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# LAWEEKLY

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# GO LA

FRI 12/27

FILM & TV

## Hallmark Season

Hallmark Christmas movies are the fruitcake of TV. They have formulaic plots, the same cast of white actors and cheesy titles (*A Christmas Wedding Tail*, anyone?). Some find them a guilty pleasure, others have dedicated entire podcasts to their schlock. UCB's **Public Access Presents: The Best of the Worst Hallmark Holidays!** takes obvious inspiration from this staple of hokey holiday entertainment. Eric Chad Ho and Koschka Bahr host the show, where three improv teams will read the synopsis of old and new Hallmark film titles and perform wholly improvised remakes, sometimes using audience participation. It's better than watching Candace Cameron-Bure or Lori Loughlin. *UCB Sunset, 5419 W. Sunset Blvd., East Hollywood; Fri., Dec. 27, 10:30 p.m.; \$7. (323) 908-8702, sunset.ucbtheatre.com.* —SIRAN BABAYAN

THEATER

## Tim Burton Takes Over the Stage

*Scissorhands: A Musical Inspired by the Film* is back to puncture your heart and tickle your funny bone. The dinner theater experience presented by The Fuse Project re-imagines Tim Burton's classic film starring Johnny Depp and Winona Ryder for the small stage, and it was such a huge hit during the holidays last year, they brought it back. Written by Bradley Bredeweg (the man behind the Disney show *The Fosters*, as well as the Freeform/Hulu show *Good Trouble*) the show aims to reflect what made the movie great and inject new ideas, melding pop culture and



Post Parade: A Showcase of Floats

COURTESY OF THE PALADINA TOURNAMENT OF ROSES

cinema references with familiar dialog, social commentary, nostalgic narrative and catchy sing-a-long numbers. Of course, we all know the story: Set in a pastel-drenched American suburb circa 1990, it weaves the tale of Edward, the creation of a mad doctor who did not finish him so he has scissor blades instead of hands. When Ed is discovered by a woman selling cosmetics door to door, she takes him to live with her family. Adjustments to “normal” life and hilarity ensue as our sweet (and sliced-up) hero falls in love with the teenage daughter of the household, making for a star-crossed love story that was — and is — unforgettably bodacious yet beautifully bittersweet. *Rockwell Table & Stage, 1714 N. Vermont Ave, Los Feliz; Friday & Saturday, 7:30 p.m. and Sundays, 12:30 p.m., through January 5; \$25-\$45. rockwell-la.com* —LINA LECARO

SAT 12/28

ART

## When In Aroma

Since 2012, the Institute for Art & Olfaction has supported the intrigue of scent as a creative pursuit, compiling research and inviting artists, collaborators and the public to get in

on the indie, avant-garde tip of the perfume world. This weekend artist and perfumer **Ashley Eden Kessler** and IAO founder **Saskia Wilson-Brown** join forces in an immersive all-day session designed for those who are more than just scent-curious, but actively seeking ways to incorporate scent into their creative practices, and maybe even grow it into a proper business. **Business + Practice: Perfumery Intensive** will cover the industry basics, answer your practical questions and trigger your flights of inspiration. *Institute for Art & Olfaction, 932 Chung King Road, Chinatown; Sat., Dec. 28, 10:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.; \$165. artandolfaction.com.* —SHANA NYS DAMBROT

SUN 12/29

DANCE

## New Year's Mit Schlag

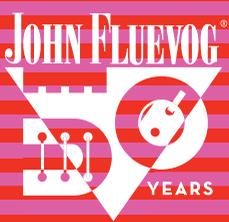
While many cultures revel in ringing out the old year, leave it to the 19th-century's Austro-Hungarian empire to set a European standard on how to do it right. In Vienna's famous *Neujahrskonzert* (New Year's Concert), dancers from the Vienna Opera Ballet perform in one of Vienna's elaborate palaces

evoking the era when the Hapsburg's ruled an empire. The dance along with music and opera is performed for a live (and presumably shivering) audience and also broadcast nationally, easily vying with New York City's crystal-ball countdown. Recreating the *Neujahrskonzert*, **Salute to Vienna** arrives with waltzes, polka, ballet, singing and lots of music provided by the Strauss Symphony of America. Like Vienna pastry, it is definitely *mit schlag*, but a fun way to stretch the New Year's celebrating with a post-concert glass of champagne before committing to those resolutions. After a Saturday performance in Orange County, the show goes to Hollywood on Sunday. *Segerstrom Center for the Arts, 600 Town Center Drive, Costa Mesa; Sat., Dec. 28, 8 p.m.; \$49-\$129. scfta.org/events/2018/salute-to-vienna. Also at the Dolby Theatre, Hollywood & Highland, 6801 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood; Sun., Dec. 29, 2:30 p.m., \$42-\$126. ticketmaster.com/event/0900570EE6404773.* —ANN HASKINS

MON 12/30

FILM

## The Poseidon Adventure



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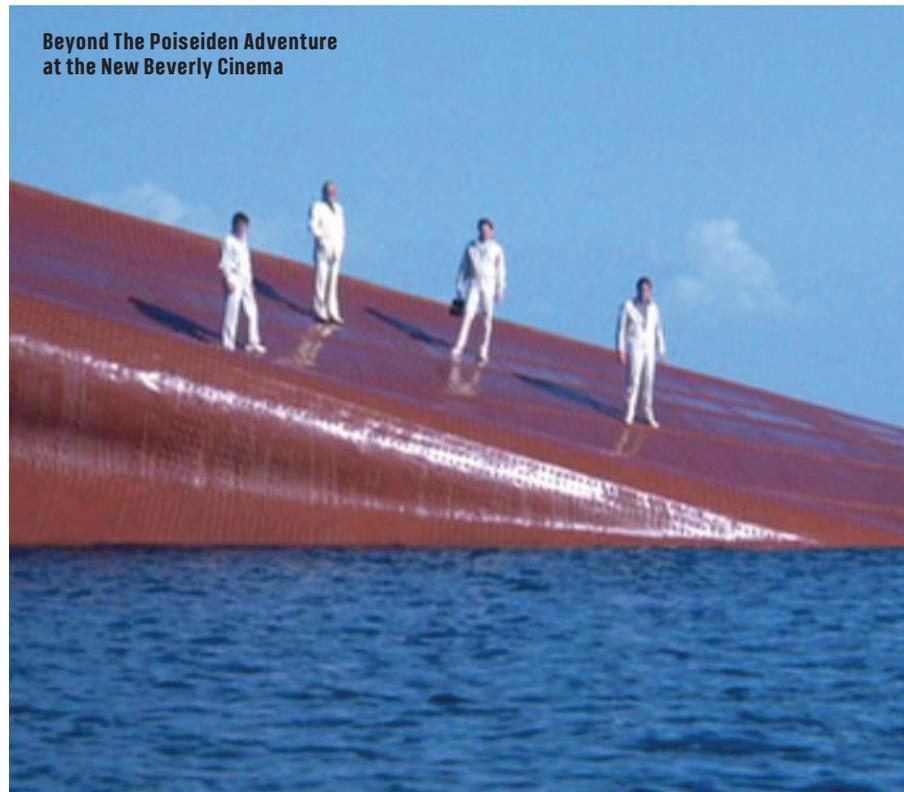
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### Beyond The Poseiden Adventure at the New Beverly Cinema



Before Kate Winslet let Leonardo DiCaprio die for some reason instead of sharing precious real estate on her flotsam in *Titanic*, when it came to maritime disaster films there was *The Poseidon Adventure*. Follow an ensemble cast (including Gene Hackman) as they attempt to survive a New Year's Eve gone disastrously wrong after the eponymous cruise liner is struck and overturned by a massive wave. The film, and its less heralded sequel, *Beyond the Poseiden Adventure* (which holds the dubious distinction of holding a 0 percent rating on Rotten Tomatoes), will be screening at the New Beverly Cinema; be sure to come prepared for a long evening — the film palace's owner, the one and only Quentin Tarantino, is committed to showing double features in 35mm, as the theater does tonight. *New Beverly Cinema, 7165 Beverly Blvd., Fairfax; Mon., Dec. 30, 7:30 p.m. & 10 p.m.; \$10 (\$11.49 service fee). thenewbev.com. —AVERY BISSETT*

### TUE 12/31

See our New Year's Eve guide online at [laweekly.com](http://laweekly.com).

### WED 1/1

CULTURE

#### Japanese New Year

If you think Little Tokyo is just about sushi or the museums, **The Annual Japanese New Year's Oshogatsu Festival** provides the ultimate one day experience to show you so, so much more. Filled with non-stop amusements reflecting the rich culture of Japan, the event, now in its 22nd year, is one of the

most important for the Japanese people. Two different stages and booths throughout present taiko drumming, traditional dance, kendo, mochi making, kite making, and origami teaching and martial arts. Of course there will also be plenty of food and drink, including beer. *Weller Court Shopping Center, 123 Astronaut Ellison S Onizuka St., downtown; Wed., Jan. 1, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.; free parking & shuttle service provided by L.A. Metro. [golittletokyo.com/oshogatsu/](http://golittletokyo.com/oshogatsu/). —LINA LECARO*

### THU 1/2

CULTURE

#### The Post Parade

Some of us would rather party and get drunk on New Year's Eve than camp outside in the cold to watch the Tournament of Roses Parade the next morning. But you can still marvel at the floats just a few feet away from the parade route at **Post Parade: A Showcase of Floats**. On view will be some of the more than 40 floats, including the ones representing the teams playing at this year's Rose Bowl game, the Oregon Ducks and Wisconsin Badgers. Nearly 150,000 visitors will be getting a closer look at these floral and mechanical beauties, which took 80,000 hours and 935 volunteers to decorate, and are covered in grass, plants, seeds, bark and a whopping 18 million flowers. Volunteers will be on hand to discuss the workmanship involved. *E. Sierra Madre Blvd. & E. Washington Blvd., Pasadena; Wed., Jan. 1, 1-5 p.m. & Thu., Jan. 2, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.; \$20, free children 5 and under. (626) 795-4171, [sharpseating.com](http://sharpseating.com). —SIRAN BABAYAN*



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## PHO LEGEND



# RINGING IN 2020 WITH STYLE

Six new, must-visit L.A. hotel bars to kick off the New Year, from the Westside to the heart of downtown

BY PAUL ZAHN

While Airbnb and other short-term rental companies are buckling hotel business in some major U.S. cities, it is definitely not crushing Los Angeles' hotel footprint. Hotels are popping up like daisies in every corner of the city and nearby — from Santa Monica to West Hollywood to Long Beach. And down-

town L.A. is outpacing all neighborhoods with more than a dozen new openings this year.

Recently, Mayor Eric Garcetti set a goal to open 8,000 new hotel rooms in downtown within walking distance of the L.A. Convention Center by 2020. The city was not seen as a viable convention destination and Garcetti sought to keep up with other Southern California cities for convention business — and that 8,000 room

number is set to be hit.

An influx of new hotels means new opportunities for local businesses, more revenue for the city and most importantly — a bevy of new hospitality outlets for adventurous eating and drinking Angelenos. In 2019, many hotel luminaries have left an impression on the L.A. hotel scene and created noteworthy watering holes in many restored iconic structures. We rounded up six stellar hotel bars perfect for an elegant New Year's Eve food and beverage crawl throughout Los Angeles.

## Navy Proof Food & Spirits at The Westin Hotel Long Beach

Kick off New Year's Eve morning with hearty breakfast fit for a sailor at Navy Proof Food & Spirits at The Westin Hotel in Long Beach. The hotel recently underwent a \$23 million renovation and unveiled a new eatery inspired by all things nautical.

The dining space and exquisite bar area, designed by Houston Tynner and Vanrooy Creative Group features a three-story chandelier, an enormous living green wall and slick white marble throughout. The space truly pays hom-

age to the property's California coastal setting. A Howe & Brown Hospitality concept, Navy Proof brings a maritime-inspired menu and craft cocktails to the bustling harbor of Long Beach. Chef Chris Garasic, the culinary mastermind behind Malibu Farm Lido in Newport Beach, created a diverse menu inspired by Long Beach's coastal surroundings.

Garasic's menu features locally sourced meat, seafood and produce to provide a more upscale surf-and-turf-flared menu. Breakfast includes dishes like the Longshoreman, served with sliced tomatoes, herb potatoes, breakfast meat and toast — perfect to pair with a spicy Bloody Mary. The bar program is run by award-winning mixologist Steve Nydell and showcases craft libations and large format, tableside-served cocktails. Ahoy, 2020! *Navy Proof at The Westin Long Beach, 333 E Ocean Blvd., Long Beach; (562) 436-3000.*

## Palma at The Santa Monica Proper Hotel

Next, head to Santa Monica for a pre-lunch beach stroll and stop at Palma, the slick lobby bar inside The Proper, a 1920s Spanish colonial

Harriet's Rooftop at 1 Hotel



revival building transformed by designer Kelly Wearstler. Nestled a few blocks away from the sandy shore, Palma is the perfect spot for a pre-lunch libation crafted with local ingredients sourced from the iconic Santa Monica Farmers Market.

The highly anticipated The Proper Hotel recently opened its doors and brought a re-discovered sense of California chic to Santa Monica. Palma's decor blends California cool with a classic Casablanca feel. The Kelly Wearstler-designed space boasts a palette of neutral California tones and showcases some eclectic art, including a mural by Ben Medansky behind the bar. White and orange furniture, combined with eclectic coffee tables, fill the space to create a lobby-bar-meets-living-room vibe — perfect for dining or setting up shop as work space.

In addition to sourcing local cocktail ingredients, chef Kaleo Adams and the culinary team utilizes the farmers market just steps away to find California produce for the lobby bar's food options. The drinks menu highlights a variety of small batch mezcals and boutique wines — perfect for any elegant imbiber. A mezcal Negroni is the perfect sipper to commemorate the end of 2019 and to celebrate 2020. *Palma at The Proper Hotel, 700 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica; (310) 620-9990.*

### The Rooftop Pool at Soho Warehouse

For a poolside lunch with a gorgeous view and a nice L.A. staycation, check in to the new Soho Warehouse. Following the success of Soho House West Hollywood and Little Beach House Malibu, Soho Warehouse recently launched in a revamped 1916, seven-story warehouse in the Arts District downtown.

The design aesthetic blends a downtown L.A. artsy vibe with lush California cool greenery. Upon entering the building, members and their guests are greeted with a street mural on the former loading dock of the warehouse created by Shepard Fairey, the artist behind the famous Obama "Hope" poster. In fact, the entire building is adorned with art curated by local galleries — furthering the thematic, quintessential DTLA vibe of the new space.

The new outpost boasts two major assets the first two L.A. locations lack: bedrooms and a rooftop pool. Tourists and locals will enjoy the chic "bedrooms," 48 in total, that include use of the locations state of the art gym. Here is an insider's tip: You don't need to be a member to book a hotel room. Bedroom bookings receive temporary membership to the club, including access to member events, programming and all club spaces — in addition to their beautiful room, of course.

The rooftop is the perfect location for lunch and poolside cocktails with a 50-foot pool and sun deck, ample day beds and chaise lounges and expansive views of downtown. The Rooftop Terrace and Bar features '60s- and '70s-inspired decor and is the ideal spot for business meetings, dates or even a New Year's Eve staycation. The globally driven menu features fare like crunchy ponzu vegetables and butter chicken with garlic naan. *The Rooftop Bar, Soho Warehouse, 1000 S Santa Fe Ave., downtown, (213) 205-1000.*

### Pilot at The Hoxton Hotel

Pilot at The Hoxton Hotel, located in a historic building downtown, is the ideal spot to watch as the sun sets on New Year's Eve and take advantage of some wonderful happy hour deals. The Hoxton Hotel opened in October and brings a British flare and hip vibe to the corner of Broadway and 11th Street

The hotel brand cleverly converted the Los Angeles Railway building into an urban sanctuary featuring relatively affordable rooms in four sizes: snug, cozy, roomy and biggy. Pilot, the rooftop open air bar and restaurant at the Hoxton boasts a three-tiered dining and drinking experience perfect for day to night dining and drinking. The outside bar offers expansive views of Los Angeles and is the perfect setting for sunset sipping.

Furthering the theme of being a budget-friendly hot spot, Pilot features a daily happy hour from 3-6 p.m. which includes \$1 oysters and \$6 Honey Bear cocktails. Guests can enjoy a live fire cooking experience of Mediterranean dishes created with locally sourced seafood and vegetables inside the dining room.



The dining space features a pull-back roof and even has a cocktail cart for tableside mixology magic. Sunday Hospitality, the team behind famed New York eatery Sunday in Brooklyn, crafted the food and beverage menu for The Hoxton. *Pilot at the Hoxton Downtown LA, 1060 S. Broadway, downtown; (213) 725-5900.*

### The West Hollywood EDITION

For dinner on New Year's Eve, why not enjoy a Michelin star-caliber meal at a hotel with ties to Studio 54, nestled below the Hollywood Hills? Last month, hotel impresario and nightlife legend Ian Schrager re-entered the hotel game on the Sunset Strip with a bang when he launched The West Hollywood EDITION.

In some circles known as the "creator of the boutique hotel," Schrager previously brought a breath of fresh air to L.A. when he opened the Mondrian Hotel on Sunset Boulevard in the late 1990s. This go-round, he went bigger and better. Over the course of five festive nights, the West Hollywood EDITION hotel celebrated its debut in November with the who's who of Hollywood. Each night included performances by the likes of Chaka Khan and Janelle Monáe, while Paris Hilton and Leonardo DiCaprio shared a bottle service table in the hotel's club, aptly named Sunset. FYI, Sunset nightclub's ceiling is entirely lined with disco balls. But would you expect anything less from the man behind the iconic NYC nightclub Studio 54?

Located on the corner of Sunset Boulevard and Doheny Drive, the 190-room hotel brings a sleek, minimalist aesthetic to the corner formerly frequented by rock & roll and grunge nightlife revelers. The hotel, in partnership with Marriott, is the first L.A. project of British architect John Pawson. The design feel reflects that of Los Angeles' abundance of nature and provides several watering holes perfect for tourists or locals alike. The expansive lobby bar features a very Instagrammable artistic installation by Los Angeles artist Sterling Ruby, as well as pool tables and ample seating.

Los Angeles native and world renowned Michelin-rated chef John Fraser crafted an exquisite five-course prix fixe chef's family-style menu at Ardor for New Year's Eve. The menu

consists of a choice of canapés, followed by shared appetizers, entrees that include beef tenderloin, roasted cauliflower and Greek iorata. Finish off dinner with a delectable assortment of homemade desserts — the perfect fuel for dancing and toasting 2020 at the next stop. *The West Hollywood EDITION, 9040 Sunset Blvd., West Hollywood; (310) 953-9899.*

### Harriet's Rooftop at 1 Hotel

Toasting the new year in the City of Angels should include one of L.A.'s best attributes: the gorgeous skyline. Harriet's Rooftop atop the 1 Hotel West Hollywood is the perfect spot for the countdown, but before 3,2,1 make sure and explore the entire property.

Following an extensive renovation of the former Jeremy Hotel space, the 1 Hotel opened to great fanfare in July of this year. The team behind the 1 Hotel sought to focus on two key changes when revamping the space — California luxury and a mission of sustainability and eco-conscious practices. The elegant hotel boasts lush greenery walls, 100-year-old olive trees and an onsite garden. The latter provides the produce to create remarkable food and drinks at all three food and beverage outlets, which are run by nightlife darlings H.Wood Group. Their long list of successful hospitality hotspots in Los Angeles continues to grow with Harriet's Rooftop being their latest treasure.

Set in the heart of Sunset Boulevard, the rooftop bar and restaurant brings a mellow yet elegant setting to the Sunset Strip. The open air lounge boasts views of Los Angeles from downtown to Santa Monica. John Sofio of Built Inc. designed the space with sleek woodwork flooring and columns, deep burgundy upholstery, marble table tops, and lush greenery all around. New Year's Eve revelers can enjoy the plentiful views of Los Angeles while sipping bubbly or libations crafted by Justin Campbell while listening to music by a very special surprise guest DJ. New Year's Eve will turn in to New Year's Day at this late night dance fest happening at Harriet's Rooftop. *Harriet's Rooftop at 1 Hotel, 8490 Sunset Blvd., West Hollywood; (424) 281-1860.*

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## ARTS

# RINA BANERJEE ASSEMBLES A DAZZLING DIASPORA

At the Fowler, a celebrated artist's first major survey holds the whole world in its hands

BY SHANA NYS DAMBROT



"Her captivity was one someone's treasure..." (detail)

The Fowler Museum's unique focus on arts of international, non-Western, post-colonial and diasporic cultures makes it unique in Los Angeles, and the perfect host for Rina Banerjee's emotionally and materially complex mid-career retrospective, *Make Me a Summary of the World*. That's because Banerjee's sculptural assemblages and large-scale installations are not only materially rich with a spectrum of eclectic elements the artist has acquired in

her international travels — from toys and trinkets to historical cultural symbols and antiques, delicate textiles to medical and industrial objects, organic and natural components to synthetics and replicas. Beyond their captivating presence, the works are also profoundly engaged with issues of hybrid identity and the fractured cultural experiences of the modern post-imperial era.

Despite the foundational theories of inquiry into cultural portability and appropriation, and the artist's not so subtle interrogations of

how feminism and environmentalism function within that already complex sphere, the work claims an indelible embodied aesthetic. The magical, mysterious, seductive and sometimes unsettling works that result from her thoughtful practice are each masterpieces of assemblage with kaleidoscopic, delightful, ritualistic and spirited beauty. In any one of the several sculptures and vignettes installed at the Fowler, one can pick out African masks and jewelry, majestic feathers, light bulbs, surgical tubing, Chinese fans, Murano glass, Japanese and Korean fabrics, cowrie shells, baby dolls, Asian antiques, toy soldiers, beads, silk flowers, shimmering sand, metal work, dried Indian spices, sea creatures, land animals, grape vines, bone, fur, coral, lace, and a great deal more.

These eclectic materials she does not "find" or "reclaim" but, rather, diligently locates and

culture, religion, person, or language that is dispersed and recreated in a diaspora, speaking to the ways in which migrations uproot and relocate not only people, but their memories.

Banerjee was born in India, and as a child immigrated first to London and then to the United States, where she still lives and works. She studied chemical science before changing course and embracing the arts. As Marla C. Berns, the Fowler's director, has said, "Banerjee's art resonates with the Fowler's mission, rejecting the idea that identity is based on one culture or gender. Instead, she embraces a multiplicity of experiences and a constant dance of negotiation and adaptation."

Aside from their intense physicality, one way in which Banerjee makes this theme of dissonance, translation and context more explicit specifically relates to the hegemony of English language in global institutions, as a vestige of colonial domination in its own right. Thus she gives her works lengthy titles of poetic, impenetrable syntax which render English as though "foreign" even to its most fluent speakers. For example, the title of a 2006 wall sculpture of white feathers, shells, and steel is "In dream with grin she kissed and licked his alligator wings, peeled his toes of all its nails and waled at the sight of killing." Some of her literary titles are as long as 200 words and while they may not quite explicate the works in question, they certainly contribute to the experience of them.

The show's eponymous central work "Make Me a Summary of the World! She was his guide and had traveled on camel, rhino, elephant and kangaroo, dedicated to dried plants, glass houses — for medical study, vegetable sexuality, self-pollination, fertilization her reach pierced the woods country by country," from 2014 greets the viewer with a curvaceous, parasol-capped feminine totem-like presence. Its body comprised of fighters and animal forms, with the armature of gnarled grape vines, is a metaphor for both beauty and decay, the physical, fixed expression of a lifetime of memories all at once.

"Winter's Flower—Raw materials from sea and from fowl and even from some exotic mice was eaten by a world hungry for commerce made these into flower, disguised could be savored alongside whitened rice," from 2009 is a monstrous, carnivore of a plant, dark fanged and elegant, alien and regal. Another work fills a Victorian bird cage with the trappings of lost childhood innocence, festooned with feathers, flowers, gourds, and other sacred-seeming objects. Its effect is both ark-like and tragic, charming and haunting, and — like all Banerjee's most powerful work — both universal and mysterious.

*Make Me a Summary of the World* is on view at the Fowler Museum at UCLA through May 31. [fowler.ucla.edu/exhibitions/rina-banerjee](http://fowler.ucla.edu/exhibitions/rina-banerjee).

purchases from their makers as both a chronicle of her own international travels and a gesture of support for the small and micro businesses who survive by selling them. She gathers this strange and wondrous bounty together, bursting with varieties of shape, texture and backstory, into singular objects that evoke familiar shapes — animals, humanoids, botanicals, totems, skeletons, architecture — while at the same time taking them apart. This is a powerful visual and conceptual analogy for what happens to a

# NEW AND OLD WORLDS COLLIDE

*The End of the F\*\*\*ing World, Rick and Morty, and His Dark Materials*

BY ERIN MAXWELL

There is a battle brewing, and it is being fought by streaming services, cable TV and primetime television. If you are too weak to resist, UnBinged is here to help you. This week, a mixed bag of youthful angst, audacious animation and dark fantasy.

## *The End of the F\*\*\*ing World* | Netflix

In its second season, we are reunited with

budding psychopath James and the slightly sociopathic Alyssa and everything is great — for us, the audience, anyway. For James and Alyssa, it's another series of painfully awkward moments filled with heartbreak and regret.

When we last saw our heroes, James was shot and Alyssa was blonde. Two years later, James is far from the scary teenager from the pilot. If he lacked feelings before, he's now making up for it in spades. Alyssa, on the other hand, has plateaued emotionally due to her inability to find any type of support after her assault.

But this time around, the focus of *World* is not just on James and Alyssa. They share the spotlight with Bonnie, a would-be assassin who has Alyssa in her crosshairs. It appears that prior to his career as a rapist and a corpse, the professor who assaulted Alyssa managed to manipulate Bonnie into performing bad acts for the sake of love. His death drove her off the deep end and now she is set on revenge.

*The End of the F\*\*\*ing World* is more than a quirky show with quirky characters doing quirky things to quirky music. It is a series of genius moments wrapped in sarcasm and delivered at neck-break speed with a love story. What makes the series a true stand out are the characters, who share themselves completely thanks to the narration of their inner dialog. Viewers are given insight into every bad decision and terrible mistake. We cannot help them, but we cannot turn away from their despair either.

And fuck, is it funny. Agonizing and strangely poignant in one moment, then absurd and hilarious the next. It is wonderful to sink into the abyss with these characters as they help you

embrace your dark side.

## *His Dark Materials* | HBO

Adapting Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy is an epic undertaking, even for the channel that brought us *Game of Thrones*. An effort to adapt the book series was made 12 years ago with *The Golden Compass*, but the potential franchise collapsed under the weight of its own importance. Back for a second try, HBO will attempt to foster the epic saga as a series, thus giving the story time to develop.

Headlined by James McAvoy, Ruth Wilson, Lin-Manuel Miranda, and Dafne Keen as Lyra, the fantasy drama takes place in world where the steampunk aesthetic hasn't become a banal cliché used to represent the future. It is a world ruled by prophecies, witches, portals, CGI animals with British accents, and delicate brass detailing attached to everything that isn't a CGI animal with a British accent.

And while the performances are good and the world is visually striking, the series commits the same cardinal sin that *Compass* did — it takes itself too seriously. It piles the viewer with so much information that it burdens the entertainment of the show. Taking the SATs were less demanding. For those already familiar with the source material, *His Dark Materials* is fine, but it could've done a better job of sorting out the saga and infusing new life into the material.

## *Rick and Morty* | Cartoon Network

It's been two years since we've been thrown into an existential crisis by an animated show on break, but with wait over and the fourth season

of *Rick and Morty* in full swing (though it just went on break, the creators promise more in the new year) we feel satisfied. The Adult Swim cartoon is not really for kids (which means, of course, they love it). Focusing on horny scientist grandpa Rick Sanchez and his stressed-out, inquisitive grandson Morty, their dysfunctional family and their intergalactic adventures, the show has continued a manic, mind-bending momentum that represents what made it a cult hit, with new storylines featuring jewel heists, a monster Morty and evil app-building.

Part of what makes *Rick and Morty* a great show is that it understands world building. For example, there is a creature named Mr. Meeseeks who only lives to serve a person's every whim. He also comes in a Kirkland off-brand version which will do the same task, but is kind of a dick. *Rick and Morty*'s genius is the way it introduces new ideas into its fictional world, relating novel concepts to stuff familiar to the viewer. Like shitty Kirkland products.

There are also the darker moments on the show that give it depth. Characters reflect on themes of loneliness and the futility of life quite a bit, and it all makes a lot of sense. Like the final twist of a dagger, these moments of introspection at the end of an episode, are intense and deep, even if the episode is about shy pooping.

The absurdity of this mixture is what fuels the ingenuity of *Rick and Morty*. It is a balance of observational anecdotes and dark subject matter delivered by means of a curmudgeon cartoon character. Add some of the dirtiest jokes this side of the galaxy and fans will continue to follow these two into many worlds to come.

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FILM

# DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH

*Uncut Gems* sees Adam Sandler in his hardest, sharpest role

BY ASHER LUBERTO

An uncut gem is a stone that is rough on the outside and beautiful on the inside. That description also applies to the movie *Uncut Gems*, a masterpiece with a tough story and tender heart from indie filmmakers the Safdie brothers. The brothers have pulled this mixture off before in another New York thriller — *Good Time* — but this has a different vibe. It's the cinematic equivalent to mixing cocaine with acid, a burst of energy that unfolds like a dream.

Josh and Benny Safdie take us on a thrill ride here. Young and full of ideas, these 30-somethings enjoy pushing the boundaries, and their camera goes places no other director would dare explore. After a prologue in an Ethiopian mine, the camera is dug out of Howard's (Adam Sandler's) intestines during a colonoscopy. It's a fitting introduction to a man at rock bottom.

He's a Diamond District jeweler slumming it in a sketchy New York burrow, with debt that's mounting and a family life that's fading like the clast from a well-weathered rock. "You're the most annoying person I have ever met," his wife Dinah (Idina Menzel) screams at him. Her criticism is fair. Since Howard left Dinah for Julia (Julia Fox), his shop's clerk, he hasn't spent time with his family. That's probably best for the family, though.

This is a man who makes terrible decision after terrible decision. A gambler, hustler and cheater, the character is a touchstone addiction, as well as a metamorphic metaphor for the horrific things that happen when addiction takes over someone's life. So it's hard to imagine what Howard would have been without the Sandman playing him. An actor who finds pathos in childish characters (*The Waterboy*, *Happy Gilmore*), Sandler makes it easy for audiences to root for even this despicable character.

When NBA star Kevin Garnett (playing himself) comes to his shop to purchase an Ethiopian opal, Howard shapeshifts into an endearing salesman. Garnett, who was basketball's fiercest competitor when this takes place in 2012, is determined to buy the magic gem for good luck. "They say you can see the whole world in opals," Howard yells to Garnett over the noise in his shop. People constantly shout in the background, and these conversations blend with the synth-fueled soundtrack, making the sound design hectic as it immerses audiences in the anarchy of Howard's everyday life.

In recent interviews, the Safdie brothers have cited Rodney Dangerfield as an inspiration for the noisy character. They are likely referring to the standup comedian's "I get no respect" bit, which could be the bling salesman's life motto. Julia cheats on him with *The Weekend*, who gets a cameo in an intoxicating party sequence. Thugs aren't afraid to double team him at his kid's play, where they strip him naked and kick him senseless. And Garnett steals the opal at the shop for his playoff series against the Detroit Pistons, which becomes a problem when Howard needs to sell it at an auction.

What keeps the protagonist going despite these circumstances is his fixation with striking it rich. No matter how much money he loses, he keeps betting for the thrill of it. The more he ruins his life, the more the Safdies crank up the adrenaline by shooting in anamorphic format. There's an intimacy to shooting closeups in widescreen; those shots from far away, peering in on Howard as he rushes through his daily routine, make the audience feel uneasy, as if we are stalking him from across the street.

The authenticity here comes from the cast. Sandler continues to prove his critics wrong by nailing serious roles. With *Punch Drunk Love*, *The Meyerowitz Stories* and *Gems*, the actor has delivered nuanced, Oscar-worthy performances that recall the churlish characters that made him a comedic star in the '90s. His Howard is just as childish as Happy Gilmore or Bobby Boucher Jr. but still hints at more underneath.

The actresses by his side shine as well. Menzel digs deep into the role of Howard's neglected wife, her frustration becoming more apparent with every reaction shot. Fox sparkles, and not just because her Julia is wearing Howard's diamonds. Her genial performance is a nice contrast to the hard-nosed Garnett, who she often shares scenes with, and who assists in tying the story together.

But it's the Safdie's script that deserves the credit for giving a convoluted story a coherent ending. Everything is connected. Like Robert Bresson's similarly themed *L'Argent*, the endless cycle of greed can be traced back to a single piece of currency. In Bresson's final film, it was a forged 500 franc that eventually led to a handful of murders. Here, it's the opal that spirals everything out of control. It's a gem that symbolizes obsession, in a groundbreaking work of art worth obsessing over.

# THE AQUABATS ARE STILL FURIOUS

The veteran superhero punks are poised for a big 2020

BY BRETT CALLWOOD



PHOTO BY FORREST LOCKE

Huntington Beach band The Aquabats have never been your average ska-punk group. For starters, they play the part of a costumed superhero team, tights and all. Then there's the scripted stage shows, the kids' TV show — the Aquabats have a lot going on.

Earlier in 2019, they released their first live album, *The Fury of the Aquabats! Live at the Fonda*, placing into posterity the gig which celebrated the *Fury of the Aquabats* album's 20th anniversary.

"*The Fury of the Aquabats!* came out in '97 and interestingly enough our bass player was doing electrical at a vegan restaurant and Travis Barker [Blink-182, Transplants, former Aqua-

bat] walked in," says frontman Christian Jacobs, aka the MC Bat Commander. "Our bass player Crash [McLarson] was up on a ladder and Travis was like, 'Dude, what are you doing?' Crash said that he was doing the electrical in that building. They got talking and Travis brought it up, that the 20-year anniversary of that album was coming up so we should do a show. Crash said, 'OK, sure.' We kinda coordinated it so that Travis would come and play a few songs with us. Hey, it's the 20th anniversary and Travis was gonna come and play with us for the first time in 20 years, or 17 years, whatever. The point is, we might as well record it. We also videoed the show and we're planning on putting that out in 2020."

The band released the live album by raising

money through crowdfunding on Kickstarter, despite the fact that, to Jacobs, it initially felt a little icky.

"I was like Kickstarter and crowdfunding feels like digital panhandling to me," he says. "It was really the fans — they kept asking for it. So we dealt with a couple of guys that are crowdfunding experts. Talking to them, they really talked us into doing it. They said, 'You're giving the opportunity for your fans to become part of something special and something that they'll actually have ownership in. Rather than looking at it as panhandling, look at it as an opportunity to let your fans be a part of something and make history with you.' I think that was eye-opening for me because I never really thought about it like that. We were able to raise almost a million dollars and do some new episodes of the TV show for YouTube. It's been really fun meeting a lot of our fans, so having them be a big part of this is something I'm really proud of."

products that were featured in the TV show as fake products but we're actually gonna have them available. 2020 will be a big year, for us at least. We're setting up dates. Unbelievably, the Aquabats have still got some game."

It's astonishing to think that The Aquabats is now a quarter of a century old — pretty impressive for something that they themselves will admit is a bit of a novelty. Or, at least, it started out that way.

"We started the band as a joke, and every time we would book another show we would laugh," Jacobs says. "We can't believe that we're actually playing another show because it was just a silly thing. Now, it's spiraled out of control but in a good way. The positive spin is that we were trying to do something fun and now it's literally fun for the whole family and not in an ironic, sarcastic play on that. We were parodying kids' shows and superheroes. Back in the '90s, we were thinking 'What's the stupidest thing we could be dressed up as in a band?' and it was superheroes. Years later, superheroes are the coolest thing in the world. It's fun to see Marvel and the studios turning a corner into acknowledging the ridiculousness of superheroes and all that, but we've been doing that a long time."

Nowadays, all of the guys in the band have kids of their own, and having a dad in a superhero punk band is something pretty damned unusual to grow up with.

"I think I was the first to start having kids, and in fact probably having kids was what rescued the band from breaking up because my wife was ready to kill me," Jacobs says. "But my kids really liked it so she said I should probably keep doing it. As teenagers, it was more like 'What is this?' Then realizing that it's actually pretty rad. My son is 17 and plays music, and my daughter sings. I think the younger kids in our crew really dig it. It's been really fun having our kids grow up with us as superheroes, and finally it's that a-ha moment where they realize it was a joke the whole time. When I was a kid, watching *Batman* with Adam West was the best thing ever. As a teenager, I watched it and realized that they were totally joking around and it's amazing. It's fun having that same experience with my own kids."

This week, The Aquabats play at the Fonda with Sasquatch-themed band PPL MVR and Dirt Farm. The latter featured some of the Aquabats' kids — Jacobs' son plays drums, and the bass player is McLarson's son. It all makes for a fun family affair around the holidays. And in the new year?

"We go into the studio to record the new album," Jacobs says. "We have new episodes out every other week on our YouTube channel, and they're 8 to 12 minutes long. We're talking about doing more this year. We're just trying to see where the 25-year wave will take us next. I don't know. I hope people will come out and join us at the Fonda because it'll be really fun."

*The Aquabats play with PPL MVR and Dirt Farm at 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, December 28 at the Fonda.*

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**FRI 12/27**

**Faster Pussycat**

@ WHISKY A GO GO

Faster Pussycat guitarist and frontman Taime Downe are part of the Sunset Strip furniture, and you can usually find them buzzing around the Whisky somewhere in this space between Christmas and New Year. They're a party band, and so they're the perfect hosts for a night of festive cheer. These days, Downe has blended the classic FP sleaze with The Newlydeads-era industrial rock to great effect; they play old favorites such as "Bathroom Wall," "Babylon" and monster ballad "House of Pain," but the tunes have been given a bit of extra electro crunch. The last new album was 2006's *The Power & the Glory Hole*, though there was a live album called *Front Row for the Donkey Show* which came out in 2009 and offers a fairly accurate representation of a Pussycat gig today. Hopefully we'll get a new album soon. Jimmy Richardson, MotorBone, The Thrillseekers and Stormbreaker also play. —**BRETT CALLWOOD**

**Dead & Company**

@ THE FORUM

Essentially, the success of Dead & Company was always a foregone conclusion. Although it's been only five years since their founding — with The Grateful Dead's guitarist Bob Weir and drummers Mickey Hart and Bill Kreutzmann throwing in their lot with bassist Oteil Burbridge (The Allman Brothers Band), keyboardist Jeff Chimenti (RatDog), and of course John Mayer — time and the persistence of the mythos have made them one of the most devotedly-followed bands of the 21st century. Everyone wants to see The Dead. Everyone wants to keep holding that magic wrapped in roses and skulls. Jerry Garcia said that, when Ron "Pigpen" McKernan died in 1973, that was "the end of the original Grateful Dead." The skull is a husk. The spirit abides. Nearby. What magic you choose to take away from that majestic manifestation is entirely up to you. Also Saturday. —**DAVID COTNER**

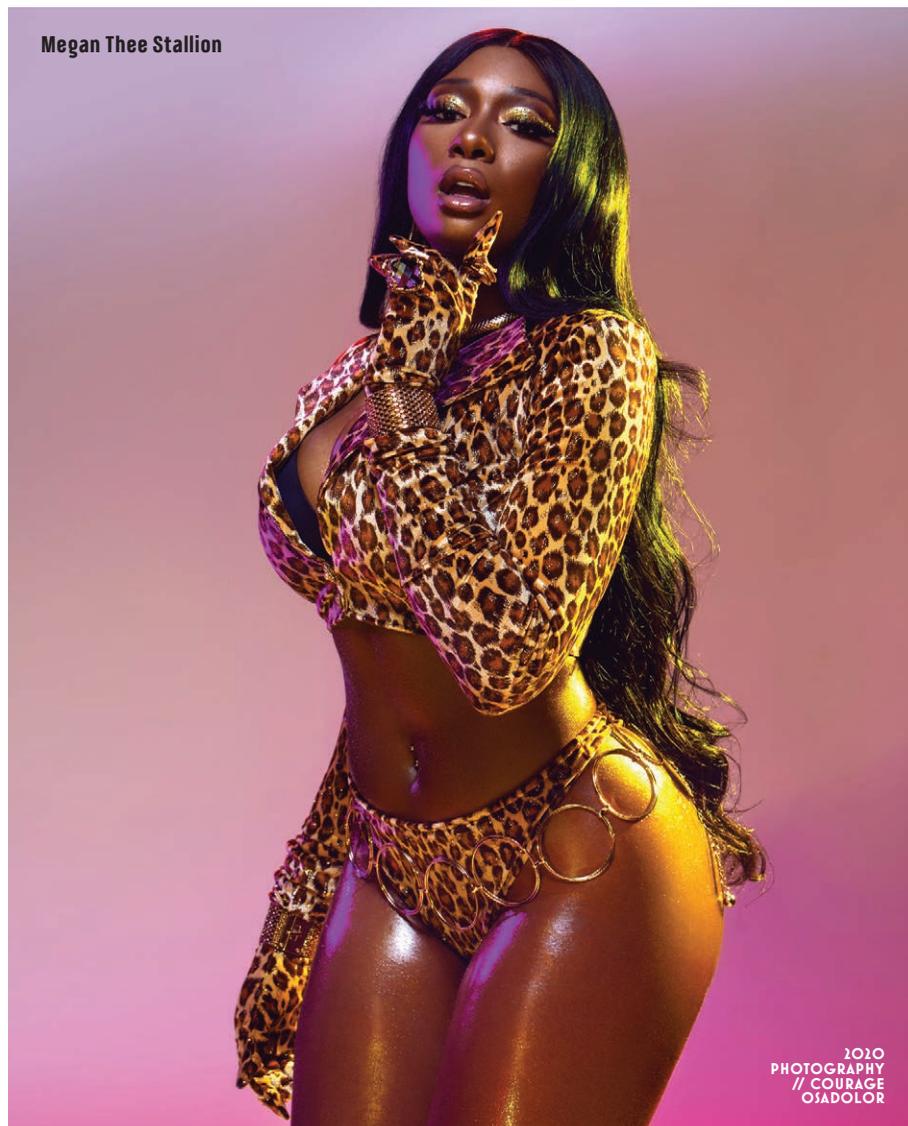
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When Roddy Ricch came out with "Die Young"

Megan Thee Stallion



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the world was not ready. Who was this kid who can hit them notes like he's from Atlanta, but actually hails from Compton? Surprisingly enough, the West Coast recording artist made his first song barely two years ago. This year, he earned himself three Grammy nominations: "Racks In The Middle" for best rap song and best rap performance, and DJ Mustard's "Ballin'" for best rap/sung performance. Riding on this success, Roddy unleashed his highly-anticipated debut studio album titled *Please Excuse Me For Being Antisocial*. The significance in the title is a reference to his introverted self, with a straight face that audiences may take the wrong way. While the project is laced with bangers, "The Box" has recently been the most requested song in clubs up and down the coast. —**SHIRLEY JU**

**SUN 12/29**

**Enuff Znuft**

@ WHISKY A GO GO

For years, the go-to accusation thrown at Chicago's Enuff Z'Nuff was that they sounded way too much like The Beatles. As if they were trying to ape them rather than enjoy a healthy amount of influence (for a modern reference, see Greta Van Fleet and the great Led Zeppelin debate). But, as is usually the case, it was all a load of reactionary hooley. Enuff Z'Nuff are and have always been a great power pop band, blessed

with pop sensibilities that carried them far beyond the standard Sunset Strip hair sound. They dressed like Warrant but they were just different. Classic-era frontman Donnie Vie has been out of the band since 2013, with bassist Chip Z'nuff taking vocal duties for the 2018 album *Diamond Boy*. It's not exactly the same but still worthy of the name. Death Valley Gypsies, Angeles, Prima Donna Rising, Temple Monarc, Decapitation of a New Day and Bound Within also play. —**BRETT CALLWOOD**

**Bino Rideaux**

@ THE ROXY

South Central native Bino Rideaux is best known for his collaborations with late rapper Nipsey Hussle and featuring on the songs "Clarity" with Dave East, even proceeding to do a whole tape together called *No Pressure*. Regardless, it's Bino's ability to both sing and rap that fans can't help but gravitate toward. Most recently, Bino unleashed his *Sorry 4 Tha Wait* mixtape, featuring standout single "Bozo." The rising independent recording artist will now be taking his talents to the main stage at The Roxy for his Bino Rideaux & Friends show, which is guaranteed to attract many special guests. This hometown show will be big for the city. —**SHIRLEY JU**

**Lagwagon**

@ THE REGENT THEATER

2019 was a busy year for Goleta skate punks

Lagwagon. As well as releasing their ninth studio album *Railer*, they celebrated the 20th anniversary of arguably their best full-length record, *Let's Talk About Feelings*. That blend of nostalgia and new saw them touring plenty during the year, and they're ending it with this big show at the Regent. Let's be honest, we pretty much know what we're going to get from Joey Cape and his crew: a wild, raucous show with a seasonal party vibe and solid punk tunes galore. Lagwagon has been in this game for long enough — they know what they're doing. And a couple of nights before New Year, what else are you going to do? —**BRETT CALLWOOD**

## MON 12/30

### Arturo Sandoval & LA Allstars

@ CATALINA JAZZ

What a difference 30 years makes: In 1990, on tour in Europe with Dizzy Gillespie, Cuban trumpeter Arturo Sandoval defects. Cuba is not best pleased by this turn of events — but ever since then, Sandoval has thrilled audiences with his impassioned virtuoso performances on an instrument that, in its way, has changed the course of nations as surely as any war or any earthquake. Tonight's live action with Arturo Sandoval and the L.A. All-Stars — the penultimate date of a four-day stand — is a New Year's celebration that marks decades of Sandoval's continuing joyous signature free expression. His is the kind of freedom that, like sound waves, expands ever-outward, touching everyone and changing them irrevocably just by hearing Sandoval's artistry and endless yearning for the chance to just be, both as an artist and as an individual human being. Also Tuesday. —**DAVID COTNER**

### Camper Van Beethoven, Cracker

@ TERAGRAM BALLROOM

While you might think that Camper Van Beethoven — they of the smash modern rock banger "Take the Skinheads Bowling" — exist in some chortlesome netherworld running beneath the '80s alongside like-minded audio pranksters Hoodoo Gurus, They Might Be Giants and Violent Femmes, witness their stance on the plight of the musician in the modern computer world and suddenly they may as well be a Rock in Opposition band rivaling the poetry of Henry Cow. The band — bassist Victor Krummenacher, leading guitarist Greg Lisher, firebrand singer David Lowery, mighty skinbeater Chris Pedersen, violinist Jonathan Segel — has much to say about the price paid by artists who now are everywhere at once while outlets like Napster and Pandora monetize their blood, sweat and tears and issue those artists a check for the princely sum of \$17. Be there or be oblong. Also: Cracker. —**DAVID COTNER**

## TUE 12/31

### Guided By Voices

@ TERAGRAM BALLROOM

When you think back on the fact that it took Guns N' Roses 15 years to record and release the *Chinese Democracy* album, it's astonishing that Dayton, Ohio lo-fi indie rockers Guided By Voices put out three albums in 2019 alone. That's the sort of work ethic that should not only force

Axl to hang his head in shame, but most other musicians too. Even The Beatles generally went for two per year. The thing is, all three — *Zeppelin Over China*, *Warp and Woof* and *Sweating the Plague* — are pretty darn good. So this show at the Teragram is being billed as their "ultimate year end blow-out" as they aim to perform 100 songs. Again, hang your heads, everyone else. It's going to be wonderful madness. —**BRETT CALLWOOD**

### Megan Thee Stallion

@ NOVO

There is nobody killing the rap game like Megan Thee Stallion. The Houston native is best known for her ability to rap, twerk, drive the boat (pouring Hennessy into friends' mouths), and of course, trademarking the term Hot Girl Summer. Earlier this year, Meg unleashed her critically-acclaimed debut mixtape titled *Fever*, home to standout singles "Simon Says" featuring Juicy J and "Cash Shit" featuring DaBaby. The latter has gone on to become of the most streamed songs in music as a whole this year. The fact that this is a show to ring in the new year... Megan will not let her hotties down. Time to turn up with Thee Stallion! —**SHIRLEY JU**

## WED 1/1

### A Viennese New Year with Zubin

@ WALT DISNEY CONCERT HALL

Start 2020 out right — which is not terribly difficult to do because apart from the Rose Parade and your hangover, there isn't much else happening today that's quite so spectacular — with A Viennese New Year with Zubin. Newly-named conductor emeritus Zubin Mehta — the music director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic from 1962-1978 — pulls out all the stops with a lively program of waltzes, polkas and works by Mozart ("The Marriage of Figaro Overture"; "Violin Concerto No. 3 in G") and Strauss ("Voices of Spring"; "Thunder and Lightning Polka"). He is aided and abetted in these relentlessly upbeat numbers by violinist Julian Rachlin and soprano Chen Reiss, who weave a heady soundtrack on this first day of the year to accompany everything from wild-eyed New Year's resolutions to the inspirational ambition to help you get through yet another Los Angeles winter. —**DAVID COTNER**

## THU 1/2

### Rough Riot

@ WHISKY A GO GO

It would be stretching the definition awfully to refer to Rough Riot as a supergroup, but you can guarantee that tag will get thrown around. All right, let's go with it. This supergroup features former members of hair metal bands Quiet Riot and Rough Cutt (hence the clever name). That's singer Paul Shortino, who was in both bands, plus guitarists Chris Hager (Rough Cutt) and Carlos Cavazo (Quiet Riot), bassist Sean McNabb (both) and drummer Dave Alford (Rough Cutt). So guess what the set consists of. Yup, songs by Rough Cutt and Quiet Riot. So if you like Quiet Riot and Rough Cutt, you'll probably like Rough Riot. It ain't rocket science. —**BRETT CALLWOOD**

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