicide Squeeze Records, “Trade Our Sins,” blends girl-group vocals engagingly with a suffusion of carny
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Cassandra Violet
@ THE LOVE SONG
Cassandra Violet is a local singer who wraps her sleekly melodic vocals around a series of ebulliently poppy settings. “Pretty,” from 2017’s EP4, is an aptly titled pop valentine that’s driven by a percussive backing track and Violet’s nimbly rhythmic delivery. She’s positively charming when she pursues an “Invisible Man,” doing everything she can to snag an elusive lover’s attention. “X the Line” is a steamier dance-pop track in which Violet demonstrates that she can still draw attention and retain her melodic poise in a harder-rocking format. “Drinking Song” is a contrasting slice of pure-pop soul that’s brightened by Violet’s persuasively seductive vocals. Unlike other pop singers, Violet is as equally at ease with languid singer-songwriter folk-pop as she is with more upbeat dance music. — FALLING JAMES

Watkins Family Hour
@ LARGO AT THE CORONET
It’s time for another edition of The Watkins Family Hour, the unpredictable gathering that mixes bluegrass heartache, folk-rock longing and classic-rock covers by unexpected musical collaborators paired with comedic guest stars. Although the monthly soiree at Largo often features such stellar visitors as Fiona Apple and Benmont Tench (Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers), the show is carried by Sara and Sean Watkins of Nickel Creek. The sibling hosts have their own deep catalogs of songs — both solo and together — and their melodic voices are twined with Sean’s artfully adept acoustic-guitar embellishments and Sara’s expressive fiddling. No two editions of The Watkins Family Hour are ever the same, and it’s difficult to guess about which celebrity pals might drop by this month, but the Watkins’ songs alone are enough to make this a compelling draw. — FALLING JAMES

Judas Priest
@ MICROSOFT THEATER
To many, Judas Priest will always be the leather-clad lunks who helped make metal as popular as it would become in the 80s thanks to songs like “Breaking the Law,” “Hell Bent For Leather” and “Living After Midnight.” But it’s always worth remembering that when frontman Rob Halford came out of the closet in 1998, he broke down boundaries for those within the ultra-masculine metal world. For those of us who adore metal, Halford will always be a figure worthy of massive praise. The man has a voice unlike anyone else’s (even if Tim “Ripper” Owens gave it a good go when he replaced Halford for a short stint), and last year’s Firepower album proves that the band haven’t lost their touch yet. — BRETT CALLWOOD
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MAIN EVENT TINIEBLAS JR & ALUSHE  PLUS SANTINO BROS ACADEMY WRESTLERS

FASHION SHOW BY WARDROBE DIVAS  BOOK RELEASE AND READING BY JOHN MARTINEZ  SOLO SHOW BY FOTOGRAFICANTE IN THEATERS GALLERY

CAR SHOW BY UNIQUES CAR CLUB  PHOTO BOOTH & FACE PAINTING

ART EXHIBIT CURATED BY ANTONIO PELAYO & VYAL REYES

ABRAHAM ROMERO  AL VARELA  ALBERT ACOSTA  ALBERT DIAZ  ALBERT RODRIGUEZ  ALEJANDRO CHORNE  ALEJANDRO PELAYO  ALEX GARCIA  ALEX MORALES  ALEX NIÑOITU  ALFIE NUMERIC  ANNIE MICKLE ANTHONY OCHOA  ANTONIO ARAGON  ARTURO RIVAS  BOTTOM OF THE PYRAMID  BREEZE  BRIAN CALLE  BRYAN AVILA  CESAR MARTINEZ  CHANDY MENDEZ  CHEPSY  CHRISTINA RAMOS  CLAUDIA PALOMARES  CURT BOYER  DAVID ARQUETTE  DUSTIN CURTIS BOYER  THE MILLIONS  EDDIE VALENCIA  EL SID  ENRIQUE GODINA  ERIK GUZMAN  ESPERALDA EZZ  FERNANDO MARTINEZ  FRANCISCO FRANKO  FREYLAN MANOLOZA  GABBY ZAPATA  GABE GONZALEZ  GEORGE YEPES  HOPE GARCIA  ISAAC PELAYO  IVAN GODINEZ  JACQUELINE TORRES  JANELLY BARRAZAN  JAVIER ANTONIO FLORES  JAVIER HERRERA  JAY EYE  JENNIFER CAVALI

JESSE HERNANDEZ  JESSE PALACIOS  JOAQUIN FLORES  JOE TATE  JOHNNY ROMAN  JONI NUNEZ  JORGE R. GUTIERREZ  JORGE VASQUEZ  JOSE ALVAREZ  JOSE ALVIZAR  JOSE SANCHEZ  JOSE-FABIAN VALDEZ  JOSH ECHERVIRA  JOSHUA RENTERIA  JULIAN GONZALEZ  KALM ONE  KÖKER  KRISTA PARADA  KRISTYNE NEGRETTE  LA MORENA  LALO  LANDO  LAUREN MARISCAL  LAURIE PALOMINO  LEDO ALVAN  LOUIE GAVEZ  LOURDES AMEZCUA  LUIS ISLAS  LUIS ENRIQUEZ  MALDITA BRUJA  MANUEL VALENZUELA  MAN ONE  MANNY TORRES  MARICARMEN RAMIREZ  MARÍA ALBERTO  MÁRKA 27  MAYAN GIL  MICHAEL ALATORRE  MIDTZ  MIRANDA VILLANUEVA  MRBBABY  NACHO SALINAS  NERI RIVAS  NERON ONE  NEYBLAC  OCTAVIO RANGEL  OSCAR MAGALLANES  OSCAR MORALES  OSCAR PELAYO  OSCAR RAMIREZ  PABLO DAMAS  PACO MONTES  PEPE NUEVAYORK  PEPE VAZQUEZ  RAFA WIZROK ONE  REYNA ESPINOZA  RIC DIAZ  RICARDO FLORES  RICARDO GONZALEZ  RICK ROREDO  ROB GUTIERRREZ  ROBERT GARCIA  ROSA LOPEZ  ROXANNE KANG  SALOMON HUERTA  SAM FLORES  SERGIO ARAU  SERGIO RAMOS  SÉNIA PEREIRA  STEPHANIE ORTIZ  STEVEN HERNANDEZ  STEVEN LOPEZ  SUZEE Q  THE CREATION OF ADAM  TONY ELIZARRARAS  TRISHA BLAZE  VARALBOA  VYAL  WEECHIO