CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE

HOW HOLOGRAM TECHNOLOGY IS CHANGING THE MUSIC INDUSTRY, FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE

BY BRETT CALLWOOD
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Celebrating improv pioneer Del Close, a smattering of poetry readings, a bondage ball, and more to do and see in L.A. this week.

FEATURE
Increasingly realistic hologram technology has allowed the music industry to bring back the dead to “perform”; L.A. Weekly explores how we arrived in this brave, new world and what it means for the music industry's future. BY BRETT CALLWOOD.

EAT & DRINK
African songstress Angélique Kidjo brought a taste of Benin to Hollywood to raise money for a good cause. BY MICHELE STUEVEN.

ARTS
Contact High at the Annenberg takes you behind the scenes of hip-hop photography. BY WYATT CLOSS.

FILM
NATHANIEL BELL explores the movies opening this week, including the latest entry into the Marvel Cinematic Universe, Spider-Man: Far from Home.

CULTURE
Elvira Zamora’s fashion melds lucha libre culture and empowering style. BY LINA LECARO.

ADVERTISING
CLASSIFIED...26
REAL ESTATE...26
EDUCATION/EMPLOYMENT...27
BULLETIN BOARD...27

ON THE COVER: DIO by P. G. Brunelli
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FUTURE DATES: AUGUST 10
Father of Improv

The Del Close Marathon honors the guy widely regarded as the “father of improv” in a way that’s as audacious as the pioneer himself: 55 hours of longform improv. Close basically made improvisational comedy what it is today, presenting and promoting it in Chicago for over 30 years, and extending into N.Y. and L.A., which influenced the likes of Tina Fey, Mike Myers, John Belushi and so many more. SNL and the Upright Citizens Brigade might not exist as we know them without this forward-thinking funnyman, so UCB — which founded the festival in ’99 after Del died — is honoring him in a very special way. The marathon, which takes place in New York over three days at multiple venues, marks its first time in L.A., this year, and it’s sure to be a nonstop celebration of laughter, imagination and creativity — which is what makes improv our most unique form of theater entertainment.

UCB Sunset, 5419 W. Sunset Blvd., East Hollywood & UCB Franklin 5919 Franklin Ave., Hollywood Hills; Fri., June 28-Sun., June 30; check website for full schedule and prices. delclosemarathon.com. —LINA LECARO

Remembering a Fearless Poet

“Put your ear down close to your soul and listen hard,” Anne Sexton once wrote. The poet listened closely to her own soul throughout her short life and fearlessly examined such bold themes as sex, menstruation, adultery and her own mental illness before she killed herself in 1974. At Sexton to Sexton, curator Brendan Constantine’s tribute to the late writer, notable literary figures such Susan Hayden and Milo Martin are curiously billed alongside musicians Lisa Finnie, Azalia Snail, Dan West and King Missile’s John S. Hall, with proceeds partially going to the building’s renovated architecture up close. Union Station (North Patio), N. 800 Alameda, downtown; Sat., June 28, 3-6 p.m.; free: unionstationla.com. —SHANA NYS DAMBROT

Culturing 45 Years of Friendship

Celebrating her 45th birthday this year (She doesn’t look a day over 30!) Hello Kitty remains an enduring pop culture icon, her bold, simple lines and ultra-girly vibe embodying whimsical fun, collectability and, as her creators Sanrio have always touted, “friendship and kindness.” The bowed feline might have come from Japan but her appeal is universal, inspiring entertainment, fashion and especially art. L.A. fans will never forget the mega art show that marked her 40th. Five years later, the beloved cat is back, inspiring many of the same revered artists in even more ways, as well as a new slew of imaginative creators. The Hello Kitty ’45th Anniversary Group Show is an exhibition featuring 100 artists re-interpreting the character and her friends via different mediums — paint, sculpture, digital art and more. Anthony Ausgang, Bei Badgirl, Buff Monster, D’Face, Mark Mothersbaugh, Mayuka Yamamoto, Oliver Hibert, Tara McPherson, Olivia De Berardinis, ONCH, Paul Frank and RISK are just a small sampling of the artists. Select prints will be available, and Miss K herself will be there in the plush. Corey Helford Gallery, 571 S. Anderson St., Boyle Heights; free. (310) 287-2340, CoreyHelfordGallery.com. —SHANA NYS DAMBROT

The Art of Possible Futures

If you’ve ever found yourself wondering what in the world artists are thinking, The Vision Board Group Show is a chance to find out. Curated by Elizabeth Valdez, an artist herself and a believer in the power of creative visualization, this pageant of mixed media experimentation brings together dozens of artists — the majority of whom do not usually work in or exhibit anything like collage — to storyboard the future in anyway they see fit. The eclectic and surprising results range from specific political justice fantasies to meditations, sustainability virtue-signaling, abstract optimism, escapism, sex, paradise, angst and a return to nature. Kopeikin Gallery, 2766 S. La Cienega, Mid-City; opening reception: Sat., June 29, 6-9 p.m.; on view Tue.-Sat., 11 a.m.-5 p.m., through Aug. 24; free. (310) 559-0800; kopeikingallery.com. —SHANA NYS DAMBROT
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PHO LEGEND
A Tearful Hello
To help close Highways Performance Space’s two-month 30th anniversary festival, artist and activist Michael Kearns, a hero as the first openly HIV-positive actor in Hollywood (The Waltons, Cheers, Body Double), assembles a diverse cast to deliver the stories in wet hankies — Wanda-Lee Evans, Dean Howell, Dale Raoul, Dave Trudell, Tim Miller, Leo Garcia and Ron Dennis. Besides intimacies, produced in Highways’ first season, in this retrospective yet forward-looking performance-based and multimedia presentations, the work on display varies from the meditative and lovely to the edgy and political, thematic and surreal, and fittingly, the experimental. MiM Gallery, 654 W. Washington Blvd., University Park; Mon., July 1-Wed., July 31, 7-9 p.m.; free. post-losangeles.org. —SHANA NYS DAMBROT

TUE 7/2

Comedy
Laugh in Secret
Speakeasy culture goes for the gut with tonight’s edition of Inside Scoop. Deep in a secret room behind an unassuming, ordinary ice cream shoppe lies a secret: the monthly comedic endeavor of hosts Matt Duckett, Katie Green and Salma Zaky, all discerning purveyors of the hot amongst the cool. Within those hidden walls stand some of the finest comedians working in speak-easies today, some of whom have appeared everywhere from Conan to Late Night. The best thing about comedy in a secret room? If the comedians are really bad, you never have to say you were there to watch them bomb. Carmela Ice Cream, 7920 W. Third St., Beverly Grove; Tue., July 2, 8 p.m.; free (with one-item minimum). (323) 944-0232, facebook.com/events/2253127364767602 /carmelaicecream.com. —DAVID COTNER

WED 7/3

CULTURE/NIGHTLIFE
Freedom of Fetish
Leave your modesty at the door and prepare to bare at a pre-Fourth of July bash where flying your fetish flag is everything. The 14th Annual Bondage Ball is one of L.A.’s biggest and most decadent dance parties for the S&M and sex-positive goth and industrial set. Some of the city’s wildest promoters are coming together for the sxxtravaganza this year too, including LA Fashion & Fet Ball, BAtcave, Soft Leather, Dark Circus, Dungeon, Perversion, Helter Skelter, and Fetish Apocalypse. Plus, there’ll be three fashion shows featuring the ultimate in lusty latex by recent L.A. Weekly cover subject Venus Prototype and her Bizarre Fetish Couture, along with Demask DTLA and Dollskin Designs. DJs from aforementioned clubs will dominate the dance floor and eye candy will include go-go gals and guys, dungeon equipment enhanced “play zones,” vampy visuals, photo booth, stage shows and more. Belasco Theater, 1050 S. Hill St., downtown; Wed., July 3, 9:30 p.m.-2:30 a.m.; $22.50 (21+). bondageball.com. —LINA LECARO

THU 7/4

INDEPENDENCE DAY
Be Above the Fireworks
Are you irrationally terrified of fireworks raining down upon you? Do you fantasize about watching the world below you burn colorfully as you gaze down from a godlike vantage point? Then this is the perfect thing for you to do on Independence Day, you big weirdo! You can watch all the various fireworks displays — legal and illegal, let’s face it — that happen across Los Angeles from 1,000 feet up at the 4th of July in the Sky. Your star-spangled ticket also includes two free drinks, an all-you-can-eat BBQ buffet, and a free ride down the thrilling glass of the Skyslide. OUE Skyspace, 633 W. 5th St., Ste. #840, downtown Los Angeles; Thu., July 4, 7 p.m.; $75. (213) 894-9000, facebook.com/events/344870076226680 /oue-skyspace.com —DAVID COTNER

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Sonia Romero, detail of MacArthur Park, Urban Oasis at Westlake/MacArthur Park Station
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How hologram technology is changing the music industry, for better or for worse

BY BRETT CALLWOOD

Since launching the Black Mirror television series in 2011, British creator Charlie Brooker has made it his business to shine a light on the more troubling aspects of technology. Technophobes shudder and technophiles snicker as Brooker takes the “just because you can doesn’t mean you should” approach to the modern fable. Everything from the overuse of cellphones to our reliance on social media has been effectively lampooned. The most recent season landed on Netflix in June — just three episodes that continue down that “be careful when plugging in” theme. But it’s the third episode that’s of most interest here.

Miley Cyrus might not be known for her biting, satirical wit, but she’s fantastic here as Ashley O, a troubled pop singer kept medicated by her unscrupulous manager/aunt. SPOILER ALERT: When Ashley O stops taking her meds and wants to write deeper, darker songs from the heart, her aunt has her deliberately induced into a coma. A hologram takes her place on stage — something management can control without question, raking in the cash and not having to rely on an unpredictable artist. At an unveiling, the fans cheer the hologram like it’s the real thing, because it looks and sounds like it is. “Photo-realistic, and fully controllable right down to instant costume changes,” Susan Pourfar, as the aunt, says.

As with everything Brooker does with Black Mirror, this “Rachel, Jack and Ashley Too” episode takes a “worst case scenario approach.” It’s a twisted look at what could happen rather than a statement that this shit will happen. But ignoring the coma subplot, what we as viewers can take from it is a healthy dose of suspicion. How should we react to a hologram on stage, taking the place of an artist living or otherwise? No matter how good the “show” is, are we comfortable getting up and cheering a projection?

It’s a relevant topic because it’s happening now. Fear not, no artists are lying in a hospital bed in a deliberately induced coma while their career is kept alive. But deceased musicians are being projected onto a stage in hologram form, and it’s gathering steam as an accepted form of entertainment. It pretty much all started when attendees at Coachella 2012 were surprised by a Tupac appearance, and more so when he started rapping with Snoop. AV Concepts was the company behind that trick and, at the time, MTV writer Gil Kaufmann told the Washington Post that, “...if Paul McCartney announced a tour with a virtual John Lennon, Beatles fans would likely see that as being in bad taste and not show up.”

Maybe Kaufmann was right, but maybe not. Because now, tours such as these are becoming commonplace. The Dio Returns tour sees a hologram of metal icon Ronnie James Dio sing with a live band largely composed of musicians that Dio actually played with. Reports have been largely positive.
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though naysayers maintain that it’s creepy.

The company behind it is Eyellusion. "The company was founded in 2015 and officially launched in 2016," says CEO Jeff Pezzuti. "The idea came from me being a massive music geek for my entire life, seeing hundreds and hundreds of shows, and after the Tupac hologram in 2012, I just assumed that somebody was going to do what I was thinking about doing, and it never happened. I gave it a couple of years, and when I still didn’t see the movement that I was expecting, I decided to take the bull by the horns and make moves. We launched our first version of Ronnie James Dio in 2016. We did another version of it in 2017 and toured Europe. This was the first time with live bands, doing anything at this level. Now, with the brand new tour, it's not only about the hologram, it’s about the overall experience.”

Pezzuti views it as the ultimate tribute to Dio, and now the company has a second show on the road offering Frank Zappa fans a chance to see their idol on stage, again or for the first time. As with Dio, Zappa’s hologram appears alongside musicians who actually performed with the man. But that raises questions too; by putting a hologram on a stage with the dead singer’s live bandmates, are the producers increasing the validity of the show as a live performance, or further pulling the wool over the audience’s eyes?

Eyellusion developer Chad Finnerty is responsible for making the Dio and Zappa holograms appear as lifelike as possible. "Basically, the whole process is a lot of computer animation and a lot of hours,” Finnerty says. "We build a digital likeness of the person we're trying to put on stage. Just like you'd have a sculptor working with clay, we have a digital sculptor working with Ronnie. We had to get approval from Wendy [Dio, Ronnie's widow], style his hair digitally — many hours went into making his hair right. We had all the skin details that we had to paint in the computer using programs like Photoshop. A lot of hours went into that. Every bit of stubble on his face. There's a lot of detail, and that's only the beginning. Then we have to animate the whole set.”

Pezzuti stresses that the company’s intentions are good, and his points aren’t without validity. There are, he says, plenty of young Dio fans who never had the opportunity to see the great man perform. And sadly, they never will, but this show is the closest possible thing. And is it really much different to a Dio tribute band with a singer who dresses like the man? Nobody thinks they're actually seeing the real Dio, so isn't this just a great tribute?

“I love to get people's impressions of what they think they're gonna see and what they see,” Pezzuti says. “It's always the same thing — a lot of kids who never got a chance to see Ronnie but heard about him through their parents. Or the other direction — they saw Ronnie in the '80s but hadn't seen him since. People who want to go back in time as well.

You have all these stories, and at the end we've had many standing ovations. I hate the idea that it's just the hologram; what makes us special is the show creation. It's how it flows. The set list, the live vocals, the visuals, Ronnie, all those elements come into play and most that have seen the show understand that and are super stoked about seeing it. We as a company have spent a lot of time and money to create this.”

Eyellusion isn’t the only company doing this. The Hologram USA theater in Hollywood hosts regular shows that include the likes of Billie Holiday. BASE Hologram, meanwhile, is responsible for hologram tours featuring Roy Orbison, Buddy Holly and opera singer Maria Callas. “BASE Hologram was officially launched in April of last year, following a two year research and development period of the business plan,” says CEO Brian Becker. “Our company has been involved in many forms and fashions of producing and presenting live entertainment around the world for 30 years, in terms of various careers, whether it was SFX Entertainment or Clear Channel, or any other stuff that we’ve done. So we’ve always been excited when there are new opportunities to create something exciting — a new art form if you will, and one that has certain appeal to consumers and also can become a good, robust business opportunity. After two years of research, we decided that this was an area that had great opportunity and could deliver really spectacular shows and educational opportunities.”

We put it to Becker that hologram technology has the potential to alter the description of what live entertainment means, and he correctly points out that technology has always changed entertainment, often (if not always) for the better.

"The idea that technology is going to change live entertainment for the negative is not something that I think will prove valid,"
Becker says, “I think now that you have streaming, and the artists and record companies have found a way to make streaming work, and now you have more artists releasing music on that platform — these are all changes that are going on, and they’re all positive changes. All this does is offer a new art form. Most of the criticism is often from people who have not yet experienced a show. We’re spending 2 million to 3 million dollars on a production, like any major concert tour or theatrical tour that would go around. There are constantly movies, TV, theater where people are dressing like, simulating, walking like, singing like, people that are no longer with us and I think you have to understand that the holographic image is part of a bigger production. It’s certainly spectacular and distinctive, and we spend a tremendous amount of effort to make it look like the actual artist. But it’s just a different way of doing the same thing. It offers something unique and exciting.”

Eyellusion agrees, with Pezzuti stressing that “raising the dead” was never in their mindset.

“The creepy factor I think is just people thinking about somebody coming back who has deceased,” agrees Finnerty. “That’s gonna happen in film, in television — whenever that’s done, there are always going to be people who are naysayers on that. What we’re going for is a tribute to that great artist. Giving new generations the opportunity to experience that. It comes from love.”

Wendy Dio admits that, when Pezzuti initially approached her with the idea for the Ronnie hologram, she was apprehensive. Who wouldn’t be? A businessman from the tech space was talking about putting her deceased husband back on stage — that meeting must have been odd. But, she says, after listening to him and realizing that she was being offered some control over the show, she was in.

“Technology has come so far in the past two years, and I’m very happy with this one,” Wendy Dio says. “It’s a hologram of Ronnie, his live tracks isolated and taken from different shows, and then it’s on stage with Ronnie’s Dio band that played with him for the last 17 years. It’s really a celebration of Ronnie’s life, keeping his music alive, and we’re really happy with this one. Obviously some people are very negative about it, but it’s the way of the future. I think that, if you want to say you don’t like it, that’s fine but don’t criticize something you haven’t seen.

The fans are loving it.”

Let’s face it, she would know. Wendy Dio also swears that her husband would have been into the idea, as he was fascinated by holograms when he was alive.

“If anyone saw Ronnie’s Sacred Heart show in ’86, you can see that we tried to make a hologram then when Ronnie came out with his head in a crystal ball,” she says. “Ronnie was always intrigued with holograms so I know he’d give his blessing. We’d go to Disneyland and he’d look at the holograms that Walt Disney had made and go, ‘We’ve gotta do this.’ It’s the way of technology. A lot of the bands, the innovators, are passing away. This is their legacy.”

The way of the future. The inevitable path that the technology is leading us down. That’s the opinion of the people who are involved in putting these shows together. And at the end of the day, the ticket-buying public will decide if this is something that they want to see, and continue seeing. Ultimately, would you rather see a hologram of a deceased favorite artist, or a new and living artist? Where do you want your money to go? And if these shows really are just a tribute to a great musician, is there any harm in that? Maybe not, but there is cause for concern. When we mention the Black Mirror episode to Eyellusion, they laugh at the storyline before Finnerty surprises us by mentioning that some living artists are considering the model.

“That’s a fact,” adds Pezzuti. “We have multiple artists who want to do something along that approach — not being induced into a coma but the hologram. If they’ve been touring for 30,35 years, it’s exhausting. Sleep on the bus all day, get to the gig, wait around, do the gig, wait for the crew to finish loading everything out, get to the next gig — it becomes monotonous. Do that for 30 to 35 years, throw in airports and hotels, it can exhaust you mentally and physically. So yeah, I can see why bands would want that approach for the future. I think a lot of them are waiting on the sidewalks because they want to make sure the fans accept it.

If you’re trying to change an industry that’s been stuck in the mud for quite a while, also trying to change the live music space, I can honestly say it’s one of if not the hardest thing I’ve ever done in my life. Everyone waits and waits, and once the dominoes start to fall, everyone jumps in. We’re building for that.”

Hold the hell on — this changes things slightly. Because what they’re suggesting here is that, rather than just a tribute to a dead musician, the hologram can be used as a replacement for a living musician to effectively give them a rest. Or, arguably more bizarrely, to keep them out of countries they don’t feel safe in.

“It’s the only approach for legacy music, but also for artists to tour countries they don’t want to go to,” Pezzuti says. “A lot of artists feel uncomfortable in South America, Russia, Eastern Europe, Western Europe, Dubai — there are fans all over the world, but depending on who the artist is, sometimes they would love to do the show there but they don’t feel safe. There are different ways to look at it.”

It’s doubtful that Pezzuti said anything there that will calm the fears of those with deep concerns about hologram technology and where it could lead. A tribute to a musician we can no longer see — that’s one thing. A direct alternative to touring — that changes the game completely and it’s deeply problematic. At what point does the concept of actually seeing the living, breathing artist on stage become as archaic as vinyl records?

Of course, we’re some way off that. The technology isn’t cheap, and your average dive bar won’t be hosting hologram nights of unsigned punk bands. But consider this. When people stopped paying for recorded music and the model changed so that musicians made the bulk of their income from touring, people behind the scenes were immediately brainstorming ways to make as much money from said touring as possible.

If hologram technology allows a musician to “perform” in multiple cities and counties on the same night, how long before the financial benefits are exploited to the full? We’re already seeing living musicians such as Mariah Carey and Psy in hologram form at Hologram USA.

“I have heard from different managers they wish they only had a hologram to manage,” Pezzuti says. “A lot easier, when it comes to catering and the nonsense they have to deal with.”

Dio Returns takes place at 7 p.m. on Friday, June 28 at The Wiltern. Roy Orbison & Buddy Holly: The Rock ‘N Roll Dream Tour hits numerous California cities in September. Go to royandbuddy.com for more info. Black Mirror is streaming now on Netflix.
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ANGÉLIQUE KIDJO TURNS UP THE HEAT

The Beninese songstress offered a taste of home to raise money for her Batonga Foundation

BY MICHELE STUEVEN

Grammy-winning singer Angélique Kidjo brought her musical and culinary talents to Croft Alley at The Standard in Hollywood last week for an intimate dinner and concert to raise funds for her Batonga Foundation.

Dubbed by Time magazine as “Africa’s premiere diva,” Kidjo spent the day in the Standard’s kitchen whipping together a multi-course meal for about 50 guests, including her famous Scotch bonnet hot sauce that is so insanely potent it can only be consumed in microscopic portions.

Using her mother’s recipes from the West African nation of Benin, main dishes included cashew chicken with jasmine rice and vegetarian couscous with tomato sauce, chickpeas, zucchini, cabbage and carrots. Baby lettuces and romaine with Kidjo’s homemade lemon vinaigrette were served on the side.

“I love to cook,” the three-time Grammy winner told L.A. Weekly as guests mingled and sipped icy Tambour lemonade cocktails made with Sodabi palm liquor from Benin and fresh squeezed lemon juice.

“My hot sauce is a little different, you see,” she explained. “They said they know hot sauce, but when they tasted mine back in the kitchen as we were cooking, their heads almost blew off. I puree Scotch bonnet peppers, garlic, onion, salt and olive oil together until your eyes water.”

Dessert was served in the club while the 2016 Amnesty International Ambassador of Conscience belted out four high-energy songs that had everybody dancing through the room.

Calories burned came from seven lactose-free and sugar-free salted caramel cakes that Kidjo baked, as well as a tropical fruit salad made from mango, jackfruit, pineapple, pears, guava, peaches and passion fruit.

The evening raised funds for Kidjo’s Botonga Foundation, which empowers young women and girls in West Africa to discover their limitless, untapped potential and transform it into social and economic power. Auction items included a dinner for six in either New York or Los Angeles prepared by the diva herself, which brought in $4,000.

The organization was founded in 2006 and targets the hardest-to-reach girls with education and skills in a safe space.

“I want to reach out to the worst of the worst in the villages nobody wants to go, where nobody cares,” Kidjo told the crowd. “We want to salvage those girls and give them a purpose in life.”
WHEN WE REMINISCE OVER THEM

Contact High at the Annenberg shows how hip-hop and its photographers changed the world

BY WYATT CLOSS

If it’s possible to find a lyric in hip-hop music that captures the essence of the photography show “Contact High: A Visual History of Hip-Hop” at the Annenberg Space for Photography, it might be these simple lines from Jay-Z and Pharrell’s “Change Clothes”: “You know I stay fresh to death, a boy from the projects...”

Because across its nearly 140 works from 60 photographers, including over 75 original contact sheets, we go from humble beginnings to the worldwide success of hip-hop and many of the characters that have made up its rich, colorful and poignant history.

Yes, there’s the swagger. And for some, that is the lure of the whole show. Thankfully, via its curation, we get a thoughtful examination of what went into the work for which we only saw the end result, be it a magazine cover or record album or press kit.

But even if you don’t immediately recognize Mobb Deep from Goodie Mob, this could just simply be a great portrait photography show. Maybe one day in the future we’ll see some of these should-be legendary images juxtaposed with those of Vivian Maier, James Van Der Zee, Roy DeCarava, Diane Arbus or Richard Avedon for a real study in capturing people in a moment — but that’s another topic.

In fact, it was Avedon who quipped, “All photographs are accurate. None of them is the truth.” As such, it is the humanity of these artists that belies the fame. When you can strip away the bling and “that’s so-and-so,” or perhaps a quick “that was my favorite album,” and take it in as the pure artistry that it is, you’ll see more of the poetry that animates it. There are flashes of the art of the hustle, the range of facial expressions across moments of reflection or an affirmative dare stared into the camera that says “What?” or “Yeah, this is how I’m coming.” One poignant photo of Nipsey Hussle in front of the L.A. County probation offices with his daughter by Jorge Peniche itself seems to capture it all.

Four predominant aspects of portrait photography emerge in this show: the staged, the documented, the accidental and what could be called the “almost never happened.”

The set of images of the female hip hop duo Salt-N-Pepa and their DJ Spinderella, shot by veteran photographer Janette Beckman in 1987, would be a classic example of the staged photo shoot. Slated to be their album cover, we get hip-hop attitude in living technicolor. Set against a simple white backdrop, these three dope queens come to life via outfits created by none other than street fashion provocateur Dapper Dan. It says “fresh to death” all day.

Another set of images that get at the documentation aspect of some of these works would be of 50 Cent at Mister Cartoon’s Tattoo Shop in 2004 in Los Angeles. Between 50’s glare, Mr. Cartoon’s elaborate Chicano style lettering, and the gentle pain involved, his back becomes a canvas of great intensity and wonder in black and white with each needle prick. The photographer, Estevan Oriol (who also had a great show of his photos at the Annenberg’s Photoville exhibit), said “I thought it was an important intimate moment to photograph.” And it’s good that he did.

Viewers bear witness to some splendid accidents as well, like the photo shoot of Tupac by Danny Clinch for Rolling Stone. Clinch used a large format camera; Tupac brought a bunch of clothes and kept changing them which was when Clinch saw all of his tattoos, including Thug Life across his abdomen. Clinch said of the impulse “I don’t think I would have ever asked him to take off his shirt but... I knew that would be a powerful image.”

“That’s why I love contact sheets. It is showing the process, the mistakes,” says Contact High curator Vikki Tobak. Her book of the same name, which came out in 2018, inspired the Annenberg to mount this show. “You see artists with their guard down in contemplation, or you see their mom or their friends.”

And then there are the fully visualized photos that almost didn’t happen. Take the iconic Notorious B.I.G. image shot by Barron Claiborne. It is now regarded as one of the most notable hip-hop photos of all time (and appear on my own DJ slip mats). But the story has it that P. Diddy, who signed Biggie, thought him wearing a crown would look corny and be like Burger King. Claiborne saw it as regal. Thankfully, he was allowed to proceed.

The same was true for the historic 1998 group photo “A Great Day in Hip-Hop,” by legendary Harlem photographer Gordon Parks, which almost didn’t go as intended because the sun was fading quickly. Parks, and the assembled 100+ rappers, across the width of three brownstones, made the cut in time. Missing this seminal capture would have been a tragic lost opportunity.

Noted music journalist Michael Gonzalez referenced a quote from Harry Allen about this work, but one that truly typifies the spirit of the whole show — to wit, “Everybody is going to get together for one picture, and what it says is, I was here... and this is what we did. We changed the world.”

Annenberg Space for Photography, 2000 Avenue of the Stars, Century City; Wed.-Sun., 11 a.m.-6 p.m., through August 18; free. (213) 403-3000, annenbergphotospace.org/exhibits/contact-high.
L.A. Weedly

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THE ROLL UP

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**SPIDER-MAN SWINGS INTO THEATERS**

Marvel releases their first, and comparatively modest, post-*Endgame* movie, plus a twist on Hamlet

BY NATHANIEL BELL

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

**Opening wide**

**Friday, June 28**

Danny Boyle’s *Yesterday* tells the story of an aspiring musician (Himesh Patel) who gets into a car accident and wakes to a world in which the Beatles never existed. Seizing the moment, he plagiarizes his favorite band and subsequently shoots to fame as the world’s greatest singer-songwriter. Deco-rated British screenwriter Richard Curtis concocted this pleasantly wigged-out comedy-fantasy, which goes after rich laughs while retaining a soft, sentimental core.

*Spider-Man: Far from Home* is bound to feel anticlimactic after the culmination of *Avengers: Endgame*, but the show must go on. Shot on a modest budget of $160 million, it brings back Tom Holland as Peter Parker, a teenager with amazing spider-related abilities. This time out, he teams up with Mysterio (Jake Gyllenhaal) to do battle with the Elementals, extradimensional creatures who once ruled an ancient civilization on Earth. It is a direct sequel to *Spider-Man: Homecoming*, and, for those keeping count, the 23rd entry in the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

**Limited/art-house**

**Friday, June 28**

*Blue Note Records: Beyond the Notes* premiered at Tribeca last year and makes its Los Angeles debut at the Laemmle Monica Film Center. Sophie Huber’s documentary dives into the history of one of the most influential record labels in the history of jazz. Miles Davis, Thelonious Monk, John Coltrane, Bud Powell and Art Blakey are just a few legendary names that passed through their doors. Combining archival footage with contemporary recording sessions, the film draws parallels between classic jazz and modern day music movements, particularly hip-hop. *Monaica Film Center*, 1332 2nd St., Santa Monica, Fri., June 28, various showtimes; $9-$12. (310) 478-3836, laemmle.com.

*Remember Ophelia*, the young Danish noblewoman engaged to the mad Prince Hamlet, who advises her to “Get thee to a nunnery!” Anyone paying the slightest attention in English lit will recall that she drowned in a brook. What Claire McCarthy’s reimagining of Shakespeare’s play suggests is… maybe she didn’t. Based on the 2006 novel by Lisa Klein, *Ophelia* features Daisy Ridley in the title role, George MacKay as Hamlet, and Tom Felton as Laertes. Clive Owen sports a Prince Valiant wig as Claudius and Naomi Watts wears an all-white one. The screenplay is by Semi Chellas. *Monica Film Center* (also playing at the Playhouse 7 and NoHo 7), 1332 2nd St., Santa Monica; Fri., July 28, various showtimes; $9-$12. (310) 478-3836, laemmle.com.

*Also opening Friday, June 28:* *Maiden; The Other Story; Three Peaks*
LA CULTURA CON CLOTHING

Local stylist Elvira Zamora talks about her inspirations, including *lucha libre*

**BY LINA LECARO**

A skilled stylist doesn’t just possess a great eye for fashion, it's about how each piece comes together to create a full look, a visual statement about the wearer and their personal references, which often evoke their culture as well as clothing tastes. Peruvian-born and -raised, Elvira Zamora has made this idea her whole career. Living in L.A. since 1991, Zamora grew up surrounded by labels and sewing machines, as her father was a tailor. He exposed and educated his daughter about both the mechanics and the magic of fashion since she could walk and talk.

“It’s been an inspiration my whole life,” Zamora shared as she prepared to present her latest fashion show at Antonio Pelayo’s Mexican wrestling and art-filled La Bulla event at Plaza de la Raza this past Saturday (L.A. Weekly co-sponsored). “For La Bulla, I am designing one-of-a-kind, up-cycled looks for the runway because I would like to be a green designer and limit the use of new materials. I’d rather re-use materials.”

Zamora, who is known as the “Fashion Gangsta” and helms Wardrobe Divas as a stylist and online retail site, explored “the meaning of luchador/a from my point of view and how the *cultura* is an inspiration to anyone fighting their own personal battles,” she explained. “I design looks for fashion shows in my own interpretation of the theme and I like to bring aspects of modern, avant-garde and couture looks to every catwalk.”

When it comes to *lucha* culture, there is plenty to be inspired by too. The vibrant pageantry and thrilling competition of Mexican wrestling dates back to the 1800s, happen occasionally, and Lucha Va Voom continues to pack the Mayan with bouts and burlesque.

Part of the luchador appeal comes, of course, from the grand regalia they wear, which often consists of colorful tights, spandex pants and leotards as well as a menacing *máscara* (mask) embellished with vibrant color and contrast. “Ever since I discovered *lucha*, I loved the mystery of the person behind the mask,” Zamora says. “Where do they come from? Who are they? What kind of message do they want to share with the world? I want to provide the voice of each model through the design and what they are trying to express.”

Zamora hopes to represent strength and freedom through all her looks for women. At La Bulla, her’s consisted of tops, bottoms, capes and the masks themselves. “Masks are like personalities, although we may have similarities, not any two people are exactly alike,” she says. “You can look at similar masks and costumes and each one will have certain details that make them unique.”

Merging costume and ready to wear for the show, Zamora showed iconic *lucha* references, including Blue Demon moments and baby doll dresses with familiar luchador details like fringe, pattern, sequin and rhinestones. She also presented her personal point of view on-*lucha* from the perspective of a minority woman. “I am trying to show fierceness in women in our own way with colors, embellishments, silhouette and even small details like gloves with long sharp stiletto nails,” she said.

Previous fashion shows for Pelayo’s parties (such as her horned headpieces for his Tatuaje event) have reflected the stylist’s sensual aesthetic and empowered themes, a thoughtful approach to fashion and spectacle, and a diverse and inclusive selection of models representing women of all beauty types and backgrounds, including lots of fellow Latinas.

“I love the impression of modern warriors putting on their “war paint” getting ready to battle,” Zamora said of wrestlers (but she could have just as well been talking about models on the runway). “They put on the very best show for their audience all the while leaving their legacy on the ring.”
FRI 6/28

Lisa Crystal Carver
@ HÔTEL FIGUERA
If any one personage in underground culture qualifies for the honorific “fearless,” it is the artist Lisa Crystal Carver. A tireless reporter since the ’80s on the work of outlier artists laboring at the fringes of culture (as well as the artist working deep inside her own psyche), Carver — mostly known as Suckdog — appears tonight in an increasingly scarce public performance. You’ll get a daring dose of her intimately inimitable music, as well as musical sketches that include but are not limited to blasts of noise, improv and burlesque, though not necessarily in that order. Home taping, outsider art, lo-fi, no-fi and performance art — Lisa Carver has done it all, survived it all and ultimately, gives her all right back at you. What you do with it is your business. Also tonight: Dynasty Handbag, Hardcore Tina, Jeff Schneider, Trap Girl. —DAVID COTNER

Lou Doillon
@ LODGE ROOM
Like her half-sister Charlotte Gainsbourg, Lou Doillon might be better known for her celebrity heritage — her mother is actor-singer Jane Birkin, and her father is director Jacques Doillon — and her career as an actor and model. But Lou Doillon has also established a sideline as a credible pop singer, starting with her 2012 debut album, Soliloquy. A tireless reporter since the '80s on the work of outlier artists laboring at the fringes of culture (as well as the artist working deep inside her own psyche), Carver — mostly known as Suckdog — appears tonight in an increasingly scarce public performance. You’ll get a daring dose of her intimately inimitable music, as well as musical sketches that include but are not limited to blasts of noise, improv and burlesque, though not necessarily in that order. Home taping, outsider art, lo-fi, no-fi and performance art — Lisa Carver has done it all, survived it all and ultimately, gives her all right back at you. What you do with it is your business. Also tonight: Dynasty Handbag, Hardcore Tina, Jeff Schneider, Trap Girl. —DAVID COTNER

SUN 6/30

Girl Pusher
@ ALEX’S BAR
This is important and couldn’t be more appropriate right now. Alex’s Bar is hosting a benefit with the $10 you pay at the door going to Planned Parenthood. With state after state doing everything they can to strip away a woman’s right to control her own body, it’s more important than ever that the people help fund an organization which, make no mistake, saves lives. How better to headline said benefit than local cyberspunks Girl Pusher, a band with such powerful anthems in their arsenal as “Where the Fuck Is My Ambulance,” “Runaway” and “Did U Think of Me Last Night.” Also on the bill is post-punks Wild Wings, singer/songwriter Justus Proffit and arty noise quartet Whaja Dew. —BRETT CALLWOOD

MON 7/1

Slum Village
@ THE ROXY
Slum Village, the iconic hip-hop duo from Detroit, is best known for their 2004 standout single “Selfish,” featuring a verse and production from Kanye West himself. The group came in...
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Robert Fiore of DopeTour. “Now there's 10 to 15. … think there were three pot tour companies,” says “When I started my tour company a year ago, I with the busyness of the market. up nearly 300 percent in the last year. That data for cannabis tourism–related information were.

**BY Claire Kaufmann**

**THE ROLL UP PUBLISHES: JULY 4, 2019**

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to fruition in ’96 with three members: rappers Baatin and T3, alongside rapper and producer J Dilla — but now is being fronted by T3 and producer Young RJ. This is the type of music hip-hop heads live for. With meaningful lyrics full of vivid storytelling over smoothed-out beats, audiences can’t help but vibe and tune in. “Tainted” is another timeless record back to the 2000s, off their Trinity (Past, Present and Future) album. —SHIRLEY JU

TUE 7/2

The Struts @ THE WILTHERN

Hard to believe it’s been 10 years since Derby rockers The Struts first emerged, though it wasn’t until 2014 that they unleashed the frankly phenomenal debut album Everybody Wants, with it’s Slade–esque glitter and Queen–like pomp, all with a super-contemporary sheen. The follow-up, last year’s Young & Dangerous, followed the same trend of cherry-picking exactly what they like about pop and rock through history, caring little about fashion trends. Bay City Rollers? Check. Mott the Hoople? Get in there. The world needs bands like The Struts — pure, honest rockers who want nothing more than a good time for everyone, and a lead singer who looks like he rolled through a thrift store wearing a velcro suit. Glorious. —BRETT CALLWOOD

The Spits, Sheer Mag @ ZEBULON

The Spits are one of the few modern punk bands who do more than merely revive the ancient past. On their variously numbered self-titled albums and the In the Red Records release V, the Seattle combo slams through a series of nonstop, sludgy, grimy punk blasts with a sullen fervor. Straight-ahead guitar-punk songs are infused with new-wave keyboards as singer-guitarist Sean Wood rants about haunted houses, skateboard partying, chemtrails and the police. Headliners Sheer Mag hail from Philadelphia and indulge in a more stubbornly retro classic-rock sound on their intermittently engaging 2017 debut album, Need to Feel Your Love. “Blood From a Stone,” from their upcoming release A Distant Call, is a typically energetic rocker that’s unfortunately marred by lyrical cliches. —FALLING JANE

WED 7/3

California Saga 2 @ THE THEATRE AT THE ACE HOTEL

Another benefit, and another important cause. This show at the Ace Hotel will see a number of music giants raising money to help people experiencing homelessness. Former Byrds/Crosby Stills Nash & Young man David Crosby headlines, and he’s joined by Beach Boys founding member Al Jardine. Also on the bill, Youngbloods singer Jesse Colin Young, blues-rock guitarist Albert Lee and, perhaps best of all, Spinal Tap bassist Derek Smalls. And then there’s The Tribe, the musicians collective who put the whole thing on and host. Fair play, that’s an extraordinary lineup. But more importantly, 100 percent of the ticket sales, which start at $25, go to the Get Together Foundation, Hope
The Invisible Hands, Alan Bishop
@ Zebulon
Alan Bishop must like living in hot, arid deserts. He formed the oddball experimental-jazz-noise-improvisational combo Sun City Girls with his brother Richard Bishop in Phoenix, Arizona, in 1979. Throughout his long musical odyssey, which includes a collaboration with The Velvet Underground's Maureen Tucker in Paris 1942, Bishop has always been interested in unusual sounds and world-music influences. A few years ago, he found himself in Cairo, where he started The Invisible Hands, an unusual project with Cherif El Masri. The band's 2013 self-titled album (which features both English and Arabic versions) encompasses cracked indie pop, acoustic-guitar noodling and psychedelic cabaret blues. The Invisible Hands make their local debut on a bill with Bishop's singer-songwriter alter ego, Alvarius B. —Falling James

Sofia Wolfson
@ Bootleg Theater
Sofia Wolfson is a local singer-guitarist who demonstrated her precocious talent when she released her 2015 debut album, Hunker Down, when she was just 16 years old. The L.A. native expands her musical range on her new EP, Adulting, a set of songs she wrote during her first year at college. The EP alternates between soulful slices of R&B and pop, mixed with relatively harder-rocking interludes such as "Probably Paradise" and "Self-Fulfilled Prophecy." All of it is distinguished by Wolfson's thoughtful, introspective lyrics and melodic vocal delivery. "Johnny Cash" is an acoustic ballad in which she declares her admiration for a friend who is also a fan of the Man in Black, while "Hotel Room" is a languid reverie frosted with coolly breezy harmonies. —Brett Callwood

Nile Rodgers & Chic
@ Hollywood Bowl
It's the Fourth of July and you want to see some spectacular fireworks while listening to some amazing music. If you haven't already been to the Hollywood Bowl's Fireworks Spectacular on Tuesday, July 2 or Wednesday, July 3, then you'll want to be there for the main event, on the day itself. Of late, Rodgers has turned his Chic live show into something really special — a career retrospective that takes in his writing and production work with the likes of Sister Sledge, David Bowie and Madonna, among others. But it's Chic classics like "Dance, Dance, Dance," "Le Freak," and "I Want Your Love" that will get the Bowl on standing. This is a party, so what better than the ultimate party band? —Brett Callwood

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