After three failed pregnancies, Ariane Fleiderman-Borges adopted frozen embryos from an Arizona couple and gave birth to twins — at age 50

THE BRAVE NEW WORLD OF EMBRYO ADOPTION

By Stephanie Haney
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LA WEEKLY ISSN 0192-1940 & USPS 463-3701 IS PUBLISHED WEEKLY FOR THE SUBSCRIPTION PRICE OF $55.00 PER SIX MONTHS & $90.00 PER YEAR BY LA WEEKLY, LP, 3861 SEPULVEDA BLVD., CULVER CITY, CA 90230. PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID AT LOS ANGELES, CA. POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO LA WEEKLY, P.O. BOX 4315, LOS ANGELES, CA 90078-4315.

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A key figure in Mayor Eric Garcetti’s administration has quietly adopted a new title, an apparent signal of his growing influence within the mayor’s office.

Rick Jacobs, named Garcetti’s deputy chief of staff in 2013, has recently added the title “executive vice mayor.” The title, which was never publicly announced, did not exist previously within City Hall. It confers no new formal responsibilities but it does suggest an informal expansion of Jacobs’ role.

“The title was only adopted this week,” said Connie Llanos, Garcetti’s spokeswoman. “The mayor knew this was happening.”

According to emails released to L.A. Weekly last week under the California Public Records Act, Jacobs’ new title seems to have originated in a discussion of diplomatic protocol in August. At the time, Jacobs was involved in preparations for the U.S.-China Climate Leaders Summit, which took place in L.A. in September.

The Beijing government was offering to sign an agreement at the summit with Los Angeles on reducing climate emissions.

“A sticking point was that the agreement would be signed by Garcetti and Li Shixiang, the executive vice mayor of Beijing,” L.A. officials wrote to Beijing stating they preferred for Garcetti’s “direct counterpart” to sign the agreement — either the mayor or the Communist Party secretary of Beijing.

The Beijing officials wrote back to say that the executive vice mayor is a powerful figure with responsibility for climate change. Officials from the U.S. State Department also got involved, indicating that it would be appropriate for Garcetti and Li to sign the agreement.

The timing is not entirely clear from the emails, but it appears that Jacobs had already taken an interest in the executive vice mayor title. He conferred about it with Stephen Cheung, a former Garcetti official who now serves as the president of World Trade Center Los Angeles. Cheung wrote an email to Jacobs about the title after conferring with friends in China and Korea.

“Vice Mayors are pretty much the number 2 across the board for Asia,” Cheung wrote in an email dated April 30, which was resent to Jacobs on Aug. 24. “In China, the usage of Executive Vice Mayor is reserved for the major metropolitan areas and is reserved for leaders with more authority than Vice Mayors… Although Executive Vice Mayor is not utilized frequently in Korea and Japan, it is accepted both in the government and business sectors as the number 2 position after the Mayor.”

Cheung also noted that in Los Angeles, the most recent comparable title belonged to Austin Beutner, who served as “first deputy mayor” under Garcetti’s predecessor, Antonio Villaraigosa.

Jacobs declined a request for an interview on the subject. In a statement, Jacobs’ use of the title is not limited to interactions with Asian dignitaries. He also used it during the mayor’s trip to Paris for the U.N. conference on climate change. In an email to an official in Paris, Jacobs wrote, “By way of introduction, I am Executive Vice Mayor and Deputy Chief of Staff for Mayor Garcesi. I currently plan to travel with Mayor Garcetti and hope to have the pleasure of meeting you.”

As deputy chief of staff, the unelected Jacobs is not the second most powerful person in the city. That would be Herb Wesson, president of the City Council, who is the second-ranking person in Garcetti’s administration. That’s Ana Guerrero, Garcetti’s chief of staff. Guerrero and Rich Llewellyn, the mayor’s counsel, are the only two officials who report directly to the mayor. Garcetti also has four deputy mayors who, like Jacobs, report to Guerrero.

Los Angeles has not traditionally had a “vice mayor” title. However, in other cities, the title typically refers to an elected City Council member who fills in when the mayor is away.

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**GARCETTI HOGS NFL GLORY**

Inglewood officials say L.A. mayor’s claim of being central to Rams decision is spin

**BY DENNIS ROMERO**

When it comes to landing an NFL team, Inglewood, population 111,905, is the little city that could.

Big, bad Los Angeles approved a downtown stadium project in 2011. But last week Inglewood pulled off what L.A. couldn’t: The city of Inglewood fast-tracked approval of Rams owner Stan Kroenke’s plans for a 70,000-plus-seat venue in less than half the time it took L.A. to get it together. Then Inglewood put forth a project that NFL owners approved over the city of Carson’s proposal.

Yet, in media coverage last week, the man of the hour was one Eric Garcetti, mayor of Los Angeles. He didn’t mention Inglewood Mayor James T. Butts, leader of the actual city where the Rams will play in a 1.8 billion stadium. Garcetti appeared to hog the spotlight, despite having virtually nothing to do with it.

“My first choice was here in downtown initially,” Garcetti said at a press conference. “The construction jobs will still go to the men and women who live here.”

He spoke to various outlets and told journalists: “I was frequently in conversation with my fellow mayors in the region, with the [NFL] commissioner, with the owners, over the last couple of years. … I had lunches with them, tried to facilitate, let them know this was a unified region, for whatever team.”

Unnamed Inglewood city officials said Garcetti was not “frequently in conversation” with Butts. L.A. Weekly was told Butts did not want to comment.

Some sources felt Garcetti was taking credit where credit wasn’t due. However, a small group of unified civic leaders and staff led by Mayor James Butts in the city of Inglewood in partnership with a developer (Wilson Meany Sullivan), who had the foresight and temerity to bet on Inglewood with no promise of reward, accomplished the impossible.”
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Suzanne Whang
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Ariane Fleiderman-Borges and Mauricio Borges tried for six years, almost from the time they met, to become parents. One of the reasons Fleiderman, an accountant, and Borges, an auto mechanic, were drawn to each other was their willingness to have children together. “I wanted her to be able to experience being a mother,” Borges says, “because I already had children of my own and I wanted her to have that same feeling.”

The couple conceived naturally a few months after they met — just before Fleiderman turned 44 — and miscarried weeks later.

“I made it less than a month,” Fleiderman says. Her doctor at the time had predicted that might happen. “He said right then and there, ‘Your pregnancy’s not going to last,’ because of my age,” Fleiderman recalls.

The following year, in 2008, Fleiderman and Borges turned to artificial insemination. Again Fleiderman got pregnant, but at around week five her OB-GYN told her she feared Fleiderman had an ectopic pregnancy. A few days later, Fleiderman was given medication to stop the growth of the abnormally progressing pregnancy, and she miscarried again.

“The emotional and financial strain of trying to get pregnant and having failed pregnancies, one after another, it’s horrible,” Fleiderman says.

After three failed pregnancies, Ariane Fleiderman-Borges adopted frozen embryos from an Arizona couple and gave birth to twins — at age 50.

THE BRAVE NEW WORLD OF EMBRYO ADOPTION

By Stephanie Haney
behind with me.’”

Every now and again people leave embryos said, ‘You know, as a matter of fact there is. Her own sentence. Najmabadi, not really sure how to finish thing?’ Fleiderman recalls saying to Dr.

a sudden I felt compelled to ask, ‘Is there genet-ically related to me.”

sperm are fertilized by the sperm outside est eggs are fertilized by the sperm outside

Sitting in Dr. Najmabadi’s office that day in spring 2011, Fleiderman’s complicated journey to motherhood finally came into focus. She recalls thinking: “I already had experience loving a child that wasn’t genet-ically related to me.”

She says that as she sat there crying, “I felt a divine assistance of some sort. I’m not a heavily religious person, but all of a sudden I felt compelled to ask, ‘Is there anything else? Like embryo ... or something?’” Fleiderman recalls saying to Dr. Najmabadi, not really sure how to finish her own sentence.

“And then he looked up at me, and he said, ‘You know, as a matter of fact there is. Every now and again people leave embryos behind with me.’”

In July 1978, the very first “test-tube baby,” Louise Joy Brown, was born in England. She arrived 34 years after the first human embryo was created in vitro — and after hundreds of failed attempts to birth an IVF baby.

Infertility treatment and options would rapidly expand in the four decades follow-ing Brown’s landmark birth. More than 5 million babies have now entered the world as a result of IVF.

Embryo adoption is sort of a by-product of IVF. In IVF, eggs and sperm are collected (either the couple’s own, or eggs and/or sperm provided by donors), and the healthi-est eggs are fertilized by the sperm outside of the body, with the hope of creating mul-tiple embryos. One round of IVF can cost up to $15,000 without egg or sperm donors — and up to $30,000 if an egg donor is needed.

The embryos are given three to five days to mature, then one or more are transferred into a women’s uterus, hopefully to implant and grow into a pregnancy. Others are fro-zen for later use.

Freeze them and let nature take its course, and sometimes they give them to a doctor or a facility or a specific parent-to-be.

“I almost never saw anybody donating embryos for adoption 20 years ago,” Dr. Najmabadi says. “I don’t know if it’s the times or our education of the patient, but now more and more of that is happening.”

In 1997, Nightlight Christian Adoptions and many families now use the term for any baby born as a result of an embryo donation.

Tyson says that well over 1,000 babies have been born into families through emb-ryo adoption agencies, which operate sim-ilarly to some traditional adoption agen-cies in that the donating family chooses recipients from prospective parent profiles.

“The essence of our embryo adoption model is to encourage open relationships between the donor and the adopter,” Tyson says. At Snowflakes, she adds, finding a donating family that’s willing to adopt to a woman older than 45 is rare. She says donors “are trying to select the family that they believe will provide any resulting chil-dren with a safe and loving home environment, with parents who are healthy and able to care for them.”

Embryo donation also occurs at the fer-tility clinics where the embryos were cre-ated. At the clinics, the biological parents generally don’t participate in selecting pro-spective parents for their donated embryos and are more likely to remain anonymous. Dr. Najmabadi says that at his clinic, some donors do place restrictions on potential recipients but for the most part don’t re-main involved after they choose to donate their embryos.

Dr. Kristin A. Bendikson, with the divi-sion of reproductive endocrinology and infertility at the USC Keck School of Medi-cine, says her clinic transfers adopted embryos into women up to the age of 53.

“There really isn’t a difference in a woman’s ability to actually carry a pregnancy with an adopted embryo, whether she’s 48 or 46 or 45.”

According to the American Society for Reproductive Medicine, women should not undergo embryo transfers after the age of 55.

Dr. Bendikson acknowledges that an older couple considering embryo adop-tion should take into account the poten-tial drawbacks of having children at an advanced age.

“I think it’s important to consider the long-term ability to fulfill the emotional, psychological and physical needs of the child, and also consider what the chances of long-term parental relationships are going to be,” she says. “I also think that it is helpful for anyone undergoing embryo adoption to undergo psychological coun-seling. That is beneficial not only because of the age of the patient but also because of the adoption process in general and hav-ing a child that is not genetically yours.”

Couples who donate embryos also have pros and cons to take into account. Kimmie Carlos, a middle-school language arts teacher, and her husband, Ryan, a Los Angeles firefighter, had to weigh the emo-tional impact of donating embryos to a woman who would give birth to and raise a child that is genetically theirs.

“When you’re going through IVF, one thing that you’re not really prepared for is the amount of extra embryos that you might have,” says Kimmie Carlos, who, like her husband, is 34. “The majority of people don’t have a ton. They have what they need. It’s more common to have too few than it is to have an abundance.”
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- A woman of childbearing potential

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But Kimmi and Ryan Carlos did have an abundance of embryos. They were left with 12 strong embryos after successfully getting pregnant with their now 5-year-old twins, a boy and a girl. Kimmi Carlos had a tough time with her initial pregnancy with the twins. She spent nearly 12 weeks on bed rest, and she knew she didn’t want to go through that again.

Then, 14 months after the twins were born, Kimmi Carlos got pregnant naturally with their third child, a son who’s now 3.

The Carlos family eventually decided to donate their remaining 12 embryos.

“I personally struggled, as I’d be pushing my twins on swings at the park, with why they got to be the lucky two, as much as I love them,” Kimmi Carlos says. “I felt in my heart the rest of them deserved the same chance at life.”

Dr. Najmabadi told Fleiderman that he suspected the problem might have been with the embryo implantation. “Many times abnormal embryos do not continue past a certain stage of pregnancy after they have implanted,” he says. “It is sometimes possible to get pregnant with an abnormal embryo that then results in a miscarriage.”

Dr. Najmabadi says he suspected the problem might have been with the embryo implantation. “Many times abnormal embryos do not continue past a certain stage of pregnancy after they have implanted,” he says. “It is sometimes possible to get pregnant with an abnormal embryo that then results in a miscarriage.”

Genetic screening and diagnosis of the embryo can be done, reducing the odds of an abnormal embryo being transferred. However, Dr. Najmabadi says this kind of testing is invasive and expensive, so most embryo transfers are done without it.

Fleiderman visited again four months later, this time with two embryos. But neither would implant into her uterine wall. Fleiderman feared the stress of the loss of her mother, who had died from lymphoma, while driving without a license, and that put me in a very bad situation,” Borges says.

“Then my husband got himself detained,” Fleiderman says.

“I made the mistake of getting arrested while driving without a license, and that put me in a very bad situation,” Borges says. “They were going to deport me back to Brazil.”

Borges was first sent to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s Contra Costa West County Detention Facility in Richmond before being relocated to the Adelanto Detention Facility in Adelanto. Merely being married to a U.S. citizen is no longer a path to getting a green card if a person didn’t enter the country legally in the first place. Because Borges entered the United States illegally in 2002, his marriage to Fleiderman, a U.S. citizen, is irrelevant to his immigration status.

With her husband stuck in Adelanto, Fleiderman decided to push ahead and try to get pregnant again.

This time, Dr. Najmabadi suggested trying to implant all three of the remaining embryos. But Fleiderman told him she was too scared to handle it if all three happened to take, so she wanted to try with two instead.

Fleiderman says that on that day in February 2013, she showed up for the procedure at her most relaxed yet. “I went in by myself, popped the Valium and fell asleep after the transfer,” she says. “It felt like shopping. Letting the doctor choose made it feel more natural.”

Dr. Najmabadi says that when it’s left up to him, he tries to select embryos that come from biological parents who have similar physical characteristics to those of the parents-to-be.

The embryo transplant wasn’t an immediate success. In June 2011, Dr. Najmabadi initially tried to transfer only one embryo, the closest physical match to Fleiderman and her husband, and made the most sense to Dr. Najmabadi in terms of the other factors, so their embryos were the ones chosen to come to life.

“We try to match the prospective parent with a close match in race, eye color and hair color of the donor,” Najmabadi says. “For example, if someone comes in with blond hair and green eyes, we would go through our data bank and say, OK, we have maybe one donor that matches them or three donors that match them, and then we present those options to the patient.”

He says he can describe the donors’ characteristics to the would-be parents but can’t show any pictures due to doctor-patient confidentiality.

The embryo successfully implanted into Fleiderman’s uterine lining—but the pregnancy resulted in another miscarriage, on Fleiderman’s 48th birthday. “That one was probably the hardest,” she says.

Could do,” Borges says. “She asked me what I thought, if I’m a true mother, I want [my] children to have the strongest bodies possible. So I should not try and insist they be from my eggs.”

“ ‘I thought, ‘If I’m a true mother, I want [my] children to have the strongest bodies possible. So I should not try and insist they be from my eggs.’ ”

—ARIANE FLEIDERMÄN

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He says he can describe the donors’ characteristics to the would-be parents but can’t show any pictures due to doctor-patient confidentiality.

Kai and Audrey’s genetic parents were because Fleiderman didn’t want to chance a multiple birth.

The process itself takes less than 10 minutes. To prepare, the patient goes through a series of estrogen and progesterone supplements, to mimic what would be happening to the body if it were experiencing a natural pregnancy. The embryos are thawed on either day three or day five of the progesterone supplement, corresponding to whether the embryos were frozen on day three or day five after fertilization. On the day of transfer, the patient takes a Valium and goes into a dark room near the back of the clinic to relax. Some patients opt to receive acupuncture. Then Dr. Najmabadi goes to work.

“I go in under ultrasound guidance, put a catheter into the uterus and release the embryos into the uterus,” Dr. Najmabadi says. “That’s it. That’s the embryo transfer process.”

The next step is implantation, in which the embryo basically digs itself into the uterine lining. It doesn’t always work.

“The doctor told us it was impossible for us to have kids with her eggs, even though she was very healthy and could carry the pregnancy, so there wasn’t much else we could do,” Borges says. “She asked me what I thought, and I said, ‘If it’s good for you, it’s good for me.’”

There also was the cost factor. Securing an egg donor and going through the IVF process would come to about $30,000—10 times as much as embryo adoption. “It was beyond a generous offer,” Fleiderman says.

Once Fleiderman decided to go forward with the gift, she let Dr. Najmabadi choose the donor from the list. “I didn’t want to pick, because it didn’t sit right,” she says.

“It felt like shopping. Letting the doctor choose made it feel more natural.”

Dr. Najmabadi says that when it’s left up to him, he tries to select embryos that come from biological parents who have similar physical characteristics to those of the parents-to-be.
It took weeks before Fleiderman’s blood test showed that both embryos had successfully implanted. Fleiderman admits that when Dr. Najmabadi confirmed she was pregnant with twins, she was torn. “At that point I was so tired they could have told me I was going to give birth to Martians and I would have been like, ‘OK, that’s fine. What time do I need to report for the birth?’”

But at other times, she says, “I definitely freaked out that there were two.”

She was still unsure of her husband’s residency status. Borges’ immigration lawyers were telling Fleiderman there was a 50-50 chance that he’d be deported to Brazil. “I was anticipating that I would basically be a single mother,” she says. “A single mother of one was daunting enough.”

Fleiderman says she started thinking about articles she’d read that described complications with multiple births, as well as situations when embryos were removed to save other embryos, or because the number of births posed a risk to the mother’s health, or even because the parent wasn’t able to properly care for more than one infant.

So she asked about embryo reduction. Embryo reduction is performed by only a few doctors in the Los Angeles area, and Dr. Najmabadi isn’t one of them. It’s a process where the doctor removes one or more embryos after an IVF cycle to give the other embryos a better chance of survival.

Then Fleiderman’s doctor showed her an ultrasound image of the two embryos and let her listen to their heartbeats. Fleiderman says she thought to herself, “Well, I’m kind of old to be having these babies, so I’ll keep them both — so when I’m senile, they’ll have each other.”

But she still wasn’t sure she could handle raising the two of them if her husband were to fail to get U.S. citizenship. She asked her cousin if he would be willing to raise one of them as a co-parent. She also scheduled an appointment to meet with an adoption counselor.

After missing her appointment three times, Fleiderman says she was hit with another realization. “One day I just looked down at my belly and I said, ‘OK, I get the message. You guys don’t want to be separated.’”

About halfway through Fleiderman’s pregnancy, Borges was released from detention pending a deportation hearing. His immigration lawyers seemed to think the result would be one of two extremes: He would be granted a green card or sent back to Brazil.

“I really worried about her, because she was so big and pregnant,” Borges says. “It wasn’t easy for her, being 50 and pregnant with twins. And she helped me with lawyers, all the papers, everything to get me out of there.”

Borges says when they let him leave Adelanto in May 2013, pending his hearing, that it was like “a gift from God.”

And it left Fleiderman free to focus on enjoying her pregnancy as much as possible.

“Pregnancy was not comfortable with twins, at 50, at all,” Fleiderman says. “My feet expanded a size and a half!”

When the day finally came for the twins to be born — Sept. 24, 2013 — she was ready. “I actually drove myself to the maternity ward.”

The twins were delivered via Cesarean section. Fleiderman made it through the delivery fine, but she lost a lot of blood due to a blood-clotting condition.

“I remember hearing Kai. I heard him cry, and then I kind of deliriously remember Audrey,” she says. “And then I passed out.”

“I saw my boy first, and after that Audrey,” Borges recalls. “Audrey was more skinny, smaller; Kai was bigger, more fat.”

Audrey had to be kept in an incubator for a week because she did not have enough body fat to hold her temperature. “I was a little concerned,” Fleiderman says. “But I was happy they made it, that they were safe. It was a healthy pregnancy, by general standards.”

On Sept. 22, 2014, two days before the twins’ first birthday, Borges had his deportation hearing. He was granted a temporary work visa and was permitted to stay in the United States legally.

“It was my second chance,” Borges says. His second chance has allowed him to see Audrey and Kai start developing their own personalities. “Audrey is so smart, it’s scary,” Fleiderman says. “She wants to do everything herself. She’s my little chili pepper — she’s a little spicy.”

“Kai is my little piece of chocolate,” she says. “He’s just sweet.”

Fleiderman and Borges say that Audrey looks out for Kai, even though she’s younger by one minute.

“They are like a team. Anytime you give anything to Audrey, like a piece of food, the first word out of her mouth is ‘Kai,’ to make sure you give something to Kai, too,” Borges says. “She is very protective of him.”

“They’ve hijacked my life,” Fleiderman says. “Which is fine. One nice thing about having them when I was older is that I’ve been able to travel and work [before I had them], and so I’m at peace with dedicating all my time to raising them.”

From the group of embryos created by the Arizona couple, the twins have at least one sibling that Fleiderman knows about. “Kai and Audrey were frozen in time,” Fleiderman says. “They were conceived at the same time, but if they were ever to meet their sibling, their sibling would be eight years older.”

Fleiderman and Borges say they’re open to the twins meeting their biological family someday, if the Arizona couple is amenable. Dr. Najmabadi says he would be willing to discuss the issue with his patients.

Fleiderman says she does not feel threatened by the possibility of bringing biological family members into her family dynamic — and she hopes other women having difficulty conceiving might come to the same realization. “I would tell women not to sweat making it their egg, and men not to sweat making it their sperm,” she says.

Fleiderman says that even though it’s not her and her husband’s DNA they’re passing on, they have been able to connect with their children in a profound way by experiencing pregnancy and childbirth.

“I always tease people and say, ‘I beat the fertility clock,’” she says. “How about that?”

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The state of Echo Park’s dining scene could be viewed as dispiriting. A few years ago, it seemed as if the rapidly gentrifying neighborhood would attract restaurants with ambition to match the newly soaring rents. Exciting openings such as Allumette and Cortez showed that restaurateurs were willing to bet on quirky, high-reaching concepts that you might not see in more established restaurant districts. Alas, it was not to be — both of those restaurants closed within 18 months. While quality neighborhood eateries continue to open — Ostrich Farm seems to be chugging along nicely, for instance — it looks very much as though the formula for success in Echo Park is still burgers and beer.

Rather than attempt to buck this trend, the most interesting new restaurant in Echo Park ran with it, and pushed it even further. If neighborhood residents want cheap fun and greasy food, might they also be interested in video games, pinball machines, and craft beers? It turns out that, yes, that’s exactly what they want. Button Mash is the new arcade/restaurant from owners Jordan Weiss and Gabe Fowlkes, along with Nguyen and Thi Tran, who have for years been known for their nomadic pop-up project, Starry Kitchen.

Button Mash is such a hit that on Friday nights a line stretches around the building just to get past the ID-checking doorman. The wait for a table can easily last an hour during peak times. Not to worry: There’s plenty to do after you’ve spoken to the shell-shocked-looking hostess while you wait for your table. Like drink beer and play Donkey Kong.

Button Mash is a lot of fun. I say this as a person who has mixed feelings about arcades and video games, in general, and who, as the mother of a 12-year-old, has spent much of the last decade in a constant battle to keep gaming from swallowing up the entirety of my family life. When I was in my mid-20s and living in New York City, my boyfriend (now husband) proudly brought home the full-sized arcade version of Street Fighter and acted as if the mere opportunity to own such a thing was a rare and wonderful prize. I was horrified at the space it took up in our small apartment and at the energy that pervaded that apartment whenever friends came over to play.

Arcades for me as a child were places to fear: dark, full of teenage boys and what friends came over to play. Fear: dark, full of teenage boys and what friends came over to play. But video games have just never been my jam. I managed to banish Street Fighter within a couple of years, an act my husband has never quite forgiven.

At the back of the restaurant is a store act replica of what was served at any of the pop-up’s iterations. In fact, there seems somewhat separate, in part because I get the feeling the Trans have not given up hope for their own place one day, and also because they’ve recently partnered with UberEats to offer Starry Kitchen food, separately from Button Mash. All that is to say there are no chili crabs served on huge, steaming platters here, which was perhaps Starry Kitchen’s most beloved dish. The menu is more like a greatest-hits album of Asian and American drunk food.

There are crispy tofu balls, Starry Kitchen’s other signature dish and the subject of much punnery when the Trans went into this thing, from the way the ingredients are stacked (mustard, meat, American cheese, Boston lettuce, tomato, onion, pickle) to the intense crisp on the patties. It’s really tall and really good in a really base kind of way.

There are several rice and noodle dishes that are mainly good but certainly not great — there are far better dan dan noodles around, far better spicy, cold Korean noodles. If the idea of Spam fried rice appeals to you, then you’ll probably like the Spam fried rice here — it’s just as greasy and bouncy as it sounds.

I wished the shrimp toast was a little crisper and the fried eggplant a little less spongy. I loved the gloppy cheese corn lubed up in Kewpie mayo more than I care to admit.

If it turns out that this is, in fact, the new face of Echo Park’s dining scene, maybe that’s a good thing. When your burgers and beer come wrapped in such original, joyful revelry — with tofu balls and Galaga thrown in for good measure — it somehow feels fresher than half the serious restaurants in town.

**CRITIC’S RATING**
★★★ ★★★

No, I’m not saying Button Mash is “Save Our Balls.” (They hoped for $500,000 — it didn’t happen.) Perhaps I forgot how good those tofu balls were in the past, or perhaps they’re better here, crisper, larger, softer on the inside, the corn and green onions popping more, the sriracha aioli more bawdily perfect for the occasion.

The bar-food excellence continues with appropriately lacquered double-fried chicken wings, which you can get in a number of flavors: tamarind, ginger or a “tangy” version made with gochujang. There’s a cheeseburger that is, like the games, pure old-school nostalgia. Usually this is where I’d say they’ve “elevated” the burger, but I don’t think that’s the word for it: This is a devotional product, the celebration of an iconic dish rather than an attempt to better it. A lot of thought has gone into this thing, from the way the ingredients are stacked (mustard, meat, American cheese, Boston lettuce, tomato, onion, pickle) to the intense crisp on the patties. It’s really tall and really good in a really base kind of way.

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The involvement of Starry Kitchen is an obvious draw, though this food isn’t an exact replica of what was served at any of the pop-up’s iterations. In fact, there seems to be an effort to keep the two brands somewhat separate, in part because I get the feeling the Trans have not given up hope for their own place one day, and also because they’ve recently partnered with UberEats to offer Starry Kitchen food, separately from Button Mash. All that is to say there are no chili crabs served on huge, steaming platters here, which was perhaps Starry Kitchen’s most beloved dish. The menu is more like a greatest-hits album of Asian and American drunk food.

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Delayed gratification is overrated. Why wait decades for whiskey to barrel-age when you can have it in a week? In that spirit, L.A.-based entrepreneurs Théron Regnier and Wynn Sanders have launched the world’s first flash-produced whiskey, Rattleback Rye.

These are not your typical spirits-industry insiders. Regnier has a background in finance and is a licensed real estate broker. Sanders is an Air Force veteran turned MIT doctorate recipient turned venture capitalist. The two came together over a shared passion for whiskey. Each spent time at distilleries, bars and tastings, and even trekked the Bourbon Trail in Kentucky. It was when Regnier started hosting whiskey tastings around town for fun that he noticed something absent in the market.

“What was missing was a truly mature rye affordable enough for mixology but enjoyable enough to drink neat or on the rocks,” Regnier says via email.

The Silicon Beach–based entrepreneurs started hunting for people who were working on the same problem. Eventually they came across Lost Spirits, a boutique distillery that created a rum in six days using a machine called The THEA | One Reactor. According to the Lost Spirits website, the chemical reactor “enables the creation of distilled spirits with the aroma, taste and texture of fully matured spirits along with a nearly identical chemical signature to products aged for 20 years or more” using “oak, fresh distillate and energy. That’s it.”

“Without hesitation we contacted them about developing the technology to create a whiskey with a cause: building the community by disrupting a cycle that left people spending more or settling for less,” Regnier says.

Once Regnier and Sanders got a hold of a THEA | One Reactor — complete with an “American South Protocol” to simulate the climate of the South — they partnered with Bend Spirits in Oregon to help with the R&D on their new rye. Today, the reactor is housed at the Bend Spirits distillery churning out 100-proof whiskey set to be released to the public early this year. Rattleback’s molecular structure is essentially the same as a traditionally produced rye, but it won’t be exactly the same.

“Will [customers] notice a difference between what they’ve been ordering and Rattleback? Absolutely,” Regnier says. “But even among mature ryes, there are significant differences found due to everything from the wood, mash bill, ABV and more.”

That said, the founders are confident that drinkers will appreciate Rattleback.

“Rattleback is for those who love whiskey and those who don’t love whiskey yet,” Regnier says. —Natalie Compton

OPENINGS

Chicago’s Most Famous Szechuan Restaurant Comes to Glendale
What do Chicago, Las Vegas and downtown Glendale have in common?

They’re all now home to outlets of Lao Sze Chuan, celebrity chef Tony Hu’s popular Sichuan restaurant, which has been the standard-bearer for Chinese cooking in the Midwest for the last decade or so.

Since opening his first restaurant in Chicago’s Chinatown, Hu has built an empire around his spicy, lip-tingling cuisine, which includes about 10 restaurants in the Chicago area, one in Las Vegas’ Palms casino and a recent expansion to Glendale.

Yet Hu’s restaurants have experienced turbulence in the past year or two. There was an FBI raid on one of his restaurants in 2014, a brief closure by the Department of Health and a sale of one of his concepts, Lao Beijing. At Lao Sze Chuan in Glendale, however, none of this drama is readily apparent. The space is modern and comfortable, and servers are tactful enough to please customers trying “real” Chinese for the first time, as well as those who fancy themselves experts in SGV Chinese food.

Chicago’s Most Famous Szechuan Restaurant Comes to Glendale
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A meal here starts with a free appetizer of spicy pickled cabbage. The list of dishes is sizable already, but a note promises that it’s only for the soft opening (“Full menu with over 500+ items coming soon!”).

Lao Ma wontons, thin-skinned dumplings awash in crushed ma la peppercorns and chile oil, arrive glowing with an aura of spice that’s more pleasurable than sweat-inducing. The same heat powers the famous Chef’s Special dry chilli chicken, a plateful of crispy fried chicken bits wok-tossed with dried chilies, garlic and ginger. The chicken is crispy and moist. Diced green beans with preserved black beans and crispy, pan-fried chow mein are enjoyable side dishes, although both have a heavy dose of chili oil mixed in.

Much of the Sichuan cooking here seems solid — not quite of the level of stalwarts such as Chengdu Taste and Szechuan Impression, where the peppercorn heat seems somehow brighter but also more subtle. But this is Glendale, and it might make more sense to compare Lao Sze Chuan with Din Tai Fung, or with Meizhou Dongpo, the Chinese import serving high-end Sichuan food at the Century City mall. That is to say: Tony Hu and his empire’s arrival might not have the same impact it would have had a decade ago, but even in a city that takes its Chinese food seriously, it’s only for the soft opening (“Full menu with over 500+ items coming soon!”).

Former Animal Chef to Open Japanese-Mexican Restaurant in Koreatown

When chef Jonathan Whitener departed his post as chef de cuisine at Jon Shook and Vinny Dotolo’s acclaimed Animal back in December, there was a sense of mourning among a certain circle of diners. This was the guy, after all, who came up with killer Animal dishes such as “honey walnut” fried crab with black Sriracha, crispy rabbit lard, and tonkotsu ramen topped with ham hocks and Swiss chard. Luckily, he won’t be out of commission long: Whitener is teaming up with Lien Ta, a former manager at Animal and culinary liaison for Shook and Dotolo’s restaurant group, to open a new 50-seat restaurant in Koreatown this spring: Here’s Looking at You.

The food will tap into L.A.’s wide range of immigrant cuisines for inspiration. Whitener notes that, as a surfer kid who grew up in Huntington Beach eating burritos and musubi, his cooking exhibits a heavy Japanese-Mexican influence. Whitener has been experimenting with dishes at private catering dinners, and he shared some creations that have made the cut: fried chicken with ume (sour plum) ranch, hamachi crudo with tamarind-hibiscus onions and beer ponzu, broiled unagi with mole negro and polenta, burrata with rau ram pesto, beet-persimmon poke, and an endive salad with Chinese sausage and five-spice blue cheese dressing (“I’m a pretty good condiment maker,” he says).

Whitener has been working in restaurants since he was 13, when he borrowed an older friend’s Social Security number to land a dishwashing gig. He attended culinary school in New York before moving back to L.A., where he worked at Craft and Mezze. After three years at Animal, Whitener — winner of the 2014 Los Angeles Rising Star Chef award — left on amicable terms. “I loved cooking at Animal, but sometimes I would come up with dishes that were a little too refined for the menu and I’d write them down for later. The food we did was supposed to be kind of ‘dirty,’ amped up with lots of fat, salt and acid.”

Whitener and Ta, who became friends while working at Animal, didn’t anticipate opening a restaurant so soon, but after learning that Beer Belly owner Jimmy Han was looking for a new tenant for his former Whiz location (as well as two adjacent parcels), the wheels were set in motion. The duo is currently designing the restaurant, utilizing warm and clean colors. Interestingly, Whitener previously restored and resold vintage furniture, which probably gives him an advantage over most chefs when picking out bathroom tile.

The restaurant’s name comes not from Casablanca but from a vintage tiki postcard that Ta stumbled upon. Expect a list of wines from sommelier Danielle Fournier of DFF Wine, as well as craft beers and a few cocktails once the liquor license arrives.

“We couldn’t be more excited to open in Koreatown,” Ta says. “It’s a neighborhood we’ve loved and admired for a long time.”

—Garrett Snyder
From the creators of 626 Night Market comes a new exclusive tasting event on the Westside, featuring an international pan-L.A. mix of cuisines from local chefs and rising tastemakers.

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Red Velvet Burlesque: See Wednesday.
yellow cedar “I beams” inside artist Minoru Chira’s solo exhibition, “Iki and Yabo.” It’s a rare collaboration between two accomplished masters blending two very different art forms. Tickets will be sold for four seatings, with two to four people at each seating. Offramp Gallery, 1702 Lincoln Ave., Pasadena; Sun., Jan. 24, noon-9 p.m.; $200. (626) 298-6931, offrampgallery.com. —Garrett Snyder

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**STORYTELLING**

**What’s the Story?**

With David Bowie’s passing, the world has one fewer storyteller. Luckily, the Moth consistently introduces us to new ones. The latest edition of the Moth’s GrandSLAM, featuring the winners of the past 10 grueling StorySLAMS and hosted by comedian Brian Babylon, has its proverbial finger on the pulse of what’s happening right now — its theme is “Now or Never,” and you’ll hear all sorts of gripping, revelatory, mind-shattering tales of taking the plunge, leaping without looking and double-fucking-dog-dares that changed multiple lives on different levels in the space of moments. The Echoplex, 1154 Glendale Blvd., Echo Park; Mon., Jan. 25, 7 p.m.; $25. (213) 413-8200, theecho.com/event/1053133-moth-grandslam-los-angeles. —David Corner

**COMEDY**

**Better Call Bob**

You know Bob Odenkirk as Saul Goodman, or half of Mr. Show With Bob and David. Comedian-writer Chris Witaske knows him as his manager Naomi’s husband. The Better Call Saul and Breaking Bad actor will be the first guest on Witaske’s monthly interview show, So, you do comedy ... ?, where famous funny folk talk about working in the business. Witaske will grill Odenkirk about his start in Chicago, how to maintain career longevity, etc. If you’re lucky, you might get to ask Odenkirk a few questions in a Q&A. Originally from Chicago, Witaske — whose credits include Second City and iO — has performed and toured with Odenkirk, and will appear in the upcoming Judd Apatow–produced Netflix comedy series, Love. UCB Sunset, 5429 W. Sunset Blvd., East Hollywood; Mon., Jan. 25, 7 p.m.; $5. (323) 908-8702, sunset.ucbtheatre.com. —Siran Babayan

**BOOKS**

**That’s Neat**

“Tidying is the act of confronting yourself; cleaning is the act of confronting nature,” writes Marie Kondo in Spark Joy: An Illustrated Master Class on the Art of Organizing and Tidying Up. The Japanese organizing expert discusses her new book as part of Live Talks Los Angeles. Kondo first wrote about her cleanliness-is-next-to-nirvana message — also known as the KonMari method — in 2014’s The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing. Her follow-up gives more advice on keeping only what gives you joy, and includes her six rules of tidying and a tidying encyclopedia with tips on how to put away everything from clothes to sentimental items. William Turner Gallery, 5255 Michigan Ave., E1 (Bergamot Station), Santa Monica; Mon., Jan. 25, 8 p.m.; $20-$95. livetalksla.org. —Siran Babayan

**tue 1/26**

**POLITICS**

**A Country in Crisis**

The Syrian civil war and the refugees that have been displaced by it have become the biggest humanitarian crisis in recent times. More than 4 million refugees have fled to safety in neighboring countries and Europe, and there are more than 7 million displaced people within Syria. As part of the Hammer Museum’s Hammer Forum, KPFT host Ian Masters leads The Migrant Tide From Syria, a discussion on how European countries — and the United States — are responding to the migrant situation. Panelists include Jana Mason, a senior adviser for the U.N. Refugee Agency; Daryl Grisgraber, a senior advocate for the Middle East and North Africa for Refugees International; and, according to the museum, a recently arrived Syrian refugee who goes by the name “Yazan.” Hammer Museum, 10899 Wilshire Blvd., Westwood; Tue., Jan. 26, 7:30 p.m.; free. (310) 443-7000, hammer.ucla.edu. —Siran Babayan

**wed 1/27**

**BURLESQUE**

**Crazy, Sexy, Weird**

There’s a fine line between the erotic and the disturbing — or at least that’s the idea behind the House of Red Velvet burlesque, described on producer-performer Olivia Bellafontaine’s Tumblr as “[a] euphoric and darkly strange burlesque art show ... or simply sexy women doing weird shit.” Bellafontaine is joined by Kristina Nekyia, Miss Miranda, Brynn Route and Erica Snap to put on a show that’s equal parts sexy and bizarre, kind of like a David Lynch movie being performed live. Bar Lubitsch, 7702 Santa Monica Blvd., West Hollywood; Wed., Jan. 27, 8-10 p.m.; $15, $20 at the door. thehouseofredvelvet.brownpapertickets.com. —Gwynedd Stuart

**ART**

**The Art of the Matter**

For being a visual event, L.A. Art Show boasts a lot of big numbers, featuring art from 120 galleries in 22 countries...
and welcoming tens of thousands — 50,000 in 2015 — collectors and gawkers into its expansive maze of exhibit spaces. In addition to its breadth and popularity, L.A. Art Show prides itself on importing significant amounts of work from Chinese, Korean and Japanese galleries, the most outside of Asia, and for supporting established and emerging artists alike. The four-day exposition, which officially opens on Thursday, Jan. 28, and runs through Sunday, Jan. 31, kicks off on Wednesday night with a fancy-ass opening-night premiere party hosted by actress Anne Hathaway and her husband, actor-producer Adam Shulman, to benefit St. Jude. Los Angeles Convention Center, 1201 S. Figueroa St., downtown; Wed., Jan. 27, 8 p.m.; $125-$250. laartshow.com.

—Gwynedd Stuart

DANCE

Wolfe Pack

Choreographer Meg Wolfe says New Faithful Disco is a “queer love power trio” and promises that the three performers — she, taisha paggett and Marbles (aka Rae Shao-Lan) — will exhibit the awkwardness and contradictions inherent in that description. The title and the choreography borrow freely from the DJ practice of remixing sounds and recordings, but Wolfe expands the concept to human relationships. As a postmodern choreographer, Wolfe is highly regarded in Los Angeles and also has made her mark in New York’s dance scene. Her national stature is underscored by this event being co-commissioned by REDCAT, San Francisco’s Z Space, Portland, Oregon’s Institute of Contemporary Art and Houston’s Diverse Works.


—Ann Haskins

COMEDY

Party Down

Were you ever to host your dream dinner party, the guest list might look something like the lineup for The Dinner Party Download. Brendan Francis Newnam and Rico Gagliano host their biweekly KPCC radio show and podcast on which actors and celebrities discuss their careers; and writers, musicians, chefs and artists discuss everything from history and music to what's trendy in food and cocktails. Past guests have included Al Pacino, Steve Martin, Mel Brooks, Spike Lee, Willie Nelson, Patti Smith and Gus Van Sant. Tonight’s live taping features actor Jason Schwartzman, singer Father John Misty and comedian Jenny Slate. The Theatre at Ace Hotel, 929 S. Broadway, downtown; Thu., Jan. 28, 8 p.m.; $32.50. (213) 623-3233, acehotel.com/losangeles/theatre.

—Siran Babayan

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NO, YOU CAN’T PLAY AS A GUY

The gaming world’s newest hero is an average teenage girl — and she’s growing on everyone

BY LIZ OHANESIAN

When Sean Krankel and Adam Hines, co-founders of Glendale-based video game studio Night School, began inviting players to test their debut title, Oxenfree, there was one question that arose again and again: “Can I play as one of the guys?” Hines recalls several players asking at the start of the game — and each time the answer was no. In Oxenfree, you are Alex. She is your default. Male players had to warm up to the idea, though. “I don’t think a lot of people, when they started playing it, had a clear understanding of the type of game that it was,” Krankel says. “They were looking at a skin as opposed to a human.” Fortunately, the players’ hesitations didn’t linger for long. “After 10 minutes, they would get into the rhythm and the flow,” Hines says.

Krankel and Hines are cousins who, despite a six-year age difference, collaborated on creative projects together as children in suburban Chicago. They made a horror movie, a game-review show and a couple of Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle flicks with a camcorder and a Walkman. While both eventually landed in Los Angeles and went to work in the game industry, sometimes at the same companies at the same time, this is their first professional collaboration.

They didn’t set out to make a game driven by a female character. Their first goal was to make a narrative-style game where players had the freedom to move and interact in a choose-your-own-adventure sort of way. They began by deciding on a location (“vaguely Pacific Northwest,” as Hines describes it). The story came later and was inspired in part by movies like Stand by Me and The Goonies. They wanted to make a coming-of-age adventure with a twist: “You can choose how you want to come of age,” Hines specifies.

“Most games that have choice involve big mortal choices of who is going to die right now or who is going to get shot or whatever,” Krankel says. “Why don’t games have choices that feel more familiar, like what was it like the first time somebody tried to kiss you, or the first time somebody offered you a cigarette or a drink, or the first time that you tried to impress a friend?”

With this in mind, they found inspiration in the short-lived and beloved television series Freaks and Geeks and its protagonist, Lindsay Weir. “Specifically, that character of Lindsay was somebody that everybody, male or female, could relate to, that moment of becoming someone new,” Krankel explains.

Alex developed from there. “It wasn’t a choice of ‘let’s cram a girl lead into this game,’” Krankel says. Hines adds, “After two weeks, this was the only way the story could be told, with this specific character.”

That’s what makes Oxenfree such an engaging game. On my first visit to Night School HQ, I lost track of time while playing it. As Alex, I could make decisions about this fictional life, and those choices made an impact on how other characters would respond to me. I searched the island looking for the strange secrets it held but also anxiously awaited more of Alex’s story to be revealed.

Oxenfree’s development more like a book than a video game. Krankel mentions that the team hopes this game will appeal to fans of books such as The Hunger Games and Internet-based tales like Creepypasta, in addition to the indie video game crowd.

That could happen. Night School recently joined forces with Skybound Entertainment, the firm led by The Walking Dead creator Robert Kirkman, to help bring Alex’s story to various media platforms, including film.

Oxenfree has been in the works for less than a year and a half, a short time considering the scope of the game and the size of the group behind it: an in-house team of six people, a sound designer in Seattle and a few contractors. They first showcased a playable version last fall at IndieCade in Culver City. Despite very little time spent promoting the game, it has already earned accolades, including being named a finalist for the Excellence in Visual Art award at this year’s Independent Games Festival in San Francisco.

The game’s lead artist, Heather Gross, is originally from the Seattle area and used some of her own recollections to help visualize the setting. Krankel and Hines also attended a Goonies 30th-anniversary event in Astoria, Oregon, for research and the team went on a trip to El Capitan Canyon near Santa Barbara for more visual inspiration. “It’s like glamping,” Krankel says with a laugh. “We weren’t camping, we were just in a cabin in a nice place.”

The game’s protagonist may have developed by happenstance, but the team at Night School is proud of the fact that they have a well-rounded and complex female character at the center of their game. Krankel in particular says he’s “thrilled” to have his wife and daughter play something where the female lead isn’t a “sassy, gun-toting” hot chick. Alex, he says, is “just a cool, interesting person.”

“WHY DON’T GAMES HAVE CHOICES THAT FEEL MORE FAMILIAR, LIKE WHAT WAS IT LIKE THE FIRST TIME SOMEBODY TRIED TO KISS YOU, OR THE FIRST TIME SOMEBODY OFFERED YOU A CIGARETTE OR A DRINK?”

—SEAN KRANKEL

Freaks and Geeks’ Lindsay Weir.

Teal-haired heroine Alex was inspired by Freaks and Geeks’ Lindsay Weir.
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WELCOME TO SPLITSVILLE
A LOOK BACK AT BYGONE
DIVORCES, PLUS FIERY ART
INSPIRED BY THE ENNIS HOUSE

BY CATHERINE WAGLEY

This week, an L.A. artist digs up old newspaper photographs of women who filed for divorce, and a writer celebrates the book he burned after he spent a year writing it.

Book burning

Writer Chiwan Choi became an artist-in-residence at Katz’s Deli in early 2015. “In 2015, he will write a book and lose it,” read the press release announcing his project. Choi would write a chapter each month, read it, then publicly destroy it at various sites around the city. Katz’s Deli founder Amanda Katz would oversee the collecting and transcription of witness testimonies after each event. So the process for writing Choi’s book Ghostmakers would be documented and experimental, in the vein of a number of conceptual artists (who have eaten works, buried them, locked them up or thrown them into tar pits). The plan was always to hold a brunch when he completed Ghostmakers. The brunch, and a conversation with Choi, happens this weekend.

Amy Besson’s Number 1: Silvana

Amy Bessone took these images, which she blew up and printed large, from newspaper stories about divorce cases. All of the women pictured separated from their husbands between the 1930s and ’70s. One smaller photo tells part of a pretty blond woman’s story: She said her husband hit her; he said she complained constantly about the weather. Bessone has paired these archival images with unruly ceramic sculptures of women’s torsos, each placed on a wooden pedestal. Some sculpted bodies have black fingerprints on them, beadlike growths protruding from a thick pool of honey. The scene is pristine inside the glass, but if the glass were to shatter, the black stone and honey would leave a sticky mess.

Lava lamp modernism

Frank Lloyd Wright built his Ennis House in Los Feliz in 1924, taking inspiration from Mayan reliefs. It sits like an imposing fortress with Griffith Park behind it. Emanuel Röhss took the Ennis House as his subject, reproducing some of its flourishes and ornamentation. The highlight of his Thomas Duncan Gallery show, “Invitation to Love,” are resin columns made from molds modeled on Ennis House designs. In the upstairs gallery, the columns are lit so they glow red and orange. They also stand in front of a garish orange-red-and-black painting, which makes being in the room feel like being in a lava lamp. It’s more overtly, knowingly theatrical than Wright’s version of tastefulness yet all based on iconic modern design.

Divorces that history forgot

For the most part, the women pictured in L.A.-based Amy Bessone’s new exhibition at Gavlak Gallery, “The Century of Women,” appear well-behaved; they’re smartly dressed and carefully posed. Bessone took these images, which she blew up and printed large, from newspaper stories about divorce cases. All of the women pictured separated from their husbands between the 1930s and ’70s. One smaller photo tells part of a pretty blond woman’s story: She said her husband hit her; he said she complained constantly about the weather. Bessone has paired these archival images with unruly ceramic sculptures of women’s torsos, each placed on a wooden pedestal. Some sculpted bodies have black fingerprints on them, beadlike growths protruding from a thick pool of honey. The scene is pristine inside the glass, but if the glass were to shatter, the black stone and honey would leave a sticky mess.

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LAVA LAMP MODERNISM

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3:30PM BUILT TO LAST: ARTIST-RUN LA
JON PYLYPCHUK, BRIAN GETNICK, ADAM D. MILLER, DEVON ODER, MODERATED BY TRAVIS DIEHL

SATURDAY, JANUARY 30TH

1PM CHARLIE WHITE AND AMANDA ROSS-HO: UNFRIEND ME

3:30PM KENNETH ANGER: LUCIFER BROTHERS

SUNDAY, JANUARY 31ST

1PM LOVE AND TRUTH
KEVIN MCGARRY, A.L. STEINER, ANDREW NORMAN WILSON, MODERATED BY TRAVIS DIEHL

3:30PM ANDREW NORMAN WILSON: LIE DOWN COMEDY
A UCLA meth clinical trial may be able to help. UCLA is conducting a clinical trial to find out if an anti-inflammatory medication can help patients to stop or reduce their meth use, and improve mental functioning, by reducing toxic brain inflammation caused by meth. Counseling, study medication, and compensation are included in this 18-week outpatient clinical trial.

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BIG BROTHER IS (STILL) WATCHING YOU

The horror of government surveillance is recharged in Headlong’s 1984

BY BILL RADEN

Perhaps the most emblematic of the ironies in 1984, the scintillating adaptation of George Orwell’s totalitarian surveillance satire currently playing at the Broad Stage, comes early. That’s when a member of a book club discussing the novel’s influence asks, “How can you say the book changed the world when nothing has changed?” As if in response, a chirping ring tone disrupts the debate as the group members fish in their pockets for the off-ending smartphone.

At a time when the National Security Agency daily harvests metadata on billions of our phone calls and eavesdrops on 200 million of our text messages, finding prophetic relevance in Orwell’s 1949 dystopian horror classic is hardly rocket science. The real coup in this stylishly inventive production from Britain’s Headlong theater company is its recognition of our own passive complicity in trading technological convenience for what Louis Brandeis famously called “the right to be let alone.”

Like New York’s Elevator Repair Service, co-creators/directors Robert Icke and Duncan Macmillan embrace the broader gestalt of the novel — the experience of reading it; its deeply rooted place in the culture — even as their script effectively distills the harrowing paranoia and epistemological underpinnings of Orwell’s narrative.

Matthew Spencer is a memorable Winston Smith, the haunted Outer Party member in the Ministry of Truth tasked with rewriting history to conform to the ever-changing party line. Hara Yananas provides fine support as Julia, his promiscuous lover and co-conspirator in opposing Big Brother. But it is Tim Dutton’s chilling presence as O’Brien, the sententiously sadistic Inner Party apparatchik who engineers Winston’s and Julia’s downfall, that ratchets the horror.

The true star of 1984, however, is the production itself. Icke and Macmillan evoke the novel’s unrelenting suspense using sleight-of-hand visual misdirection. And designer Chloe Lamford’s windowed and wood-paneled reading-room set, topped by a large horizontal projection screen (and featuring Tim Reid’s surveillance video) — together with Natasha Chivers’ eerie low-key lighting and Tom Gibbons’ explosive sound — is the metaphorical lynchpin that captures Winston’s fragmenting psyche along with the wrenching upheaval of his reality.

1984 | The Eli & Edythe Broad Stage, 1310 11th St., Santa Monica | Through Feb. 6 | (310) 434-3200 | thebroadstage.com

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THEATER LISTINGS

My Sister
One of the buzziest shows from last summer’s Hollywood Fringe Festival was My Sister, a play about identical twins in early 1930s Berlin. It was developed at the University of Iowa in 2013, with Elizabeth and Emily Hinkler playing the roles of Matilde (Elizabeth) and Magda (Emily). The show takes a hard look at ableism, with the intense scrutiny of the Nazi regime looming over the twins — though they’re identical in almost every way, including genetically, Matilde has cerebral palsy, and the Nazis targeted the disabled first. Prepare to be moved and haunted. —Katie Buenneke

Den of Thieves
This play by Stephen Adly Guirgis (who also wrote The Motherfucker With the Hat and last year’s Pulitzer winner, Between Riverside and Crazy) follows four hapless thieves who find themselves at the mercy of a reluctant gangster. Tied to chairs, each tries to argue that he (or she) deserves to live. Guirgis is a master of black comedy, and this send-up of gangsters, thieves and 12-step programs has been praised for its wit and quick pace. —Katie Buenneke
2Cents Theatre at the Hudson Guild Theatre, 6539 Santa Monica Blvd., Hollywood; through Feb. 7. (323) 960-5770, plays411.com/denofthieves

Twelfth Night
Either you love Shakespeare — or you pretend to love Shakespeare so people don’t think you’re a rube. For those in the latter camp, Archway Theatre’s decision to set the 15th-century comedy Twelfth Night in old Hollywood — some vague synthesis of the 1920s, ’30s and ’40s — is a welcome spoonful of sugar to go with the medicine."Shipwrecked" on the backlot of a movie studio, Viola disguises herself as a man, and goes to work for and promptly falls in love with major movie star Orsino, who’s in love with leading lady Olivia, who in turn falls in love with “Cesario,” the disguised Viola. Shakespeare’s text is kept intact, but the characters affect mannerisms from the golden age of cinema; for instance, handmaiden Maria becomes a Girl Friday–type secretary and the fool Feste is flat-out played as Groucho Marx. The gimmick is applied unevenly, but enthusiastic and funny performances make it easy to forgive and forget. —Gwynedd Stuart

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TRADING TRUTH FOR EXPLOSIONS

13 Hours is not truly political

BY AMY NICHOLSON

Benghazi is a hashtag battle cry, a call to arms that many Americans don’t understand. Unlike the simplicity of “Remember the Alamo!” a bleat of “Benghazi!” still has people wondering, “Wait, what happened?”

Michael Bay’s 13 Hours: The Secret Soldiers of Benghazi has an explanation, though it should be taken with a grain of salt—or rather, a kilo of dynamite. Bay takes Mitchell Zuckoff’s nonfiction book and amps up the action with explosions, star filters and neon-blue lights that zip across our heroes’ heads as they tromp down the alleyways of Libya’s second-biggest city on a night that will cost four Americans their lives. When a man plops his boots on a desk, it sounds like a gun going off. When a gun actually fires, it sounds like a thunderbolt. It’s the truth cranked up like a thunderbolt. It’s the truth cranked up.

Bay argues that the men at the center of his film were fighting two enemies: the shape-shifting Libyan militias and the CIA snobs who trusted Ivy League desk jockeys over these weight-lifting, beer-drinking jokers who’d actually been in the shit. Chuck Hogan’s script blows raspberries at everyone from the blonde agent (Alexia Barlier) who treats Jack, posing as her husband, with such condescension she nearly blows their cover, to the cowardly Libyan guards who care only about their $28-a-day paychecks. “Middle Eastern Keystone Kops,” groans the guard (David Furr) in charge of protecting Ambassador Chris Stevens (Matt Letscher). Good old Bob, however, a doughy middle-manager in need of a dastardly mustache, prefers the rent-a-Libyans to our band of saviors. “You’re not the first responders,” he grunts. “You’re the last resorts.”

13 Hours captures the contradictions of Benghazi. Everyone agrees it was a tragedy in which four men died: two due to smoke inhalation, one under mortar fire. Yet ever since, some pundits and politicians have mourned with a dash of self-satisfaction—it confirmed both their fears about terrorism and their pride in the brave Americans who put their asses on the line. By the time Bob vows, “There is no threat here,” the movie can’t wait to prove him wrong. Of course, 13 Hours doesn’t extend any of that pride to the Libyans, more than 30,000 of whom died in the first year of the 2011 revolution. Every Libyan in the film is suspicious or pathetic, even the ones who help the Americans fight. When two teens rush to rescue Ambassador Stevens, Rone warns, “Don’t shoot us in the back.” And when a translator (Peyman Moaadi) takes up a pistol to defend his country, Jack jokes, “That dude’s not coming back.”

That dude does come back, bloodied and sweaty, not that he gets much credit. Jack shoots him off with the admonition, “Your country’s gotta figure this shit out, Amahl.” Well, they’re trying. Just last week, 65 Libyan police trainees died when a truck bomb crashed into their academy, not that we’ll ever see a movie about that. And though both book and film imply a sizable Libyan body count on 9/11, no U.S. newspaper has confirmed any non-American dead. Either there weren’t any, or no one cares.

Libya’s Culture and Information Minister, Omar Gawaari, has dismissed 13 Hours for turning “America’s failure to protect its own citizens in a fragile state into a typical action movie all about American heroism.” He has a point. To Bay’s credit, the movie doesn’t. Though Lone Survivor and American Sniper tittered into propaganda, 13 Hours is adamantly apolitical—unless you think all-American men of action knowing more than the bureaucrats is something new in action movies. It just wants to blow things up. Bay strips out any mention of Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama and then keeps stripping until even the characters themselves can’t explain why they fight. Says Jack, imagining his own funeral, “He died in a place he didn’t need to be, in a battle he doesn’t understand, in a country that doesn’t mean nothing to him.”

The actual men weren’t vague. Zuckoff quotes Tanto (Pablo Schreiber), a self-described “avenging angel” with a tattoo of St. Raphael battling the Devil, as saying, “I don’t wish the Crusades would come back. But sometimes I feel that they should come back.” On the opposite side of the pew, ex-SEAL Glen Doherty (Toby Stephens) fought against the encroachment of religious fundamentalism in the military. At his funeral, buddies toasted him from a flask inscribed “What Jesus Wouldn’t Do.”

But here Tanto and Doherty are pared down and purified until these ideologically opposed warriors are interchangeable guys with goatees. They’re action heroes in an action movie that too many people will accept as truth. As ever, the real story is both more complicated and more boring.

In Zuckoff’s report, there’s a moment when former Marine Tig (played here by Dominic Fumusa) brandishes a flame thrower on an abandoned Benghazi street while the other men take pictures. They wanted to pretend he was a blockbuster star. And now he is.

13 HOURS: THE SECRET SOLDIERS OF BENGHAZI

Directed by Michael Bay
Paramount Pictures | Citywide

ANTI-PHARMA DOC PRESCRIPTION THUGS IS NOT QUITE JOURNALISM

In his Bigger, Stronger, Faster, director Chris Bell documented the stories of his two brothers who became involved in the subculture of performance-enhancing drugs as they pursued their sporting ambitions. In Prescription Thugs, he struggles with the death of his brother Mike, who succumbed to his addiction to multiple prescription medications.

The film explores the deregulation of the pharmaceutical industry in the 1980s, which resulted in a widespread culture of legal-drug dependency. Bell points out that Oxycontin is so chemically similar to heroin that the molecules could be confused for one another in a police lineup.

Among interviews with doctors, former pharmaceutical reps, athletes and addicts, Bell commiserates with his family about their loss and reveals to his parents his own struggle with addictive painkillers after hip surgery. It’s unusually confessional and often moving, but Thugs is unsatisfying as documentary journalism. He comments ironically on the film’s subjects with insert shots from old health films, anti-drug PSAs and pharma ads. It’s an empty, used-up technique. He also extends the discussion of American addiction to pornography, the Internet, cheeseburgers and iPhones—a thematic overreach that seems inconsequential by comparison.

—Chris Packham

PRESCRIPTION THUGS

Directed by Chris Bell
Samuel Goldwyn Films | Royal
Film

PAST TENSE

TWISTY INDIE
TIME-TRAVEL PUZZLER
SYNCHRONICITY
HAS SPARK BUT STILL SPUTTERS

BY ALAN SCHERSTUHL

An admirably complex tale of time travel, corporate espionage and high emotions, you’ll just have to take everyone’s word on, Jacob Gentry’s science-fiction puzzler Synchronicity is so ambitious — and so canny, on occasion — that you might be willing to forgive its indie infelicities.

The acting is iff y, especially by Jacob Gentry | Magnet Releasing | Available on-demand | 888-AMC-4FUN | 1560 S Azusa Ave.

At first, how much future-lab excitement Gentry and his production team whip up on the cheap, suggesting complex machinery and procedures on sets swathed in fog, bathed in white light. They merely tease the particulars, inviting us to imagine along, but at some point you’ll probably ask, “Hey, why are most rooms in this unnamed city in this not-far-off time built around slowly churning industrial fans?”

Repetitive set dressing might be thematic. Synchronicity returns again and again to its key early scene in which inventor Jim (Chad McKnight) tests some kind of wormhole/particle-transferring contraption, which eventually everyone just shrugs off as time machine.

At first, if “first” has any meaning with time travel, the results prove inconclusive — but, wait, why is there suddenly a glass dahlia in the room? And who is that mysterious beauty, Abby (Brianne Davis), who’s hanging out near the lab? An even more pressing question: Why does Jim immediately spirit that out, as if he knows something?

More and more, the question is: What is the point of this? Director Rockaway loads early scenes with familiar horror signifiers — there’s a storm coming, everyone keeps warning, and the communication equipment linking the guards is famously unreliable. Our heroine spends a lot of time meandering through abandoned quadrants lit only by her dim flashlight, asking if anyone’s there; presumably she’s addressing the living, but it’s a different kind of transient that answers. This setup is not unlike Fear, an early-’00s reality show in which 20-somethings were ferried to supposedly haunted locations and forced to walk around in the dark with p.o.v. cameras. The Abandoned lacks that show’s tri-fi charm, however.

Two second-act revelations alter its tired dynamic for the better, but those changes are undone by cheap scares and a climactic revelation that’s more ho-hum than horrifying. (Michael Nordine)

GO AERIAL! At fi rst blush the least Romanian of the Romanian New Wavers, Radu Jude’s new film is in no way a steely-eyed, ultra-realist, uninflected working-class trudge, and the cranial wounds of Eastern European communism are yet a gleam in the characters’ eyes. Rather, more than a mere cry of The Hateful Eight, Aerial! is a comic Western — complete with period-drama frontier-ress, poky horse-ridden, bounty hunters and an Anthony Mann–ish love for scrubby mountain landscapes. The particulars emerge great-gruesome post-medieval (early 1800s, actually) Wallachia, and the two chatty riders we meet are mercenary “constables” traversing a peasant landscape of plague, frontier justice and gypsy slaves. Shot in spectral widescreen black-and-white, Jude’s movie (a prize-winner at the Berlin Film Festival and Jude’s first film distribut ed state-side) plays out almost entirely at a lazy distance, without close-ups; you have to lean in to catch the ironies amid the wild openess. The ersatz Lawmen on the journey, plump, crotchety father Costandin (Teodor Corban) and dim son Ionița (Mihai Comanoiu), have been commissioned to track down a runaway Roman slave wanted for fucking the boyar’s wife. Mostly, they talk. The pair’s run-ins — with plague-infected peasants, terrified “crows” (gypsies), an outrageously xenophobic priest, a militia of other boyars, even an officious Ottoman bigwig — float on nonstop banter, most of it spewing from Costandin’s mouth in a river of invective and idiotic aphorisms. Jude, a New Wave stalwart since

SYNCHRONICITY | Written and directed by Jacob Gentry | Magnet Releasing | Available on-demand

By TMP

OPENING THIS WEEK

THE ABANDONED (THE CONFINES)
Eytan Rockaway’s familiar horror film The Abandoned stars Louisa Krause as a single mom who, lest she lose custody of her young daughter, takes an assignment patrolling an empty apartment complex. Two guards oversee the palatial residence at all times: one on patrol, the other monitoring security-cam footage. Eye-in-the-sky duties belong to Cooper (Jason Patric), whose creepy behavior would have long ago gotten him fired by any reputable establishment (or at least one on an on-site HR rep). Built during a bygone real estate boom, the unfinished, all-inclusive residence is now empty save for homeless folks seeking shelter and a few rascally spirits. Writer-director Rockaway loads early scenes with familiar horror signifiers — there’s a storm coming, everyone keeps warning, and the communication equipment linking the guards is famously unreliable. Our heroine spends a lot of time meandering through abandoned quadrants lit only by her dim flashlight, asking if anyone’s there; presumably she’s addressing the living, but it’s a different kind of transient that answers. This setup is not unlike Fear, an early-’00s reality show in which 20-somethings were ferried to supposedly haunted locations and forced to walk around in the dark with p.o.v. cameras. The Abandoned lacks that show’s tri-fi charm, however. Two second-act revelations alter its tired dynamic for the better, but those changes are undone by cheap scares and a climactic revelation that’s more ho-hum than horrifying. (Michael Nordine)

GO AERIAL! At fi rst blush the least Romanian of the Romanian New Wavers, Radu Jude’s new film is in no way a steely-eyed, ultra-realist, uninflected working-class trudge, and the cranial wounds of Eastern European communism are yet a gleam in the characters’ eyes. Rather, more than a mere cry of The Hateful Eight, Aerial! is a comic Western — complete with period-drama frontier-ress, poky horse-ridden, bounty hunters and an Anthony Mann–ish love for scrubby mountain landscapes. The particulars emerge great-gruesome post-medieval (early 1800s, actually) Wallachia, and the two chatty riders we meet are mercenary “constables” traversing a peasant landscape of plague, frontier justice and gypsy slaves. Shot in spectral widescreen black-and-white, Jude’s movie (a prize-winner at the Berlin Film Festival and Jude’s first film distribut ed state-side) plays out almost entirely at a lazy distance, without close-ups; you have to lean in to catch the ironies amid the wild openess. The ersatz Lawmen on the journey, plump, crotchety father Costandin (Teodor Corban) and dim son Ionița (Mihai Comanoiu), have been commissioned to track down a runaway Roman slave wanted for fucking the boyar’s wife. Mostly, they talk. The pair’s run-ins — with plague-infected peasants, terrified “crows” (gypsies), an outrageously xenophobic priest, a militia of other boyars, even an officious Ottoman bigwig — float on nonstop banter, most of it spewing from Costandin’s mouth in a river of invective and idiotic aphorisms. Jude, a New Wave stalwart since

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MICHAEL NYE

DONNIE YEN

ACTION DIRECTOR

YUEN WOO PING

SPECIAL APPEARANCE BY MIKE TYSON

IN THEATERS FRIDAY JAN. 22

www.ipman3.com
his unforgettable short The Tube With a Hat (2006), won virtually every festival prize there is, coolly resists any portent about how the journey might resolve—we fear the worst, and get it, in a typically offhand Romanian way. (Michael Atkinson)

ALL MISTAKES BURIED (THE AFTERMATH)
Co-writer/director Tim McCarthy and actor Sam Trammell adroitly juggle the competing realities inside the mind of a slippery crack addict obsessed with returning a pawed necklace to his estranged wife on their anniversary. Trammell’s Sonny is an unreliable narrator compulsively dredging up his painful past in All Mistakes Buried (a more suitably ambiguous name than working title The Aftermath), and McCarthy follows his tortured thought process without qualifiers or judgment. Trammell, who shares credit for the story with McCarthy and producer/co-screenwriter Shaun Sanghani, defines Sonny by his contradictions. In flashbacks where he’s a successful businessman and restless husband, Trammell hints at the deluded loner Sonny will become, and during drug binges and impassive rages, the actor adds moments of courtly charm and righteous clarity.

Sonny’s relationship with his beloved Jennifer is recalled in bitter arguments (real-life partners Trammell and Missy Yager employ some Burton/Taylor bite as warring spouses), and Sonny barely remembers how the alurring Franki (Vanessa Ferlito) affected his marriage, even as we see her use her knowledge to compel his participation in a crime. Cinematographer Alan McPhyre Smith shoots steamy Alexandria, Louisiana, in vivid colors as saturated as Trammell’s sweat-soaked T-shirt, which adds to the intoxicating feeling of being immersed in Sonny’s fractured psyche. McCarthy makes some jarring choices, such as using Marian Anderson’s soaring spirituals to accompany a character whose concerns are strictly earthly. But even when the puzzling pieces of Sonny’s existence don’t quite fit, Trammell’s beautifully unhinged performance offers a compelling vision of a grieving narcissist burrowing into the rabbit hole of his own mind. (Maximilian Ferlito)

JERUSALEM What’s the Hebrew word for “headache maker”? Jerusalem’s Old City is an unusual setting for a horror film, but the style is the familiar wobbly found-footage approach in Doron and Yoav Paz’s Jerusalem, with a winkle: It’s purportedly shot using a Google Glass-type device worn by a college-age American, Rachel (Yael Grobglas). The conceit provides exposition, as the software shares details at the corners of the screen about people Rachel meets and sites she visits. It also affords a rare shamy-tarn twofer, showing us a picture-in-picture of a grisly found-footage clip (“from the Vatican archives,” we’re told) in the lower left while Rachel fumbles around the hotel. As impressive as the Old City locations can be, one narrow alleyway looks much like another when the Paz brothers’ camera is bouncing to and fro. Not much substance is buried beneath the irritating style. The premise: Apparently sometimes on Yom Kippur, the dead rise and raise hell; this is just one of those times. The fiends—winged sanerines at the edges of the frame—are mostly seen briefly while Rachel is ushered this way and that as she tries to escape or to rescue her friends. The urgent shouting directly into the camera reveals, led by a death-obsessed meanie (Kate Burton, in an epic career low), the co-directing brothers Goetz prove adept at building escape-the-bad-guy action sequences, but they continually run up against the story’s Marquis de Sade underpinnings. And so it comes to pass, in a secret basement torture chamber, that the filmmakers unveil the deadly, shiny toys that are to be used on their trapped heroine. Are the directors reluctant to deploy them? Possibly. Nevertheless, they proceed, and what follows proves only that what is repellent in French is equally so in English. (Chuck Wilson)

YOUR WEEKLY MOVIE TO-DO LIST
Japanese Classics and Radio on Film
Friday, Jan. 22
Hollywood used to turn to radio for source material most as often as it plundered the literary canon. UCLA’s Out of the Ether: Radio Mysteries and Thrillers on Screen investigates this phenomenon over the coming weeks, beginning with The Trial of Vivienne Ware (1932) and Night Editor (1946). These hour-long dramas are dialogue-heavy explorations of the legal system and the darker end of newspaper reporting, respectively. UCLA’s Billy Wilder Theater, 10899 Wilshire Blvd., Westwood; Fri., Jan. 22, 7:30 p.m.; $10. (310) 206-8013, cinema.ucla.edu.

At midnight on Friday, the Nuart screens Akira, Kat-suhiro Otomo’s 1988 sci-fi drama. Considered by many to be the high-water mark of the genre, its dystopian vision of 2019 Tokyo long ago garnered a cult following that persists to this day. Loyal devotees may never see the long-rumored live-action adaptation, which has been in development hell for more than a decade now, but at least the original isn’t going anywhere. Nuart Theatre, 11272 Santa Monica Blvd., West L.A.; Fri., Jan. 22, 11:59 p.m.; $11. (310) 473-8530, landmarktheatres.com.

Saturday, Jan. 23
Anne V. Coates was recently honored with a Career Achievement Award from the L.A. Film Critics Association. Her career spans more than six decades and a number of classics—The Elephant Man and Out of Sight among them—but her legacy has always been defined chiefly by her revolutionary work on Lawrence of Arabia. The Aero screens David Lean’s enduring epic as part of the American Cinematheque’s Seeing the Big Picture: 70mm Favorites program, which includes Ben-Hur and Vertigo. Aero Theatre, 1329 Montana Ave., Santa Monica; Sat., Jan. 23, 7:30 p.m.; $11. (323) 466-3456, americancinemathequecalendar.com.

Sunday, Jan. 24
Not every Akira Kurosawa film is marked by Samar and swordplay. Red Beard, which closes the Egyptian’s two-weekend retrospective devoted to the Japanese luminary, is about something ostensibly mundane: a doctor. Constant Kurosawa collaborator Toshiro Mifune is the physician in question, and in addition to healing members how the alluring Franki (Vanessa Ferlito) affected his marriage, even as we see her use her knowledge to compel his participation in a crime. Cinematographer Alan McPhyre Smith shoots steamy Alexandria, Louisiana, in vivid colors as saturated as Trammell’s sweat-soaked T-shirt, which adds to the intoxicating feeling of being immersed in Sonny’s fractured psyche. McCarthy makes some jarring choices, such as using Marian Anderson’s soaring spirituals to accompany a character whose concerns are strictly earthly. But even when the puzzling pieces of Sonny’s existence don’t quite fit, Trammell’s beautifully unhinged performance offers a compelling vision of a grieving narcissist burrowing into the rabbit hole of his own mind. (Maximilian Ferlito)
One-faced martial-arts star Donnie Yen does a lot with a little in wuxia weepie Ip Man 3, the rare kung fu film whose stripped-down action sequences are just as good as its sentimental dialogue scenes. The title character—a soft-spoken Wing Chun martial-arts instructor based on Bruce Lee’s teacher—one again brings out the best qualities in Yen’s severe but deliberately un-flashy persona.

Ip’s latest story is a variation on his last two adventures’ formulaic confrontations with wealthy “foreign devils,” to quote ineffectual police officer Po (Kent Cheng), such as American gangster Frank (a sadly unimpressive Mike Tyson) and his mustache-twirling, Lord Thistlewick Flanders—sounding British associates. Little changes to set this apart as a superior sequel. But there’s power in scenes where tough-but-tender Ip dotes on ailing wife Wing-Sing (Lynn Hung), avoiding her gaze, listening attentively while doctors and pharmacists diagnose and treat her for cancer.

Better still: Action scenes directed by legendary choreographer Yuen Woo-Ping—his first contributions to the Ip Man trilogy—allow Yen to focus on give-and-take rhythm when he trades blows with imposing antagonists such as Tyson and Jin Zhang, the latter playing an ultra-violent rival Wing-Chun teacher. Yen’s best fight scenes are more concerned with back-and-forth movement than crippling body blows, as we see whenever he redirects his opponents’ blows to window panes and wooden furniture. When Ip’s fists and feet do connect, they make Yen look like a uniquely disciplined icon. —Simon Abrams

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**Mojave**

What but the meaninglessness of everything? William Monahan’s Mojave is one of those ’90s-style chatty-killers movies, mixed with one of those ’90s-style guns-in-the-desert existential cheepies, the kind of picture where good-looking dudes shooting each other is passed off as elemental and beautiful rather than just what it actually is—the only thing Hollywood can think of for good-looking dudes to do together onscreen. You can tell early on that the worst thing that can happen in a movie will at some point happen: A talkative fellow, prepping to kill, asks, “Do you believe in the duality of contemporary well-to-do teendom, or do you believe in the duality of modern man?” “Do you know yet which one of us is the bad guy?” “Mojave is like one of those 100-question personality tests that big box stores force upon prospective hires, finding 12 different ways to ask whether it’s ever morally justified to steal—one of these times it’s bound to get a response. It doesn’t, of course. The wisp of a story concerns a pampered Hollywood type (Garrett Hedlund, playing a film director) striking out into the Mojave Desert to find something that’s actually in himself, only to be chased from ridge to valley to civilization by a relentless villain (Isaac) whose motivations seem existential or infernal, which is a waste of way saying that it’s apparently supposed to be significant that said motivations make no sense.

The good news: As shot by Don Davis, the desert sequences have a vast unsettling sentience that can happen in a movie will at some point happen: A talkative fellow, prepping to kill, asks, “Do you believe in the duality of contemporary well-to-do teendom, or do you believe in the duality of modern man?” “Do you know yet which one of us is the bad guy?” “Mojave is like one of those 100-question personality tests that big box stores force upon prospective hires, finding 12 different ways to ask whether it’s ever morally justified to steal—one of these times it’s bound to get a response. It doesn’t, of course. The wisp of a story concerns a pampered Hollywood type (Garrett Hedlund, playing a film director) striking out into the Mojave Desert to find something that’s actually in himself, only to be chased from ridge to valley to civilization by a relentless villain (Isaac) whose motivations seem existential or infernal, which is a waste of way saying that it’s apparently supposed to be significant that said motivations make no sense.

The good news: As shot by Don Davis, the desert sequences have a vast unsettling sentience. (Sherilyn Connelly)

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**Ip Man 3**

Directed by Wilson Yip Well Go USA | Cinemark 18 & XD, AMC Atlantic Times Square, AMC Universal CityWalk

Ip Man 3’s three young leads (played by Everett梅cker, Alex Mansky and Calum John), all boys, find it easiest to bruise through life a little cut off from one another, not letting anyone close, keeping their relationships studiedly hostile. They shooft, bully each other, call each other “dickles.” Brothers shove brothers without clear in-the-moment cause; friends stalk off together for adventures into the green hills of Palo Alto despite seeming to detest one another. The young performers embody bored misery and put-on aloofness without apparent calculation—rather than actors working from a script, they just seem like your distant, younger cousins sulking through a family get-together. Franco has stripped nostalgia and innocence from his stories of growing up except for nostalgia for innocence: His characters have begun to suspect that people are terrible to one another, and also begun to experiment with terrifying themselves, but there’s always a hint that perhaps they might right themselves—that maybe kindness isn’t exclusive to suckers. The drama in Palo Alto, on page and screen, and now in Yosemite lies in whether the empathy that we feel, as readers and filmgoers, ever has some corresponding analogue in the stories. Can his people come to care as we do? (Alan Scherstuhl)

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**Monster Hunt**

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REVOLUTION RUNS IN KING LIL G’S BLOOD — NO WONDER HE’S CHANGING THE FACE OF L.A. RAP

BY JEFF WEISS

If you want to understand King Lil G, start with Emiliano Zapata. According to family lore, L.A.’s most popular Latino rapper since Cypress Hill descends from the famed Mexican revolutionary. With mild imagination, it’s easy to draw parallels between the iconic advocate for the dispossessed and the socially conscious people’s champ raised in Inglewood and South Gate.

“Ever since I was a kid, I’ve been very outspoken … voicing my opinion and trying to spread a message of common sense. My grandmother always told me it was because of where I come from,” the 29-year-old rising star says at a Mexican restaurant at L.A. Live, close to his DTLA residence.

A clef note tattoo rests under his eye. His neck and arms are covered in symbols of women, music, death and hometown pride, and remind you that Alex Gonzalez’s first rap name was Lil Gangster.

“Once we love something too much, we often lose perspective,” Lil G continues. “I try and teach my people that it’s OK to love being Mexican, but don’t take it overboard. Love Kobe Bryant, but don’t hate every other basketball player.”

In a genre that often slants toward extremes, King Lil G seeks moderation. He’s a moralist without being self-righteous, an ex-gangbanger and dope dealer raised by a single mom, attempting to steer people away from the traps that once ensnared him. He gets high but not too high.

The songs feel real in the stories and people that they portray. They’re filled with temptation, regret and pain, as well as celebration, brown pride and joy. 2Pac famously said it “wouldn’t be L.A. without Mexicans.” Lil G is the grown-up kid who heeded his call, determined to be a voice for those whom the system failed.

His biography is embedded in the music. Listen to his most popular song, 2014’s “Hopeless Boy” (8 million YouTube views and counting): “Fuck rapping and bragging about the way you balling/Spray cans in my backpack and I was starving/In middle school with a trey five seven revolver/My family said I wasn’t going to make it/Now I’m grinding harder.”

He did it without label or publicist. Turning down major-label offers, he’s a grass-roots phenomenon. He does turkey giveaways in Compton, visits cancer patients in South Gate and sponsors toy drives.

Another mixtape looms in March. Gonzalez recently signed to Del Records, a Latin-music powerhouse that should earn him significant inroads south of the border. There are imminent plans to record in Spanish.

“I want to be what Bob Marley meant to Jamaicans. I don’t mean only to Mexicans but people in general,” Lil G says. “I’m trying to spread a message of respect for women, children and everyone else. If you’re going to be brave, be brave in the way that you think.”

An L.A. native, Jeff Weiss edits Passion of the Weiss and hosts the Shots Fired podcast. Find him online at passionweiss.com.
Sitting on a tour bus in Newcastle, England, I found out that David Bowie had passed away.

Within minutes, still clumsy with shock, road manager Ward had Bowie’s new and final album, Blackstar, coming through the speakers.

Bowie’s detached vocal on the title track almost hypnotized me. Not only did it command my total attention but I also realized that the person singing was dead. I listened to the rest of the record carefully, trying to forget that the man was gone.

The lyrics of Blackstar’s third song, “Lazarus,” are some of his most powerful. “Look up here, man, I’m in danger/’ve got nothing left to lose/I’m so high it makes my brain whirl/Dropped my cellphone down below.” It’s the work of a man who is seeing the end of creation, as he creates what he knew would be his last artistic communication with the world.

I am sitting in a cold backstage area in Newcastle, listening to Blackstar for the third time today. I will be onstage in about 90 minutes. I am wondering how I am going to get through it.

I have been hoping to find a lyric on the album that will make me want to put my sadness on pause long enough to be cleared for two-plus hours. I think I found it in the song “Dollar Days”: “I’m dying to/Push their backs against the grain/And fool them all again and again/I’m trying to.” I love that sneering defiance.

Blackstar is on the level of Low, Heroes or any of Bowie’s standout works. It is hard to listen to because it was obviously written with his condition in mind. The final lyric of the last track, “I Can’t Give Everything Away,” repeats the song title over and over, like a mantra, and makes me want to chase after him as the song fades, pleading with him not to go.

The album is agile and nervy, challenging and masterful. The poise and guts Bowie displays in this collection of seven songs are unreal. Hopefully he was able to get some feedback from fans all over the world.

There are some artists who are as big as life itself. They are part of your life and somehow escape the obligation of mortality. We cannot imagine our world without them. For those who have not listened to David Bowie beyond his singles or the inescapable Let’s Dance album, I hope you allow yourself to do so. I can’t think of any other musician who achieved such a level of intimate distance with their audience. The more you think about him, the more amazing and enigmatic he becomes — less a man than the aura that surrounded him.

If you watch Bowie in interviews, he is articulate and almost feral in his desire for dislocation from the ritual of Q&A. He really did let the music do the talking. If he couldn’t give everything away, as he states on Blackstar, we are left to wonder how much he, in fact, did give away and what it was that he kept for himself. That, perhaps, will be the most mysterious mystery of the man.

Spending time with David Bowie, as brief as it was, had a major influence on my life. It was almost 20 years ago. We were playing the same festival. I saw him walking alone. I just stood there, awed that there was the man himself. I didn’t say a word.

He stopped and looked at me. “Rollins!” “David!” I replied, as I walked over to him and stuck out my hand.

He asked me if I had eaten lunch yet. I said no. He recommended that we do that. As we walked, he told me that he really liked this thing I had said in a recent interview he’d read and proceeded to quote several sentences of it. Then he quoted me from a different interview from a year before. He asked when my next book was coming out. I was speechless but managed to answer. Bowie told me that he had read a few of them. I have no proof of this, but I am happy to take him at his word.

Our conversation during the meal went from Iggy Pop to Hubert Selby Jr. I expressed interest in contacting Lou Reed to see if he wanted to perhaps do some music for a potential project with Selby, knowing that Reed was an admirer of his work. Bowie told me he would call Lou on my behalf. I barely believed it and took it to be that David was just being friendly.

Later that evening, I watched David Bowie from stage right as he sang perfectly in front of thousands of people. He was amazing. The way he held the audience was like nothing I have ever seen before or since.

Weeks later, I was back in my micro-apartment in NYC when my phone rang. I answered. I heard a voice that my DNA recognized before I said, “Hello Henry, this is Lou Reed. David said you wanted to talk to me.”

I just remembering that is making me feel a little better.

Somehow, the world will go on without David Bowie living in it. But it will be different. I have yet to play any other Bowie albums. I hope hearing them now doesn’t hurt too much.

For those who have not listened to David Bowie beyond his singles or the inescapable Let’s Dance album, I hope you allow yourself to do so. I can’t think of any other single artist who not only covered so much ground but also broke it (and himself). The entire time, he kept just out of reach, even at his most radio-friendly pop moments — those perhaps being his biggest put-on of all.

As good as music gets can be found on any number of his albums. What he gave away to us is more than enough.
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The Muffs, Prima Donna
@ THE ECHOPLEX
For much of last year, Kim Shattuck toured Europe and North America with a reunited version of her old band, The Pandoras. If there’s anyone who can duplicate late Pandoras singer Paula Pierce’s feral-wildcat howling, it’s Shattuck, who manages to evoke Pierce’s scabrous vocals while still retaining her own distinctively insolent, pop-minded style. She gets back to work tonight with her main group, The Muffs, who amp up the Pandoras’ garage-rock primitivism with a Sex Pistols crunch, powered by Redd Kross drum wrecker Roy McDonald. Add in Shattuck’s sarcastically catty lyrics and Kinks-influenced melodies, and you end up with a madly catchy garage-rock sound that’s distinguished by icily sullen vocals bursting through a fog of sludgy reverb guitar. —Falling James

Madeon
@ CLUB Nokia
“Wunderkind,” “prodigy” and “phenom” are the obligatory words thrown about when speaking of French electronic music superstar Madeon. All those descriptors are apt, but the fact is, the precocious 21-year-old has been making music for half his life. Madeon made his mark far in advance of the release of his debut full-length, last year’s Adventure. With that album, the tuned-in producer cleverly incorporates high-profile collaborators such as Foster the People’s Mark Foster, Passion Pit’s Michael Angelakos and Bastille’s Dan Smith into electronic-pop concoctions that thankfully skirt obnoxious EDM pitfalls yet still appeal to the crowd. Sugary on “Pay No Mind,” epic on “Pixel Empire,” driving on “Imperium” and playful on “Beings,” Madeon’s songwriting has been pounding the pavement at nearly 25 minutes in length. The 11 minutes apiece and another epic two tracks that clock in at more than 11 minutes apiece and another epic that’s nearly 25 minutes in length. The bewitching bill includes L.A. Witch, who also conjure a darkly unsettling vibe but with a markedly different approach. The all-female trio stirs up a shadowy garage-rock sound that’s distinguished by icily sullen vocals bursting through a fog of sludgy reverb guitar. —Falling James

Dawes
@ THE THEATRE AT ACE HOTEL
“May all your favorite bands stay together,” Taylor Goldsmith harmonizes with guest singer David Rawlings on the knowingly sentimental title track of Dawes’ fourth album, All Your Favorite Bands. The piano ballad is a simultaneously goofy and disarmingly sincere shout-out to old friends and fellow musicians, brimming with cheerful good wishes (“I hope your brother’s El Camino runs forever”), until Goldsmith undercut everything when he admits, “Now I’m just waking up, and I’m not thinking clearly so don’t quote me.” Whether he’s lamenting about a love lost “Somewhere Along the Way” or making lists to sift through the details of his life on “Things Happen,” Goldsmith is always unhurried on the new album. His drummer-brother Griffen Goldsmith, bassist Wylie Gelber and guitarist Duane Betts maintain a loping, trippy pace throughout. —Falling James

Malcolm Mooney
@ THE ECHO
Space is still the place for Malcolm Mooney. The American singer and prolific visual artist was the founding vocalist of German avant-garde experimentalists Can, and he continues to explore the outer reaches of his mind and/or the galaxy more recently with drummer-composer Sean Noonan on the freakily rambling 2014 opus Pavees Dance. In contrast to Can’s free-flowing and linear trances, Mooney’s collaboration with Noonan is more jaggedly eclectic, shifting suddenly from hard rock and psychedelic noise to funk and jazz. Mooney’s clipped, poetic chanting has been an underrated influence on many arty post-punk provocateurs, including Mark E. Smith, Black Randy and Pere Ubu’s David Thomas. But he remains light-years ahead of his acolytes because he doesn’t appear to be imitating anybody, instead seemingly drawing his inspiration directly from the pulse of distant constellations. —Falling James

The White Buffalo
@ THE FONDA THEATRE
Jake Smith, better known as The White Buffalo, is a throwback to the old-school troubadour who goes from town to town armed with only a guitar and gravelly voice. Fiercely independent, the singer-songwriter has been pounding the pavement for more than a decade, preaching tales of love, loss and the lives of whiskey-drenched, flawed characters. Unsurprisingly, Smith’s songs have been featured on TV shows such as Sons of Anarchy and Californication, both of which had main characters who reflect the outlaw nature of his music. Playing his biggest local headlining show to date, Smith, who already has five albums and a number of EPs to his name, will remind those in attendance that there’s nothing more poignant and raw than just a man and his instrument of choice. —Daniel Kohn
For two weeks every year in March, Austin is transformed by an influx of knowledge-hungry, cool-hunting, experience-seeking, entertainment-pushing trendsetters."

—The Irish Independent

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mon 1/25

Nicole Moudaber
@ SOUND NIGHTCLUB
Nicole Moudaber had a hell of a 2015. The London-based DJ/producer hit the U.S. circuit for a jam-packed tour that included an open-to-close set at downtown’s Exchange L.A. She hosted her own festival-style event in New York and, as she bounced back and forth across the Atlantic, released one of the finest dance releases of the year, *Breed*, with Skunk Anansie vocalist Skin. This year is shaping up to be just as interesting. Moudaber’s recent cut, “Ow,” is techno fit for a haunted house. If you like your music dark and mildly creepy, you need this. In April, you can catch her with Skin at Coachella. For now, check her out behind the decks at Sound. —Liz Ohanesian

FORK
@ NEW ROADS SCHOOL MOSS THEATER
Grammy Award-winning jazz collective Snarky Puppy have been at the top of the jazz food chain for several years, dazzling audiences with their signature brand of high-energy music, a kind of cross between The Pat Metheny Group and Dave Matthews Band. With a loosely knit band family that extends to almost 40 musicians, it’s no surprise to see satellite factions starting to drift away from the mothership. Perhaps the most notable of the small pups is the quartet FORQ, anchored by Snarky Puppy bassist/founder Michael League, along with standouts Henry Hey on keyboards, guitarist Chris McQueen and drummer Jason “JT” Thomas. League is wise to parlay his extraordinary success from his previous band into promoting this new group. They are, essentially, “The FORQ Awakens,” merely the first of many spinoffs to come out of the rapidly expanding Snarky franchise. —Gary Fukushima

tue 1/26

Bobby Rush
@ THE MINT
Louisiana-born blues singer Bobby Rush’s timeless, dirty zealotry ranks him as one of the genre’s most genuine, wild-ass, deep-plowing practitioners. Oozing a gusher of his signature sound — where deep Southern funk and backcountry blues churn together for a singularly potent draught — Rush roars into Hollywood with his flabbergastingly wonderful new-four-disc retrospective, *Chicken Heads: A 50-Year History of Bobby Rush*. At 82, the indefatigable Rush still displays all the formidable vocal power and showstopping prowess that long since earned him the title King of the Chitlin Circuit, and when he and his troupe of rump-shaking entertainers hit the bandstand, it’s always a gale-force ball. Plus, as a bonus, he performs a rare solo set at Amoeba Music on Monday, Jan. 25, at 6 p.m. —Jonny Whiteside

feels
@ RESIDENT
L.A.’s Feels evolved from Raw Geronimo, named for singer-guitarist Laena Geronimo, who’s made a multi-instrumental mark of her own across L.A. music through work with everyone from Ty Segall’s Sabbath-oid Fuzz to that last, ’60s-style incarnation of The Like. Feels can do just about anything and do it well, and they prove it on a self-titled debut due next month on the storied Castle Face Records label. Produced by Segall in his bunker-style studio, it’s lightning strike after lightning strike of dirty-but-detailed art-punk grunge-pop — a lot of adjectives, yes, but there’s no other way to explain songs connected as much to Suburban Lawns and Dangerhouse Records punk as Sonic Youth or The Breeders. And of course there’s that unexpected, head-swirling, Turkish-psychedelic breakdown on “Bird’s Eye.” What else can be said? Feels love those surprise reveals. —Chris Ziegler

wed 1/27

White Out
@ THE SMELL
Featuring a choice group of experienced masters of improv, sound art and genre invention, here’s a musical FOV that never says its name, just gets on with the making of music. The veteran NYC duo features Lin Culbertson on analog synths, autoharp, flute, mystery electronics and vocals. She and partner drummer/devices dude Tom Surgal make a beautifully mystifying chamber-music hash of free jazz, prog and experimental/electronic stuff, such as they recently did with guitar god Nels Cline on their incredible album *Accidental Sky* (on Northern Spy). Tonight the duo goes head-on with lap-guitar/digitalia ace Bill Nace. Local new-thing titans G.E. Stinson (guitar/electronics), Devin Sarno (bass frequencies) and percussion king Danny Frankel dart into the fray as openers, as do Telecaves. —John Payne

thu 1/28

Holly Herndon
@ TERAGRAM BALLROOM
Holly Herndon may be getting a doctorate in composition from Stanford, but her dense, visceral take on experimental electronic music is about as far from a stuffy academic exercise as it’s possible to get. Using software, samples and her own digitally distorted voice, Herndon creates sound collages that dart about like bacteria under a microscope, shifting and reconstituting in unexpected ways. Her second album, 2015’s *Platform*, was highlighted by the corruscating “Chorus,” which could pass for an Aphex Twin remix of Julianna Barwick, the almost medieval-sounding polyphonies of “Unequal,” and the digitized dream-pop of “Morning Sun,” the best proof yet that Herndon’s experiments, as bizarre as they can be, are rooted in real songcraft and a humanity that runs deeper than the technology. —Andy Hermann


BACKSTAGE BAR & GRILL: 10400 Culver Blvd., Culver City. King Chris & the Groove Thang, Wednesdays, 9 p.m., free.


BARDOT HOLLYWOOD: 1737 N. Vine St., Los Angeles. ESP Evolution, Fri., Jan. 22, 7 p.m., $20. Noname, Nick D & the Believers, Mon., Jan. 25, 8 p.m., free.


CAVERN CLUB THEATER: 1920 Hyperion Ave., Los Angeles. Booty Underground, a cabaret with burlesque from Princess Farhana, Haute Coque, Kristina Neysha, Tito Bonito and others, Tue., Jan. 26, 7:30 p.m.-3:30 a.m., $20.

CHA CHA LOUNGE: 2375 Glendale Blvd., Los Angeles. Sex Stairs, DJ Jesperota, Mon., Jan. 25, 10 p.m., $10.


recorded music is ready to be devoured by UPCO MIN G EVENTS at AM OEBA!

Celebrating the release of his new album, (Omnivore Recordings). January 26th!

Wednesday • January 27 • 6pm

**BOBBY RUSH**

Bobby plays live and signs his new album for fans! His incredible half century of recorded music is ready to be devoured by those who’ve never tasted and those who want another helping on Chicken Heads: A 50-Year History of Bobby Rush, Wednesdays, 9 p.m., $10.

**SAUL WILLIAMS**

Celebrating the release of his new album, Martyr Loser King (out 1/29 on the Fader Label). Ameoba welcomes Saul Williams for a live set and signing! His debut album, We Are KING, is out on Feb. 5, but will be available at the instore.

Friday • January 27 • 7pm

**RICHIE HAWTIN DJ SET & SIGNING**

Richie Hawtin visits Ameoba for a guest DJ set and to sign copies of his new release, From My Mind To Yours, Wednesdays, 9 p.m., $10.

**THURSDAY • JANUARY 28 • 6PM**

**KING**

Twins, Paris and Amber Strother, and musical sister Anna Bias are KING. The L.A.-based R&B group visits Ameoba for a live set & signing! Their debut album, We Are KING, is out on Feb. 5, but will be available at the instore.

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**THE DREDGEN RESTAURANT**

1760 N. Vermont Ave., Los Angeles. Marty Greer & Steve Taylor, Saturdays-Saturdays, 9 p.m., free. The Ready Set, Sunday, 9 p.m., $5, FREE. LA Underground Superstars, Mondays, 8:30 p.m., free.

**GARDENIA RESTAURANT & LOUNGE**

7068 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles. Owned and Operated by Mike Harvelle, Tuesdays, 9 p.m., $5. All Free After 9:30!

**THE VPPER ROOM**

8852 W. Sunset Blvd., West Hollywood. Anima Insida, The J.C. All-Stars, Blake Digangi, The Family, Fri., Jan. 22, 10 p.m. TBA. Jocelyn & Chris Arndt, Sat., Jan. 23, 7:30 P.M. TBA. The Street Invasion Showcase, Sun., Jan. 24, 8 p.m. TBA. Matt Carrier, Pillar Saints, Lion’s joystick, Detroit Diesel Power, Wed., Jan. 27, 7:30 p.m. TBA.

**WISKEY A GO-GO**

6911 Sunset Blvd., West Hollywood. Blasted to Static, Jeff Martin, Fri., Jan. 22, 6 p.m. TBA. Vision of Disorder, Pissing Razors, Critic, Sun., Jan. 24, 7 p.m. TBA. Reclaim the Sky Project 46, Aries, Wed., Jan. 27, 7 p.m. TBA. Saving Abel, Thu., Jan. 28, 7 p.m. TBA.

—Falling James

**JAZZ & BLUES**

**ALVAS SHOWROOM**

1417 W. Eighth St., San Pedro. Don Alder, Fri., Jan. 22, 8 p.m., $20. Ohm, Sat., Jan. 23, 8 p.m., $5. The Saxophone Quartet, Sun., Jan. 24, 7:30 p.m. TBA. Nick Mancini, Sun., Jan. 24, 4 p.m., $20; Donovan Raitt, Adrian Belle, Antoine Dufour, and others, Sun., Jan. 24, 8 p.m., $25.

**ARCADIA BLUES CLUB**

1415 Huntington Drive, Arcadia. Preston Smith, Bobby Bluehouse, Sat., Jan. 23, 7 p.m. TBA.

**THE BAKED PASTO**


**BLUE WHALE**


**BUKBANK MOOSE LOUNGE**

2001 W. Burbank Blvd., Burbank. Pete Anderson, Mondays, 8 p.m., free.

**CATALINA BAR & GRILL**

6725 W. Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles. The Lee Rittenhouse Band, Through Jan. 23, 8:30 & 10:30 p.m, TBA. Vel Lewis, Sun., Jan. 24, 7:30 p.m., $20; Candie Sosa, Tue., Jan. 26, 8:30 p.m., TBA. The David Garfield Band, Wed., Jan. 27, 8:30 p.m., TBA. Pete Anderson, Mondays, 8 p.m., free.

**COLOMBO’S**

1833 Colorado Blvd., Eagle Rock. Steve Thompson, Fridays, 5:30-9:30 p.m, free; Tom Armbruster, Wednesdays, 7 p.m., free. Karen Hernandez & Jimmy Spencer, Wednesdays, 7 p.m., free. Triptease, Thursdays, 7 p.m., free.

**DEL MONTE SPEAKEASY**

52 Windsor Ave., Venice. Brad Kay's Regress Jazz Quartet, fourth and second Saturday of every month, 8 p.m., free.

**DESSERT ROSE**

1700 North Cahuenga Blvd., West Hollywood. The Mark 2, Stevens Trio, Saturdays, 7-11 p.m., free.

**THE DREDGEN RESTAURANT**

1760 N. Vermont Ave., Los Angeles. Marty Greer & Steve Taylor, Saturdays-Saturdays, 9 p.m., free. The Ready Set, Sunday, 9 p.m., $5, FREE. LA Underground Superstars, Mondays, 8:30 p.m., free.

**GARDENIA RESTAURANT & LOUNGE**

7068 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles. Owned and Operated by Mike Harvelle, Tuesdays, 9 p.m., $5. All Free After 9:30!

**GRIFFINS OF KINSALE**

1007 Mission St., South Pasadena. Barry “Big B” Brenner, Thursdays, 8 p.m., free.

**HARVELLE’S SANTA MONICA**

Records family) has made a name for himself with raucous trap, bass, rap and R&B mixes and remixes, and his live sets leave few wanting to chill. Co-headliner Ana Sia brings her potent dubstep deckwork to the party, too, and it all gets warmed up with the anthemic sounds of DJ Swisha and Alfred English, plus openers Wallace, Statues and Leemz. A millennial mishmash of epic proportions, this one’s an opportunity to see what the kids are gettin’ up to these days.

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$10 | 18+

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**Roadie**

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**COCOPALM RESTAURANT:**
1600 Fairfax Drive,
Pomona. Chino Espejo and los Duenos del Son, Fri., 10 p.m., $20 & $35.

**EL CID:**
4212 W. Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles. Flamenco Dinner Show, Fridays, 7:30 p.m.; Saturdays, 7 p.m., Sundays, 6:30 p.m., $15.

**EL FLORIDITA RESTAURANT:**
1253 N. Vine St., Los Angeles. Salsa Night, Fridays, 8 p.m.; Saturdays, 9:30 p.m., $10.

**THE GRANADA LA:**
17 S. First St., Alhambra. Salsa Fridays, 9:30 p.m.-11 p.m.; Salsa & Bachata Saturdays, 7 p.m.-10 p.m.; $10. Salsa & Bachata Tuesdays, 9:30 p.m.; $35. Bachata Thursdays, 8-11 p.m., $35.

**TIA CHICUA'S CENTRO CULTURAL & BOOKSTORE:**
13197 A Gladstone Ave., Sylmar. Open mic, Fridays, 8-10 p.m.

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**Country & Folk**

**BOULEVARD MUSIC**:
3318 Sepulveda Blvd., Los Angeles. The Influence Jazz Orchestra, Mon., Jan. 25, 7 & 9 p.m., $20 & $45.

**CINEMA BAR:**

**COFFEE GALLERY BACKSTAGE**:

**COWBOY PALACE SALON**:
32635 Devonshire St., Chatsworth. Talent Contest, hosted by Chad Watson, Mondays, 8 p.m., free.

**FREET HOUSE**:
309 N. Citrus Ave., Covina. Jim Kweksil, Meredith Axelrod, Suzy Thompson, Sun., Jan. 24, 6 p.m., $20.

**THE COWBOY PALACE SALON**:
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DANCE CLUBS

THE AERLINER: 2419 N. Broadway, Los Angeles. Low End Theory, with resident DJs Daddy Kev, Nobody, The Gaslamp Killer, D-Styles and MC Nocando, Wednesdays, 9:30 p.m.-1:30 a.m.

AVALON HOLLYWOOD: 1735 Vine St., Los Angeles. Peking Duck, Coyote Kisses, Embody, Armour, Fri., Jan. 22, 9:30 p.m., $20; Control, with DJs spinning dub-step and more, 19 & over, Fridays, 9:30 p.m.-2 a.m. Avaland, 22, 9:30 p.m., $20; Control, with DJs spinning dub-step, 21 & over, Fridays, 9:30 p.m., $10.

THE ECHOPLEX: 1154 Glendale Blvd., Los Angeles. Club, an eternally mesmerizing night of reggae, dub and beyond from resident DJs Tom Chasteyn, Roy Corderoy, The Duneysmaster and Boss Harmony, plus occasional live sets from Jamaican legends, 21 & over, Wednesdays, 9 p.m., $7.

EXCHANGE LA: 618 S. Spring St., Los Angeles. Richie Hawtin, Pety Torg, Ee K, Fri., Jan. 22, 10 p.m., $45; Awaking, Fridays, 10 p.m. Alan Fitzpatrick, Harvey McKay, Ratz, Sat., Jan. 23, 10 p.m., $20; Inception, Saturdays, 10 p.m.

THE FEDERAL BAR: 3303 S. Lankershim Blvd., North Hollywood. DJ Mike B, Fri., Jan. 22, 1 p.m., TBA. DJ Greg G, Sat., Jan. 23, 10 p.m., TBA.

FUBAR: 7994 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles. Booty Sundays, Fridays, 10 p.m.-2 a.m., free. B.F.D., Saturdays, 10 p.m., free.

GENERAL LEE’S BAR: 475 Gin Ling Way, Los Angeles. DJ Joey Altruda’s Shanghai Noir, Wednesdays, 9 p.m., free.

GRAND STAR JAZZ CLUB: 943 N. Broadway, Los Angeles. Club Underground, with DJs Larry G & Diana Meehan spinning Bippitop, post-punk and new wave, 21 & over, Fridays, 9 p.m., $8.

HONEYCUT: 819 S. Flower St., Los Angeles. DJ Ladymonix, DJ Whitney Fierce, waxing disco, Wednesdays, 10 p.m., free.

LA CITTA: 3040 W. Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles. Punky Reggie Party, with DJ Michael Stock & DJ Bass Harmony, Fridays, 9 p.m., $5; Doble Poder, with cumbia and nortena bands TBA, Sundays, 2-9 p.m., free; DJ Paw, 21 & over, Saturdays, 9 p.m., free; Soul Patch Sundays, 9 p.m.-2 a.m., free; Modist Mondays, 9 p.m., free; Dance Yourself Clean, Saturdays, 9:30 p.m., $5.

THE LAST: 6021 Hollywood Blvd., Los Angeles. Noize Fridays, Fridays, 10 p.m.-2 a.m., free. DJ Jose Galvan, spinning Caribbean and funky Latin sounds, Saturdays, 10 p.m., free.

CREATE NIGHTCLUB: 6021 Hollywood Blvd., Los Angeles. 7:30 p.m., $35.

CANA RUM BAR: more, 21 & over, Saturdays, 9:30 p.m.; Destructo, step and more, 19 & over, Fridays, 9:30 p.m. Avaland, 22, 9:30 p.m., $20; Control, with DJs spinning dub-step, 21 & over, Fridays, 9:30 p.m., $10.


MUSE ON 5TH: 759 S. La Brea Ave., Los Angeles. Annette Conio, Grit, Wild Mountain Mystics, Fri., Jan. 21, 8 p.m., TBA. —Falling James

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MATT CORBY: 9 p.m., $25, Hollywood Forever Cemetery, 6000 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles.

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 27

CHIEF KEET: 8 p.m., $20, The Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana.

CHRISTINE EBERSOLE: 7 p.m., STS-135, Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, 9390 N. Santa Monica Blvd., Beverly Hills.

THURSDAY, JAN. 28

BONE THUGS-N-HARMONY: 8 p.m., $27.50, Riverside Municipal Auditorium, 3485 Mission Inn Ave., Riverside.


CHRISTINE EBERSOLE: 7 p.m., STS-135, Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, 9390 N. Santa Monica Blvd., Beverly Hills.

GIBSON DUNN RUSH HOUR CONCERT: With students from the Conservatory of Music, Music Academy and the Community School of Performing Arts, 6 p.m., free. The Colburn School of Music, Thayer Hall, 200 S. Grand Ave., Los Angeles.

HOLLY HERNDON: 8 p.m., $16, The Teragram Ballroom, 1234 W. Seventh St., Los Angeles. See Music Pick.

JENNY LEWIS & THE WATSON TWINS: With M. Ward, 7 p.m., $39.50, Immanuel Presbyterian Church, 3300 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles.

THE SOFT MOON: With Gateway Drugs, Sextile, Rev. John, 8 p.m., $12.90. The Regent Theater, 444 S. Main St., Los Angeles.

STEPHANIE BETTMAN & LUKE HALPIN: 8 p.m., $20-$40, Smothers Theatre, Pepperdine University, 24255 Pacific Coast Highway, Malibu.

UPCOMING

JANUARY

BEAUTY IN THE BREAKDOWN: Fri., Jan. 29, 8 p.m., $12. The Teragram Ballroom.

BOBBY MCFERRIN: With Taylor McFerrin, Fri., Jan. 29, 8 p.m., $30-$105, Valley Performing Arts Center.

CELTIC NIGHTS: Fri., Jan. 29, 8 p.m., $40-$50, Cerritos Center for the Performing Arts.

CHINESE NEW YEAR: Sun., Jan. 31, 8 p.m., TBA, Saban Theatre.

DAVID LISLER: The violinist stitches together Mozart’s Sonata in F flat major, K. 454; and Schubert’s Fantasie for Violin and Piano, D. 934, Sun., Jan. 31, 6 p.m., free. LACMA.


D58: Sat., Jan. 30, 8 p.m., $20-$22.50, City National Grove of Anaheim.

ELIADES OCHOA: With Barbarito Torres, Fri., Jan. 29, 8 p.m., TBA, Alex Theatre.

THE EULER STRING QUARTET: The group debuts new work by local composer, Sun., Jan. 31, 8 p.m., $5-$10. Art Share L.A.

EXCISION: With Dj Figure, Bear Grillz, Sat., Jan. 30, 9 p.m., $25-$50, Hollywood Palladium.

EXPECTANCY: Jacaranda presents performances of selections by Thomas Adès, Gerald Barry and Peter Schickele, Sat., Jan. 30, 8 p.m., $45, First Presbyterian Church.


JULIA HOLTER: Sat., Jan. 30, 8 p.m., $18, The Teragram Ballroom.

KID KOALA: Fri., Jan. 29, 8 p.m., $19-$49, Royce Hall.

KITTEN: With Hunny, Oliver the Kid, Sat., Jan. 30, 9 p.m., $19.50. The Fonda Theatre.

MAGICAL CLOUDZ: Fri., Jan. 29, 8 p.m., $20, Hollywood Forever Cemetery.

MIKE GORDON: Fri., Jan. 29, 8 p.m., $30, Fonda Theatre.

PASADENA COMMUNITY ORCHESTRA: Pianists Junyan Jin and Peter Green duet over Poulenc’s Concerto for Two Pianos, and Bethany Pleiguer conducts Rossini’s Overture to an Italian Girl in Algiers and Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony, Fri., Jan. 29, 8 p.m., free. First Church of the Nazarene, 1220 Second St., Santa Monica.

SESHOLLOWATERBOYZ: Sat., Jan. 30, 9 p.m., $20, Club Nokia.

SHATNER’S WORLD: Fri., Jan. 29, 8 p.m., $37.50-$58.50, Club Nokia.

THE USC THORNTON SYMPHONY: Conductor Carl St. Clair lays down Mahler’s Ninth Symphony, Fri., Jan. 29, 7:30 p.m., free, USC, Bovard Auditorium.

YAMATO: Sat., Jan. 30, 8 p.m., $35 & $45, Beckman Auditorium, Caltech.

CLASSICAL & NEW MUSIC

BILL NACE, JAKE MEGINSKY: Body/Head’s Nace performs a solo set on guitar, whereas installation artist Meginsky experiments with electronic and acoustic sounds. With Kathleen Driscoll and Andrew Cheote, Sat., Jan. 23, 9 p.m., free. L.A. Contemporary Archive (LACA), 2245 E. Washington Blvd.

CANDIDE: David Schweizer conducts Long Beach Opera’s presentation of Leonard Bernstein’s opera, Sat., Jan. 23, 8 p.m., Sat., Jan. 30, 3:30 & 8 p.m., $29-$137. Center Theatre, 300 E. Ocean Blvd., Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center, Long Beach.

CINDY WU: The violinist leads a quartet through string quartets by Brahms and Mendelssohn, Sat., Jan. 23, 8 p.m. Dohney Mansion, 10 Chester Place.

CIRCULAR 14: THE APOTHEOSIS OF ARISTIDES: The Donald Bringar Sings perform the world premiere of Neely Bruce’s oratorio, which is based on the life of Aristides of Soussa Mendes, a Portuguese diplomat who saved refugees from the Holocaust, Sun., Jan. 24, 3 p.m., $40, American Jewish University, 15600 Mulholland Drive, Bel-Air.

THE CROSSROADS ORCHESTRA: Alexander Treger conducts a program TBA, Sun., Jan. 24, 6 p.m., free. LACMA, 5900 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles.

DENIS MATSYUK: The Russian pianist rummages through pieces by Tchaikovsky, Schumann and Stravinsky at a recital, Fri., Jan. 22, 8 p.m., $55-$95, UCLA, Royce Hall, 340 Royce Drive, Westwood.

KALEIDOSCOPE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA: The group gives the West Coast premiere of Alyssa Weinberg’s In somnis alongside Mozart’s Eine Kleine Nachtmusik and Schoenberg’s Verklärte Nacht, Sat., Jan. 23, 10 p.m., $30, L.A. Theatre Center, 514 S. Spring St., Los Angeles. Sun., Jan. 24, 6 p.m., $30. First Presbyterian Church, 1220 Second St., Santa Monica.


PASADENA COMMUNITY ORCHESTRA: Pianists Jungwon Jin and Peter Green duet over Poulenc’s Concerto for Two Pianos, and Bethany Pleiguer conducts Rossini’s Overture to an Italian Girl in Algiers and Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony, Fri., Jan. 29, 8 p.m., free. First Church of the Nazarene, 1220 Second St., Santa Monica.


THE SHANGHAI QUARTET: The Chinese ensemble ties together string quartets by Beethoven, Sat., Jan. 23, 8 p.m., $39.50, Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, 9390 N. Santa Monica Blvd., Beverly Hills.

THE UCLA WIND ENSEMBLE: The group tours out selections by Paul Dukas, Edward Gregson, Edward Elgar, Darius Milhaud and others, Wed., Jan. 27, 8 p.m., S14, Schoenenn Hall, UCLA, 445 Charles E. Young Drive E., Room 1100, Los Angeles.

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