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By Michael Weinstein, President, AIDS Healthcare Foundation and Member, Coalition to Preserve LA

At its heart, AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF) is a social justice organization. Over the past three decades, our fight has centered on health disparities of people living with AIDS and other infectious diseases. Over the course of this battle, AHF has taken on many related issues including racism, gender inequality, immigration policies and various kinds of stigma. Our mission, "Cutting Edge Medicine and Advocacy Regardless of Ability to Pay," transcends what takes place in an exam room or a test site. Holistic health embraces the totality of what is required to keep someone healthy. Protecting the public health in a broad context involves embracing a person’s full humanity.

Last year, AHF launched a ballot measure effort to remove the Confederate symbol from the Mississippi flag. We did so because the biggest burden we face as a medical provider in Mississippi is stigma against HIV/AIDS. And nothing is more stigmatizing than a hateful symbol of slavery.

AHF participates yearly in gay pride parades. What does that have to do with providing medical care to HIV patients? The discrimination and bias toward LGBT individuals is a major contributor to the elevated rates of HIV and STDs in their communities.

For the last three years, AHF has been running a campaign called "AIDS is a Civil Rights Issue," focusing on the disproportionate impact of HIV among African-Americans. We proudly march in Martin Luther King Day parades across the country.

AHF staff in South Africa play a leading role in highlighting rape and violence against women and the role it plays in the spread of HIV. For several years, we have led a day of silent protest where women cover their mouths with tape to highlight the silence about the rape epidemic in that country.

After AHF’s leading doctor in Sierra Leone, Dr. Sheik Humarr Khan, died of Ebola while heroically treating patients under terrible conditions, AHF began an international advocacy campaign to change public health policies. In 2015, AHF sponsored a float in the Pasadena Rose Parade saluting Ebola first-responders.

The question then becomes: How does the Neighborhood Integrity Initiative fit with all of these other battles?

First, Los Angeles is the birthplace of AHF. This is our international headquarters. We have grown from a local hospice provider in 1987 to the largest AIDS organization in the world serving more than 600,000 patients in 15 states and 36 countries. We employ 3,400 staff people, including hundreds of nurses and doctors worldwide. We have a budget of $1.3 billion.

To find out more and show your support, please
Neighborhood Integrity Initiative

Our staff and clients are suffering because of the changes that are taking place in Los Angeles. More and more of our patients are homeless. Our staff cannot afford to live close to where they work and sit in snarled traffic for hours every day. The diversity that is the beautiful tapestry of Los Angeles that we treasure is being diminished. We have witnessed over the last fifteen years how San Francisco, where we have testing, treatment and thrift stores, has become a rich ghetto. Low-income people by the tens of thousands have been displaced. We don’t want that to happen here.

Gentrification is a social justice issue that plays out in the same way as income inequality.

All the privileges are going to the wealthy at the expense of the poor and middle-income people. Affordable housing is torn down to make way for luxury towers. Stable, diverse communities are being displaced by expensive condos, trendy shops and costly restaurants and bars. This is not progress—it is displacement.

Homelessness is a public health issue. It is a challenge for the homeless to take care of themselves. Making appointments, taking medicine everyday and prioritizing well-being is a nightmare for the homeless. Homelessness leads to the spread of infectious diseases such as tuberculosis. Homelessness in Los Angeles is at epidemic levels. Tearing down low-rent apartments and hiking rents is feeding the beast.

Traffic gridlock is a quality of life and an environmental issue. Mass transit in Los Angeles is not a viable alternative for many people. Therefore, the closer they can live to where they work the better their lives will be. Building luxury mega developments is pushing more and more working people out of the city center and extending their commutes. Creating truly affordable housing in urban areas will improve the quality of life for everyone.

AHF is a very important stakeholder in Los Angeles. Non-profit organizations are critical to the fabric of life here and across the globe. Civil society should have every bit as much to say about civic issues as any developer, politician or private corporation. In fact, their opinion—unbiased by greed—is even more important.

AHF receives no benefit from our opposition to over-development in Los Angeles. In fact, it will be a very tough fight. However, we have never shied away from taking a stand on something we believe in. In this place where we were born, that we love and have thrived in for three decades, we must take a stand against the unmitigated greed and corruption that will forever change Los Angeles from a welcoming place to one that is only for the privileged. It would be irresponsible for AHF to simply stand by and let that happen.

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Upcoming Events & Patient Appreciation Days

- **King Kush** (PAD) - Sun. April, 10th - 3-9pm - 323-208-9397 _Hempcon_ - Cow Palace San Francisco - Fri-Sun. April, 15th-17th
- **The Healing Touch** (PAD) - 18013 Ventura Blvd. - 818-881-1462 - Tue. April, 19th - 12-3pm _DTPG (PAD)_ - Wed. April, 20th - 213-747-3386
- **Hollywood High Grade** (PAD) - Wed. April, 20th - 323-536-9133 _CCA Silverlake (PAD)_ - 213-353-0100 - Wed. April, 20th

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SAYING NO TO HIGHER UTILITY BILLS
One angry bus driver tries to put the brakes on DWP rate hikes

BY GENE MADDAUS

ike most cities, Los Angeles is overwhelm-
ingly Democratic. The mayor, controller and city attorney are Democrats. Of the 15 members of the City Council, all but one is a Democrat. That does not mean that city politics are free from conflict; it just means that the conflicts are not primarily ideological.

Instead, the primary fault line is between insiders and outsiders. Most seriously contested elections come down to a race between a candidate who is more favored by City Hall interests — organized labor, business groups, developers and so on — and one who is less favored by them.

This fault line was on clear display last week, when Cal State L.A. convened a panel to discuss reform at the Department of Water & Power. For more than an hour, a bunch of insiders — the mayor, the general manager of the DWP, some commissioners — held the floor. They talked about process, and governance, and reforming the city charter — insider stuff.

But then it was question time, and the outsiders got their say.

“These rates have been going real bad,” said Earis Vails, an African-American bus driver who lives in South L.A. “We don’t make no money. We’re in a recession. How you guys keep going up?”

Marcie Edwards, the DWP’s general manager, tried to respond, saying that rates go up because of “pass-through costs” and the department is working to improve its “internal productivity measures.”

Vails was unsatisfied with that answer. She also was totally uninterested in the hourlong discussion that preceded her question, in which Edwards and other insiders bemoaned the cumbersome bureaucratic procedures that make it difficult to get anything done at the utility.

“That’s not important to me. That’s their in-house problem,” Vails said in a follow-up interview. “That’s your house you need to take care of. But don’t make me suffer because you don’t have your stuff right.”

This cuts to the heart of the debate over DWP reform: Who is it for? Is it for the insiders, who talk about greater “efficiency” and “streamlining” of processes? Or is it for people like Earis Vails, who just want rates kept low and who suspect that the DWP is wasting the money it already gets on lavish compensation for unionized workers?

Councilman Felipe Fuentes is the driving force behind DWP reform. He has often said that his purpose is to “remove politics” from the utility. He has not, however, clarified what he means by that. By “politics,” does he mean the voice of people like Earis Vails?

After last week’s meeting, this reporter pursued Fuentes out of the auditorium, asking him to give an example of political interference at the utility. Fuentes remained silent. He tried to escape across the street, but the light was against him, so for a solid 45 seconds he stood in perfect silence as he was given variations of the same question: Name an example of political interference. Fuentes referred to the 2010 battle between the City Council and the DWP over a proposed rate hike. The council held off on approving the increase, and in retaliation the DWP threatened to withhold $73 million from the city’s coffers. The council was so angered by this that it created a ratepayer advocate to offer independent advice. That most normal people forgot about this a long time ago, but within the DWP the scars are still fresh.

“It was a horrible process,” Rea said. “You had a situation where DWP management decided they wanted one thing, and it didn’t true up with what the mayor wanted and what the council wanted. You had a significant conflict, and it resulted in no rate action for a period of time. And then the rate action that was taken was less than what the department asked for.”

This is the best answer yet given to the question of what problem DWP “reform” is intended to solve. The DWP wanted a big rate increase, but the council wouldn’t approve it. A rate increase, to a utility, is like oxygen, and the council was standing on DWP’s windpipe.

Fuentes’ reform measure would change that, allowing the DWP commission to set rates. The council could review them, but only if two-thirds of the members chose to do so. (One can imagine the council preferring to leave that hot potato at the commission.) The commission would be further insulated from “politics” by giving the commissioners staggered terms of fixed duration, without the option of removal by the mayor.

In her answer to Vails, Edwards, the DWP general manager, endorsed the idea of letting the commission set rates. “As long as the mayor and the council have the ability to assert jurisdiction ... I would be comfortable with that.”

Of course she would. It is a reform that appeals to insiders. It would allow them to run the DWP unfettered by political constraints. In Rea’s words, it would allow rates to go up in a “consistent, repeatable and effective” manner.

“The DWP’s rate cycle is so highly irregular and so governed by election cycles,” Rea said. “Much more regular funding would avoid a lot of stop-start on programs.”

From the utility’s point of view, that’s a good thing. It is not a good thing if you’re Earis Vails.

“They go up every year,” she said. “They keep talking about infrastructure — they haven’t done any infrastructure. It’s mostly they’re getting raises.”

—BUS DRIVER AND LADWP CRITIC EARIS VAILS
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[Image of a smiling person]
Michael Weinstein peeks out the window of his corner office on the 21st floor. Hollywood is growing all around him. In every direction, there are construction cranes, dirt pits and street closures.

“It’s just ungodly,” he says.

Two blocks to the north, on the east side of Argyle, a construction pit consumes an entire city block. This will be a seven-story, 513-unit apartment building, with retail on the first floor. Another block to the north, a 16-story, 225-room hotel is going up. To the east, Weinstein can point to a half-dozen newly constructed buildings, shiny metallic things glittering in the afternoon sun.

“It’s just going to be a collection of sore thumbs, this whole area,” says Weinstein, who’s doing his best to halt the encroaching concrete and steel.

But for Weinstein, the worst is yet to come. Last month, the L.A. City Council gave its stamp of approval to the Palladium Residences, a 30-story, 731-unit mixed-use development to be built around and on top of the historic Hollywood concert venue and its parking lot — right across the street from Weinstein’s office.

“It’s one of the most dense things that’s being proposed anywhere in the area,” he says. “So yeah, I have a bird’s-eye view of all the crap.”

Weinstein has come to occupy a unique place in California politics. As the founder and president of an international, billion-dollar nonprofit, AIDS Healthcare Foundation, he is a CEO of sorts but also a health care provider, an advocate and an activist. Whereas in the past his portfolio of causes hewed closely to his foundation’s core mission — HIV prevention and care — Weinstein is set to expand his sphere of influence to include urban planning, specifically stemming the tide of “megadevelopments” that he believes afflicts Hollywood.

Along with the likes of Tom Steyer and Charles Munger Jr., Weinstein has become one of California’s premier citizen legislators, individuals who go around politicians by taking their cases directly to voters. But unlike them, Weinstein isn’t a billionaire and isn’t spending his own money. He’s using his nonprofit to fund and push for his chosen causes; he alone decides how AHF spends its money and what political stances it takes.

Steve Schulte, a former employee and former board member of AHF, uses the word “fascistic,” almost nervously, when describing Weinstein. He recalls one meeting during which his then-boss informed AHF department heads that they were not to publicly disagree with the foundation’s political views. “He went around the room and said, to each one, ‘Will you promise not to speak against AHF?’ ”

“I hated the organization,” Schulte says. “I loved the work they did. Michael has a sort of genius for the entrepreneurial work in AIDS care. But he is just a megalomaniac.”

Under Weinstein’s leadership, AHF has grown in the course of three decades from a single AIDS hospice in Elysian Park to a global operation with 730 centers in 37 countries with 9.3 million people on its care list. All this work is done without a government grant or subsidy. Weinstein has drastically reduced the number of clients in need of care, moving from broke to well-heeled. And he has done it through aggressive fundraising and corporate partnerships.

Yet even as Weinstein seems to have transformed himself from an AIDS activist to a corporate executive, he continues to dream of another role: urban planner.

“Look at the architectural quality of the city,” he says. “The story is not being told. We don’t even have a downtown.”

Weinstein is ferociously proud of the fact that he is the only American to have won the title of Citizen of the Year by the municipalities of both New York and Los Angeles. He even has the honor of appearing on the cover of the Times Square edition of the New York Times, although he says he didn’t read a word of the story before deciding to buy it online.

Weinstein is already developing a star-studded list of supporters, from the likes of Steyer and Munger to the majority of Los Angeles City Council members. He has even lent his name to several ballot initiatives, including one to build more homes near transit stations, a leap in making Los Angeles a more walkable city.

Michael Weinstein might have diagnosed what’s wrong with L.A. — but can he fix it?
Park into a $1.3 billion organization serving more than 600,000 patients in 36 countries through numerous clinics, pharmacies and a chain of thrift stores. It is, as Weinstein likes to point out, the largest AIDS organization in the world.

It also advocates for legislation — often divisively. Weinstein has become the de facto spokesman for what you might call the “condoms first” approach to HIV prevention. He’s angered many of his fellow AIDS activists by speaking out against PrEP, the first HIV-prevention pill that purports to be 99 percent effective if taken every day.

“He [subscribes to] the Larry Kramer view of why HIV killed all of his friends,” longtime West Hollywood political consultant Steve Staley says. “And that is because gay men had too much nasty gay sex. And the only way we’re going to save ourselves is to be ashamed of how we had sex in the past, and we need to wear condoms until the day we die.”

Staley isn’t alone. Weinstein’s personal brand of activism has earned him many adversaries.

“As someone who has been involved in HIV and LGBT issues for 30-plus years, I cannot take away all the good things Michael has done through AHF,” says long-time AIDS activist Peter Staley. “We had sex in the past, and we need to wear condoms every day.

“The Foundation appears to be acting beyond its authorized purposes,” says Lloyd Mayer, a professor at Notre Dame Law School. However, the only people who would have grounds to take action against AHF over such an alleged overreach would be the attorney general or one of AHF’s board members.

Neither is likely to do so. The board members would be supportive of Weinstein’s effort. Board chair Cynthia Davis told the Advocate in January that there was “general consensus” around Weinstein’s most recent effort, the anti-development ballot initiative called the Neighborhood Integrity Initiative. (Davis didn’t return our phone call.)

This year, AHF is funding campaigns for two statewide initiatives on the November ballot. One mandates the use of condoms in pornographic video production. The other aims to lower the price that state agencies pay for prescription drugs, by prohibiting them from paying more than the Veterans Administration does.

The Neighborhood Integrity Initiative is expected to go on the local ballot in March 2017.

For Weinstein, all three causes reflect social justice issues. But others are left wondering what, exactly, city planning and sky-scrappers have to do with AIDS prevention and treatment.

When Michael Weinstein moved to L.A. in 1972, LGBT activism centered around a man named Morris Kight, who founded the Stonewall Democratic Club, the Gay Community Center (now the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center), the Christopher Street West Gay Pride Parade (now simply L.A. Pride) and any number of other groups. The joke was that Kight had invented homosexuality.

“Morris took Michael under his wing,” says Ryan Gierach, the editor of WeHo News and a longtime friend of both Weinstein and Kight. “Michael learned from the master. One of the lessons I think he learned best from Morris is that every issue really needs a good villain. Michael’s got nuts of steel, so he knows how to find a villain and nurture the villain, so his fights are appropriately staged.”

—Ryan Gierach, editor of WeHo News
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✔ You are living with HIV
✔ You are between the ages of 40 and 75
✔ You have been on antiretroviral therapy (ART) for at least 6 months
✔ You have a CD4+ cell count at or above 100
✔ You are not currently using a statin drug
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Talk to your medical provider today about your cardiovascular risk and to see if you would qualify for this study.
A march from Silver Lake to LaRouche’s campaign against the initiative, organizing with instinct, given his roots. It is perhaps ironic, then, that Weinstein has come to champion that instinct, given his roots.

Born in Brooklyn, Weinstein took to activism at an early age, protesting the Vietnam War as a long-haired teenager, marching at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago when he was 15, and later joining two communist-leaning groups, the Spartacus League and the gay rights–affiliated Lavender and Red Union.

He studied architecture in college in New York and came to California to get a master’s degree from Cal Poly. A decade later, the AIDS epidemic was ravaging the gay community. In 1986, arch-conservative Lyndon LaRouche sponsored a ballot measure to add AIDS to California’s List of Communicable Diseases. Opponents said the measure would lead to mass testing and the quarantining of people with HIV/AIDS. Weinstein’s friends Chris Brownlie and Mary Adair “guilt-tripped” him into getting involved in the fight against LaRouche.

Weinstein and Brownlie led a grass-roots campaign against the initiative, organizing a march from Silver Lake to LaRouche’s headquarters in Atwater Village.

The march drew 4,000 people. Two months later, the measure was rejected by a 40-point margin. Shortly thereafter, Weinstein and others founded the AIDS Hospice Foundation.

“At that time, the average life expectancy was 13 months,” Weinstein says. “People were dying in the hallways of the county hospital or on the streets. And we said, the least we can do is give people a dignified death. So we started building hospices.”

Gierach says of Weinstein: “You’d see him on Santa Monica [Boulevard], hanging out in Boys Town, holding a coffee can and a clipboard, making notes about who gave and how much.”

The first hospice, named for Brownlie (who had just been diagnosed with AIDS), was built on the campus of Barlow Hospital in Pomona with the help of a $400,000 grant from the county. Brownlie died less than a year later.

By 1990, there had been some modest advances in the treatment of AIDS. Patients were living two or three years and desperately needed medical care. So AHF became the AIDS Healthcare Foundation and started opening clinics.

“The clinics were like MASH units,” Weinstein remembers. “We used to open the door, and the walking wounded would walk in, and we’d patch them up. Twenty-five percent of them died every year in those clinics.”

In 1993, Weinstein ran for Mike Woo’s vacated City Council seat in Hollywood. Weinstein was furious when former school board president Jackie Goldberg, a fellow LGBT activist, decided to run for the same seat.

“He felt like it was his turn,” Goldberg recalls. “I said, ‘That’s not how politics works, people don’t get turns.’”

Weinstein finished a distant fourth in the primary, with 1,641 votes. Goldberg finished first and in the June runoff narrowly defeated Tom LaBonge.

Goldberg says Weinstein “still is furious at me.”

“I still defend him,” she continues. “He’s a very intense man, who takes action when he thinks he’s justified, and he doesn’t back off. That makes a lot of people angry, particularly elected officials.”

—Jackie Goldberg, who faced Weinstein in a City Council race

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“We hope that this will usher in a new day,” Weinstein says.

AHF tried to pass its first ballot measure in 2000, calling for all bars in the 2-square-mile city of West Hollywood to hand out free condoms.

The proposal sharply divided the gay community. Posters began appearing in the bathrooms of restaurants and bars in West Hollywood reading: “Stay out of our bedrooms, AIDS Healthcare Foundation.”

They accused AHF of profiteering from the AIDS epidemic and called Weinstein himself “an enemy of the gay community” and a “Condom Nazi.”

The measure was rejected, but Weinstein says, “From my vantage point, it was a success in terms of the consciousness it raised.”

He also took away a key lesson: “It gave me sort of a taste of one of the issues within the gay male community, in terms of not wanting to be told what to do in any way, shape or form. In terms of prevention, I’ve been fighting that fight, and it’s often a lonely one for decades.”

If it has been a lonely fight, that’s partly of Weinstein’s own choosing, or at least a function of his personality. Most groups and activists work together. They form partnerships and coalitions. AHF, because of its enormous revenue stream, has never had to do that. And Weinstein has never shown much interest in it. He’s content to use his power not to build consensus but to stoke outrage.

“At the very beginning, he believed in being aggressive and proactive, sometimes more so than other folks felt was appropriate,” says Phil Wilson, Chris Brownlie’s former partner, who founded the Black AIDS Institute. “And I don’t think that he necessarily concerns himself with what the conventional wisdom is.”

That attitude has made Weinstein quite a few enemies.

“Michael Weinstein is a billion-dollar bully,” says Eric Paul Leue, executive director of the Free Speech Coalition, a porn industry trade association. “He’s not interested in talking to people. It’s his opinion and his opinion only.”

AHF’s condom campaign eventually graduated to controversial billboards promoting condom use and STD testing. Some can be quite funny—a recent

The county and AHF recently settled one of their lawsuits. The terms of the agreement have not been disclosed.

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“You can do your best to create a movement, but it’s not always the right time.” —Michael Weinstein

>15> one, parodying Bernie Sanders’ campaign slogan, reads “Feel the Burn?” before directing viewers to the website FreeSTDcheck.org. Others, however, have been perceived by some as shaming, even fear-mongering. One shows four silhouetted faces, each one with a word written on it: Tinder, chlamydia, Grindr, gonorrhea. Another shows two gay men in bed, one eyeing the other suspiciously, with the tagline, “Trust him?”

“I am consistently angered and confused and disgusted by his prevention campaigns, which seem to encourage a stigma against homosexuality,” says Cleve Jones, a prominent AIDS activist, who came up with the idea for the AIDS Memorial Quilt. “I don’t know of anyone who agrees with him or claims to understand what his motivation is.”

Although close to 80 percent of AHF’s revenue comes from its chain of pharmacies in the United States, Weinstein has frequently taken a combative stance against pharmaceutical companies, filing a number of lawsuits against them. Some have seemed reasonable, aimed at getting them to reduce drug prices. Others have seemed bizarre, almost quixotic.

For instance, AHF sued Pfizer in 2007 over its Viagra advertisements, alleging the company was promoting it as a party drug and was encouraging unsafe sex.

“He started taking anti-science positions — positions that didn’t make any sense, but they were great press hooks, and garnered him a lot of attention,” Peter Staley, founder of the Treatment Action Group, says of Weinstein. “It made AIDS activism look stupid.”

But Weinstein’s biggest offense, in the eyes of Staley, is his campaign against PrEP, a pill that, if taken every day, promises to prevent HIV infection. Weinstein made headlines in 2014 when he called PrEP a “party drug,” arguing that gay men wouldn’t take it every day as directed and would stop wearing condoms.

“In the world I live in, he has hurt the public health,” Staley says. “He can say he’s the largest AIDS organization in the world, and on a dollar-sign basis, he’s right. He has created a massive pharmacy empire. But that doesn’t make him an AIDS activist. AHF gets laughed out of international AIDS conferences now. He is completely ignored in Washington. And he is completely boxed out of everything the actual AIDS activist community does.”

A group of 164 HIV/AIDS organizations and individuals has signed a letter endorsing the use of PrEP and condemning Weinstein for his claims about the drug. Still, Weinstein has not backed down from his position (although AHF doctors do sometimes prescribe PrEP).

“The fact that STD rates are skyrocketing and the fact that the CDC is only talking about PrEP and not talking about condoms at all means our position here has been largely vindicated,” Weinstein says.

Weinstein’s office, much like that of any corporate head or elected official, is cluttered with mementos: awards, photos of Weinstein, miniature versions of AHF billboards. Off in the corner hangs a framed poster advertising the march against Lyndon LaRouche; below it sits a ceramic plaque Weinstein’s mother made for the Chris Brownlie AIDS Hospice. On the wall behind Weinstein’s desk hangs an impressionistic painting of Brownlie.

On the edge of his desk sits a plaque: “Aut viam inveniam aut faciam.” I shall either find a way or make one.

Yet behind Weinstein the headstrong activist lies Weinstein the astute realist. It was he who decided to move the Neighborhood Integrity Initiative to the March 2017 ballot, when the electorate will be much smaller, richer, whiter and older. And he recently abandoned an effort to remove the Confederate flag from the state flag of Mississippi, after it became clear there was no real base of support.

“You have to deal with the reality of where the consciousness is at any given time and place,” he says. “You can do your best to elevate it and do your best to create a movement or to involve yourself in a movement to change those things, but it’s not always the right time.”

Asked if he’s thought about running for public office again, he replies: “No, because I don’t want to tempt fate — I might win this time.”

“I’m not a good politician,” he adds, rather proudly. “I’m not a back-slapper, I’m not a placater. Also, there’s no way I could have a canvas of this magnitude as an elected official.”

15

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WITH CASH BARS AND LIVE MARIACHI MUSIC!
At Charcoal, Josiah Citrin’s sleek steakhouse straddling the border of Venice and Marina del Rey, it is unlikely that your server will suggest fresh bread and French butter to start, although it sits at the top of the menu. Instead, they’ll say, consider the cabbage. It reveals a lot about the current state of cooking that the first dish you’re offered at a steakhouse — even one operated by a chef with two Michelin stars — is a $9 quarter wedge of cabbage charred on smoldering embers. Its blackened outer shell gives way to warm, soft layers underneath, intended to be swiped through dollops of healthy roughage rather than carbs.

Josiah Citrin, the L.A. native and chef-owner of Mélisse, is a chef preceded by reputation. His elegant, modern French restaurant in Santa Monica has long been a beacon of hope for those who decry the city’s dearth of fine dining, a special-occasion place to drop a few hundred dollars on tasting menus gilded with truffles and caviar. Charcoal is far more casual by comparison, though it would be a stretch to label it a casual restaurant (imagine owning a Ferrari and then buying a Mercedes-Benz as the “family sedan”). If there’s an obvious analog, it might be Odys • Penelope across town, where fine-dining veterans Quinn and Karen Hatfield opted to open a relaxed, family-style joint centered around grilled meats and big pints of roasted vegetables.

Although it’s billed as Charcoal Venice, the sleek, blond-wood-and-concrete dining room vibes more with the upscale condos of Marina del Rey than it does with the boho Craftsman bungalows a few blocks away. At its core, this place is a steakhouse in the revivalist sense, one whose kitchen is equipped with a bathtub-sized Green Egg — the domed grill and smoker that’s something your dad might buy himself as a retirement gift.

At the bar, the handful of cocktails skew simple, including a solid margarita tinted jet black with activated charcoal and a Venice Negroni, whose name is literal in the sense that it is indeed a standard Negroni served in Venice. There are craft beers, too, but you’d be most rewarded by poring over the intensive Cal-French wine list, which is short on by-the-glass options (four red, four white) but contains gems such as a cool, earthy Cabernet Franc from Santa Ynez.

Most of the dishes here, as your server will explain, draw inspiration from Citrin’s own backyard barbecues. Does that include the beef heart tartare? We hope so. Speckled with pickled mustard seeds and crowned with an egg yolk, it was silky and rich — exactly the kind of thing you’d expect from a serious French kitchen.

Not everything demonstrates such precision, though. A bowl of chicken wings, saturated with smoke and rubbed liberally with chili, fit the weekend barbecue theme better, but they were simply too dry. Grilled rings of calamari tossed with snappy green beans and lemon zest make for a brilliant combination of textures, but that same smoky char sensation so prominent in other dishes was all but nil here.

If you decide to forgo meat altogether, Charcoal is more than accommodating — though you shouldn’t expect to doddle the usual steakhouse premiums. A salad of raw collards tossed with shaved cheddar and sweet potatoes is satisfying, but for $14 you might expect the greens to be softened a bit, the way a home cook knows to massage bunches of kale to mellow their bitterness. Coal-roasted potatoes — blackened on the exterior until they resemble actual lumps of coal — seem like a genius idea out of the Francis Mallmann playbook until you realize the acrid shell is all but inedible. Scraping out the fluffy insides, enhanced by a liberal dose of creme fraîche, aged gouda and butter, is blissfully decadent, but it’s hardly an improvement over the standard steakhouse baked potato.

Many of the vegetable dishes — coal-roasted carrots drizzled with honey and peppery ricotta or grilled endive with slivers of roasted beets and duck egg gribiche — can leave you dreaming of the ones at nearby Gjelina, where each plate seems like a miniature world of contrasts. Here they just feel safe.

Where Charcoal shines most shouldn’t come as a surprise: damn good meat. A thin cut of lamb shoulder, gamy and crusty with char on the outside, was a surprise hit despite the waitress warning our table of its possible toughness (“Do you usually like lamb?”). We picked up the steak, lacquered with caramelized honey, mint and coriander, by hand and tore off hunks like hungry wolves. Even better was the smoked short rib: decadent, fatty strips of meat as soft and smoky as Franklin brisket, though fortunately basted with a bit too much sweet barbecue sauce.

Speaking of sauce, each table is topped with a trio of them — that sweet barbecue sauce, a loose chimichurri and a mustardy steak sauce dubbed “J1.” The steak sauce is especially vibrant, but you might regret dabbing any amount on your skirt steak, a perfect specimen that arrives in the primal state of beefage despite its status as a lower-tier cut. Rich and mineral-y with a hint of aged funk (a glowing glass meat locker sits in a corner of the dining room), it needs no embellishment. There might be no better steak at this price on the Westside.

Yet as much as fire and smoke and sizzle help buttress the meat section, the same applications falter on dessert. A play on banana s’mores arrived as a campfire experiment gone awry: A tooth-shattering slab of graham crackers was slathered in chocolate creme, layered with warm and mushy bananas and topped with a skewer of grilled marshmallows. It looked and tasted like a mess.

It is clear that there is a great deal of skill in this kitchen, yet a meal at Charcoal can seem hard to decipher. It aims for progressiveness, but its strongest dishes lean toward tradition. It aims to be a neighborhood restaurant, but once the bill arrives it’s hard not to crunch the numbers and realize that you’ll hardly spend less than you would on the tasting menu at Mélisse. If indulging in a well-sourced, beautifully grilled steak and a nice (pricey) bottle of wine sounds like your kind of evening, Charcoal is a fine option on an otherwise sleepy section of Washington. And even given Citrin’s illustrious track record, it might be unfair to expect him to reinvent the classic steakhouse trope — though convincing the expense-account crowd to start their meal with a $9 crab cake is its own small act of transgression.

**CRITIC’S RATING**
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ = Excellent
★ ★ ★ ★ = Very Good
★ ★ ★ = Good
★ ★ = Fair
Zero = Poor
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A GOLD LINE EATING EXCURSION
SPOTS TO SIP AND SUP ALONG THE METRO FOOTHILL EXTENSION

The sprawl of good food in Los Angeles has become much more accessible thanks to the addition earlier this month of the Metro Gold Line Foothill Extension. Covering the San Gabriel Valley, the new stops stretch from Arcadia to Azusa. If you’ve never ventured this far, now is the time to load up that TAP card and check out some fantastic places to eat and drink along the extension’s route.

Canyon City Barbeque (0.7 miles from Arcadia Downtown station)

Carnivores, rejoice! The owners of this unassuming neighborhood gem once were regulars on the grill and barbecue competition circuit, where they perfected their slow-smoked and saucing games. Platters of fall-off-the-bone St. Louis–style ribs and tender beef brisket are hearty enough to be shared. You also can’t go wrong with the pulled pork sandwich, loaded spuds, cornbread with honey butter or anything on the menu that’s smothered in the signature brisket gravy, a luscious and savory affair that borders on excessive. Plenty of beer on tap helps wash it all down. 347 N. San Gabriel Ave., Azusa; (626) 815-4227, cayoncitybbq.com.

Luscious Dumplings (1 mile from Monrovia station)

This is Chinese comfort food at its finest. The steamed soup dumplings (guan tang jiao) have a delicate wrapper that readily bursts to release a tasty, porky broth, but it’s the pan-fried pork dumplings that will steal the show when they arrive at your table with their delectable brown crispiness. Equally gratifying are the pan-fried chive pockets and the savory stewed beef noodle soup. It’s cash only, and it’s best to arrive early, before the popular items sell out. 919 W. Duarte Road, Monrovia; (626) 385-0518, lusciousdumplings.com.

Tacos Ensenada (1.1 miles from Duarte/City of Hope station)
The 99-cent Fish Taco Tuesday deal draws a long but quick-moving line out the door each week, and for good reason. Each piece of fish is perfectly battered and fried golden and crisp, topped with shredded cabbage, pico de gallo and tangy fresh crema. Order at least three and load up at the crowded condiment bar with radishes, limes and the roasted chili gueritos. The variety of ceviches and seafood cocktails is generously portioned and piquant, and meat eaters might want to hit up the taco special on Thursdays. 2171 E. Huntington Drive, Duarte; (626) 359-4959.

Capital Seafood (0.4 miles from Arcadia station)

No need to head to Chinatown or Monterey Park — you can get your dim sum fix daily, and made to order, at Capital Seafood until 3 p.m. Classics such as plump har gow, shu mai, baked barbecue pork buns, leaf-wrapped sticky rice, fried turnip cake and egg tarts are satisfying. Be sure to try the salt-and-pepper tofu or smelt fish for an extra dose of spice and crunch. If you’re there for dinner, don’t miss the Peking duck special and flavorful house-style lobster. 333 E. Huntington Drive, Arcadia; (626) 574-8889, arcadia-capitalseafood.com.

Mantra Coffee Company (0.4 miles from Azusa Downtown station)
Converted from an old house, this coffee shop feels like home for the neighborhood locals and students from nearby Azusa Pacific University. Mantra roasts San Jose’s Chromatic Coffee Co. beans, and if you plan to avail yourself of the free Wi-Fi for a while, choose the bottomless-cup option. Here you can get buzzed and feel good about it, because Mantra donates 51 percent of all profits to charities that benefit the local community. 615 N.
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Los Feliz’s Sikh Temple Offers a Taste of Community, at No Cost

Every morning, inside the marbled halls of the Golden Temple in Amritsar, India, 1.5 tons of lentils are simmered, stewed and spiced to feed its 100,000 daily nourishment within the world’s largest communal kitchen — and it’s all free, embodying Sikh ideals of community and inclusion.

On the corner of North Vermont and Finley avenues, the Vermont Gurdwara (Sikh place of worship) is smaller in scale but not spirit. After Friday and Sunday services around lunchtime, you’ll find families and first-timers seated on the floor, enjoying some of the homiest vegetarian North Indian fare in L.A.

On a recent visit, lunch included hot basmati rice and dhal makhani, silky black lentils simmered with onions and garlic (usually weighed down with cream in stateside Indian restaurants, but blissfully forgone in this version, allowing the flavors to shine through). Rounding out the plate was sabji, a catch-all term for curried vegetables — this particular permutation featuring potatoes, carrots and peas, all glistening in thick tomato gravy. Also being served were handmade roti and a coriander-spiced yogurt raita, which offered a cool complement to the meal.

In the kitchen, volunteers chopped their way through bulk bags of onions and stirred pots of dhal large enough to be featured in a fable. We asked Bhajneet Singh, a former volunteer at the Vermont Gurdwara and current member of the Khalsa Care Foundation Gurdwara, to talk more about langar, or the concept of the communal, come-one-come-all kitchen.

“The idea of it is that there’s equality and universal brotherhood amongst all people, regardless of faith,” he said. “Whether you’re a king or a beggar or a shoemaker, you’re going to sit on the same level and eat the same meal, and interact with your neighbor.” Langar, he explained, is one of the fundamental pillars of Sikhism, and each gurdwara has one. All over the world, meals are mostly served by volunteers and the food is funded by community tithing, which is also a tenet of the religion.

“Everyone is welcome,” Singh said. “When someone comes into the gurdwara and they’re looking to learn ... they’re often overwhelmed by the number of people who are asking them: Do you want tea, do you want water, do you want a snack?” This concept of hospitality is pretty radical. It’s not a soup kitchen. It’s a gathering place where everyone can share in the spirit of community and eat, for free.

One can’t help but notice that this idea stands in sharp contrast to the neighboring coffee bars and small-plates restaurants along Los Feliz’s main drag. While they are all gathering spaces in their own right, the gurdwara, in its own way, stands apart from the persistent drumbeat of competition and capitalism, continuing to quaintly strive for inclusivity, equality and the abolishment of barriers. —Gowri Chandra

Mast Brothers Brings L.A.’s First Bean-to-Bar Chocolate Factory to Downtown

Two tall, bearded men dip their hands into a pile of cocoa beans, lifting them up as if to wash their faces with them. “All beans come from a pod, inside fruit the size of a football,” explains Rick Mast, who with his brother Michael started making artisanal bean-to-bar chocolate at their Williamsburg factory in 2007. “The first time I understood that all chocolate, at the end of the day, is a fermented fruit seed, I thought chocolate [production]
The Mast brothers recently became the subject of controversy over accusations about Mast Brothers Chocolate Makers’ past sourcing practices. At their new L.A. factory, the brothers are aiming for their chocolate-making process to be as transparent as possible. The 150-pound sack of beans the brothers were just inspecting is lying on a metal table inside a giant black cube. If it weren’t for the neat stacks of colorfully wrapped chocolate bars on display or the big wooden menu near the entrance listing, the minimalist 6,000-square-foot space would seem more like an art gallery than a functioning chocolate factory. In a sense, it is both.

The black cube design was inspired by artist Donald Judd’s outdoor cube installations in Marfa, Texas, and the space is intended to be a sort of chocolate museum, where the public is encouraged to enter and learn about all things cacao. Each of the five cubes houses a specific part of the chocolate-making process. Like Mast’s New York and London factories, this new Arts District location, set to open in mid-April, will offer chocolate-making tours every hour. In the first cube, guests are able to learn how the fermented beans are roasted in a convection oven. In the second cube, the roasted beans are transformed into nibs by being cracked and separated from their shells. In the third cube, the nibs are ground for three days in granite stone grinders. In the fourth cube, the chocolate is tempered and the brothers experiment with new flavors. There, one of the head chocolate makers uses pastry piping to hand-fill a tray of square confection shells with ganache. “The pink lemon is so bright and awesome,” Rick Mast declares after tasting a spoonful. Orange blossom honey, Angel City stout beer and local pink lemons have been mixed in with ganache, which will fill a special line of confections exclusive to the Los Angeles store.

“And then we’ve got our brewery,” Rick Mast says as he walks into the fifth and final cube. “Chocolate beer is the thing we’re super excited about. It’s like cold-brew coffee, ginger beer or root beer — a combination of all those.” The brothers have crafted three different varieties of non-alcoholic chocolate beer, which comes in sweet and dry varieties and is available on draft at the factory’s in-house tasting bar. It eventually will be bottled for distribution.

Though most of the chocolate currently on display at the new factory on South Santa Fe Avenue (around the corner from Bestia) was made in New York, eventually all of the Mast chocolate in L.A. will be made here, with local ingredients. Along with the variety of creatively flavored bars (olive oil, sheep’s milk) and beer, visitors can order hot chocolate, chocolate milk and giant chocolate chip cookies. “We bake those fresh several times throughout the day,” Rick Mast says. “There’s like a thousand dollars worth of chocolate in each cookie.” —Heather Platt

Mast Brothers Chocolate, 816 S. Santa Fe Ave, Arts District; mastbrothers.com.
A "Hocus Pocus Parlor & Pub," where you can drink alongside magicians and catch shows. There’s also a haunted tour of the ship and even magic training classes. Featured magicians include Murray Sawchuck, Jon Armstrong, Mike Caveney and Tina Lenert. The Queen Mary, 1126 Queens Hwy., Long Beach; Fri., April 8, 7 p.m.-1 a.m.; Sat., April 9, 10 a.m.-1 a.m.; Sun., April 10, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; individual events start at $15, all-inclusive midday pass $159. (800) 437-2934, queenmary.com/events/fantassea. —Siran Babayan

MAGIC

Magic on the Water

The Academy of Magical Arts typically operates from within the confines of its storied Hollywood clubhouse, the Magic Castle. But this weekend, member magicians are taking their show on the road — or on the water, rather. FantasSea: Magic Festival is a weekend of performances plus all kinds of other cool stuff with fun names, like an “Abracadabra Brunch Buffet,” or
Beach; Cambodian Town Culture Festival continues afterward in MacArthur Park; Sun., April 10, 9:30 a.m.; free. cam-cc.org. –Gwynedd Stuart

SPORTS

Grin and Bare It
I don’t know if Olive Dell Ranch in San Bernardino County actually has olives—but it definitely, for sure, has lots of naked people. Its Bare Burro 5K is no exception. The far-flung family nudist resort offers all sorts of clothing-optional activities, from swimming to tennis and distance running. Ever feel as if your shorts chafe or your sports bra digs into your flesh? Leave that shit in the car and run, jog or walk alongside other people with pronounced runnners’ tan lines. It’s a bit of a drive from L.A., but jogging naked in your neighborhood is generally frowned upon. Olive Dell Ranch, 26520 Keissel Road, Colton; Sun., April 10, 10:30 a.m. (registration begins at 8 a.m.); $40. (909) 825-6619, olivedellranch.com. –Gwynedd Stuart

FOOD & DRINK

Sausage Party
The crew behind Seoul Sausage Co. Little Tokyo will host chef Deuki Hong and journalist Matt Rodbard to celebrate the debut of the duo’s cookbook, Koreatown: A Cookbook, which pays tribute to Koreatowns across the country and abroad. Hong and Seoul Sausage chef Chris Oh will be serving Korean street food dishes, and there will be soju and Korean-inspired cocktails. The ticket price includes a signed copy of the cookbook. Seoul Sausage Company Little Tokyo, 236 S. Los Angeles St., #G, downtown; Tue., April 12, 7-10 p.m.; $50. eventbrite.com/e/seoul-sausage-x-koreatown-a-cookbook-release-party-tickets-23069232696. –Garrett Snyder

MUSIC

Star Hero
Under the tutelage of her father, Ravi Shankar, Anoushka Shankar learned both sitar playing of high technical prowess and the importance of her music’s message in the world beyond the stage. She’s folded this knowledge into a series of excellent solo albums that incorporate classical, jazz and electronic sonorities. Shankar’s recent Land of Gold album is her musical response to the plight of displaced people fleeing conflict and poverty. Joining Shankar are Manu Delago, percussion and hang (tuned metallic drum); Tom Farmer, bass and keyboards; and Sanjeev Shankar on the oboe-like shehnai. UCLA Royce Hall, 340 Royce Drive, Westwood; Wed., April 13, 8 p.m.; $19-$69, UCLA stu-
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OPERA
The Soprano

There are divas, and then there’s Anna Netrebko. The Russian soprano possesses a soul-stirring voice that unfurls with a rare combination of emotional poignancy, majestic power and luminously killing tone. Netrebko appears regularly with New York City’s Metropolitan Opera and other leading companies around the world, but she hasn’t performed locally since L.A. Opera’s Manon in 2006. She finally makes her grand return with an evening of Italian arias and duets with her new husband, Yusif Eyvazov, the Azerbaijani tenor briefly seen last fall with L.A. Opera in the title role of Pagliacci. The Broad Stage, 1310 11th St., Santa Monica; Wed. & Fri., April 13 & 15, 7:30 p.m.; $100-$225, (310) 434-3200, thebroadstage.com — Falling James

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DANCE

Fest Is the Best

Many of L.A.’s best modern/contemporary dance companies spend most of their time touring. Even when they’re in town, they’re still performing all over the Southland. Troubled by the obstacles to seeing her colleagues’ work, choreographer-producer Deborah Brockus found a solution. Now in its fourth year, the Los Angeles Dance Festival attracts an impressive number of L.A.-based dance troupes (30 this year) over four days in an informal studio setting. Opening night includes performances by Ate9 danceCOMPANY, known for Danielle Agami’s choreography; Union Dance Project, led by Brazilian-born Mariana Oliveire, Wax/Wane, helmed by choreographer Andrew Winghart; and Brockus’ own BrockusRED. Diavolo Dance Space, Brewery Arts Complex, 616 Moulton Ave., Lincoln Heights; Thu., April 14, 7:30 p.m.; Fri-Sat., April 15-16, 7 & 9 p.m.; Sun., April 17, 6 & 8 p.m.; $40-$45, Thu. only, $25 adv., purchase $50 at door, $100 for a four-show festival pass. ladancefest.org — Ann Haskins

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TALKS

The Revolution Was Televised

Way back in 1980, The Buggles declared that video had killed the radio star — but maybe that’s not so. At I Want My MTV: A Talk With Terrence Butcher, the film studies MFA will discuss how the music channel David Bowie really wanted you to want saved the record industry, turned kids on to aspects of avant-garde cinema and made you wait for that one Gino Vanelli video that maybe had guys dressed like girls in it, but you couldn’t really tell through the scrambled signal. Echo Park Film Center, 199 N. Alvarado St., Echo Park; Thu., April 14, 7:30 p.m.; $5 suggested donation. (213) 484-8846, echoparkfilmcenter.org/events/i-want-my-mtv-a-talk-with-terrence-butcher — David Cotner

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NEW MALIBU ROYALTY

Lauren Alice Avery is the poster girl for an elite, social media-savvy generation of L.A. heirs and heiresses

BY ART TAVANA

On March 17, what would have been another forgettable St. Patrick’s Day, I was “kidnapped” by an heiress. OK, I wasn’t kidnapped, but I was blindfolded and taken to a discreet location at one point during our whirlwind six-hour interview.

She wears a black trench coat and baggy black suit pants. With her bleached-blond hair and puffy L.A. lips, she looks like Jayne Mansfield through a lo-fi Instagram filter. In the canyons of Malibu, where she was raised, Lauren Alice Avery is nobility—a “Mali-Baby”—an eighth-generation Angeleno whose bloodline traces back to Francisco Xavier Sepulveda, the namesake of L.A.’s longest street, and Sewell L. Avery, a Midwestern gypsum baron and the head of Montgomery Ward from 1930 to 1954.

At 23, she’s an enfant terrible of Young Hollywood’s Snapchatting brat pack, which includes Jack Kilmer, Val Kilmer’s son, and Georgia Ford, Harrison Ford’s daughter. They’re Hollywood’s first indigenous Internet babies, a generation of Hollywood aristocrats whose fame is nurtured online rather than on red carpets or in supermarket gossip rags. Their real lives have been obfuscated by their detached tweets and irreverent Instagram posts.

It’s nearly 10 p.m. and I’m sitting with Lauren on the back patio of her beach club. She’s drinking white wine and smoking Marlboro Lights.

“Famous people are the most miserable people I’ve ever encountered,” Lauren says. “I don’t want to be famous. I want to offer my unique perspective that wouldn’t normally be offered into the world.” To nurture her eccentric worldview, and because she enjoys the theatrics, Lauren sees various psychics, healers, past-life regression therapists and shamans in the Malibu area.

“In my first life on Earth, I was actually a tree,” she says, smiling tentatively and asking if she sounds crazy. “I tell her I’m a realist. She tells me she thinks she’s preparing to sing for me. “I’m gonna sing a song about you,” she says, holding a microphone that’s plugged into a tiny amp that’s playing a beat.

She sounds like an untrained Lana Del Rey.

Lauren then turns away and heads toward the front door. She’s now singing opera. “We’re going to see my Young Hollywood friends,” she says. We whisk away to Silver Lake and walk into a dimly lit bar I’m told I cannot name.

I see Lauren softly palming a guy’s ass. It’s Jack Kilmer, 20, the son of Val Kilmer, who’s surrounded by members of Young Hollywood I cannot name. He’s wearing a black T-shirt, with black slacks and shiny black shoes. His hair looks unashed and stylish.

“I met Lauren in my living room,” he says. Lauren jumps in with a warning for her friends: “He’s taking notes on everything!” Jack continues: “The most artistic thing she does is existing. Wherever she is, she’s performing.”

After the bar, Lauren takes me to the Gaylord Apartments She has a place there, which she rarely sleeps in. “I can’t sleep at nights. When I try to fall asleep, I feel as though an unseen force is trying to take over by my body. Sometimes I have to go to my mom’s house just so she can hold me.”

From the unkempt apartment’s balcony, she snaps an iPhone pic of a 2016 Chevy Malibu billboard. “If what being taken seriously is being retweeted, I don’t want any part of that. I want something greater and grander,” she says.

A few seconds later, Lauren is on her iPhone in the lobby of the Gaylord, Snapchatting with Jack Kilmer, adding herself to a cudding app (as a joke, I think) and looking through baby names she’s saved in her phone: “Cinderella, Pony, Winnie, Sepulveda, after my family.”

On the drunken drive back to Brentwood, we listen to Hole’s “Malibu.” The lyrics ring true. “Oceans of stars. Down by the sea is where you drown your scars.” Malibu is dark and Lauren Alice Avery is our parachute into an uncharted terrain, an entree into the White Houses of the West, where she’s known yet uncomfortable with the notion of fame. She’s a paradox, like Malibu and the Young Hollywood brat pack she belongs to.
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Brothers in Arts

BY CATHERINE WAGLEY

This week, an artist-oracle leads sessions as part of a show about uncertainty, and another artist riffs on new-age self-realization in Chinatown.

Shooting A Communist

The first artwork in “Plan” at El Segundo Museum of Art is a photo of Lehman Brothers executives lined up and looking small against the bank’s epic tiled floor. The men aren’t actually standing on the tiles, however. They’ve been photographed over different years and then collaged together (some have 1950s haircuts; some look like classic products of the ’70s). Later in the show, you’ll encounter photographs of Madonna before she was famous and a painting of Lenin sitting peacefully on a bench, created by some anonymous social realist. Lenin has a bullet through his head because an angry Russian barged into a Moscow gallery to give the communist icon his due. “Plan,” which is purportedly about planning or not planning for the future, unfolds like an intuitively assembled curiosity cabinet. 208 Main St., El Segundo; through May 22. (424) 277-1020, esmoa.org.

Corporate Self-Realization

Ian James’ exhibition at Metro PCS, the small space he co-runs with artist Matt Siegle, has a cultish, corporate feel. Images of glass, pyramid-shaped skyscrapers spread across one wall, a purplish sky behind them. On the tile floor, clear plastic poles puncture high-resolution, stock-style images (in one image, a woman’s cheek rests against a clean white phone), creating these stool-like, calf-high assemblages. The painting show that’s perhaps overfull and populated by too many names we already know, but still genuinely sensuous. One painting by L.A.-based Henry Taylor shows a woman with a blank face — she has no features, just an all-brown oval for a head — turning back to stare out at us. 4339 Leimert Blvd., Leimert Park; through June 18. (323) 337-6887, artandpractice.org.

Resort Town Shenanigans

Jocko Weyland, a Finnish artist based in Tucson, Arizona, set the paintings for his current Martos Gallery exhibition in a resort town called “Incline Village.” The paintings are at once quaint and crass, done in a loosely representational style that occasionally veers toward the cartoonish. Sticks in dirt spell out the word “bowl,” a bear wanders away in waning sunlight and a smiley-faced blob perches on a hill as rain and snow fall around it. A broom pokes out of snow near the ski lift. 3315 W. Washington Blvd., Arlington Heights; through April 23. (323) 643-4758, martosgallery.com.

Orange Peel in A Hot Tub

In Brooklyn-based Jamian Juliano-Villani’s painting, To Live and Die in Passaic, a little figure made of an orange peel carries its own flesh (i.e., an unpeeled orange), across the white steps of a pristine hot tub. The painting appears in the new exhibition at Art & Practice, “A Shape That Stands Up,” a painting show that’s perhaps overfull and populated by too many names we already know, but still genuinely sensuous. One painting by L.A.-based Henry Taylor shows a woman with a blank face — she has no features, just an all-brown oval for a head — turning back to stare out at us. 4339 Leimert Blvd., Leimert Park; through June 18. (323) 337-6887, artandpractice.org.

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STOP ME IF YOU’VE HEARD THIS ONE...

Movie star Jesse Eisenberg’s sophomore effort as a playwright treads well-worn territory

BY BILL RADEN

“What?! You mean Jesse Eisenberg isn’t in it?”—dismayed theatergoer overheard outside the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts

t’s tempting to approach The Revisionist, the sophomore playwriting effort by film star Jesse Eisenberg (The Social Network), with a certain amount of skepticism. Though the actor—who is currently only known as Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice, the $400 million comic-book blockbuster that opened recently to icy notices—didn’t exactly invent the job title of movie star-playwright (see: Sam Shepard), it’s hard to not speculate about just how much of Eisenberg’s meteoric off-Broadway success has been driven by old-fashioned Hollywood marquee power.

The play’s 2013 premiere at New York’s Cherry Lane Theater, which also starred Eisenberg but won accolades mostly for the commanding presence of British stage and screen legend Vanessa Redgrave, featured the kind of dream redraft that are the envy of any early-career writer. (It arguably took Shepard two decades to reach the same benchmark, coincidentally also at the Cherry Lane, with Steppenwolf Theatre’s 1982 production of True West.) But this Revisionist is not that production and not that cast.

Still, having one’s Los Angeles debut at the Annenberg and in the supple hands of director Robin Larsen is nice work if you can get it.

Deanna Dunagan is Maria, a 70-something Holocaust survivor who passes her days watching American news programs in her photo-festooned sliver of a railroad flat (rendered in fine-grain detail by designer Tom Buderwitz), the temptress-like American second cousin, a struggling novelist attempting to break his writer’s block and finish his stalled book by escaping the distractions of New York for the solitude of Maria’s guest room.

“I never wanted to die so much,” she wisecracks to the bewildered American after he arrives three hours late. “I was going to stick my head in the oven, but it takes so long to heat, I changed my mind.”

It’s a shrewdly emblematic introduction to two characters divided by far more than generations and cultures. Maria is a mordantly sardonic but lonely widow pining for the family brutally taken from her a lifetime ago by the Nazis; David (Seamus Mulcahy), her young American second cousin, a struggling novelist attempting to break his writer’s block and finish his stalled book by escaping the distractions of New York for the solitude of Maria’s guest room.

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As a writer, Eisenberg has an actor’s instinct for sharp, incisive dialogue along with show-stopping, revelatory images. A later scene wonderfully played by Dunagan and the fine Ilia Volok, in which David is revolted by the sight of Maria having her legs shaved by a middle-aged cab driver—in David’s eyes, an act of seemingly unseemly familiarity; in Maria’s, a tenderly familial act of helping a bereaved friend cope with the loss of his mother—cuts to the quick of the novelist’s crippling lack of empathy.

It is finely observed moments like these that underscore the play’s thematic ironies about the importance of family and the wounding blindness of American millennial entitlement. But they also come with a nagging sense that Eisenberg is ultimately dealing from a stacked deck. Sentimental dramas about the emotionally hidebound being redeemed—or not quite redeemed in this case—by the humanity of another are hardly new. And David is so one-sidedly opaque, Maria so luminously human, that the play’s pathos ultimately feels manufactured rather than earned.

Such quibbling concerns may be irrelevant when it comes to the box-office calculus of the movie star/playwright, but they do mark The Revisionist as a journeyman effort from a writer of promise who may nevertheless want to hold on to his day job.

THE REVISIONIST | Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, 9390 N. Santa Monica Blvd., Beverly Hills | Through April 17 (310) 746-4000 | thewallis.org.

WEIGHT, WEIGHT ... DON’T TELL ME

I’m going to go out on a limb and say it’s the exceptional American woman who doesn’t wrestle with image issues, the modern feminist movement notwithstanding. Years ago my own mother lectured my sister and me on the virtues of thinness, and her invocations of experience (much more impactful than my own) in an interview published in the press were days watching American movies.

The cast and reviews that are the envy of any early-career writer. (It arguably took Shepard two decades to reach the same benchmark, coincidentally also at the Cherry Lane, with Steppenwolf Theatre’s 1982 production of True West.) But this Revisionist is not that production and not that cast.

Still, having one’s Los Angeles debut at the Annenberg and in the supple hands of director Robin Larsen is nice work if you can get it.

Deanna Dunagan is Maria, a 70-something Holocaust survivor who passes her days watching American news programs in her photo-festooned sliver of a railroad flat (rendered in fine-grain detail by designer Tom Buderwitz), the temptress-like American second cousin, a struggling novelist attempting to break his writer’s block and finish his stalled book by escaping the distractions of New York for the solitude of Maria’s guest room.

“I never wanted to die so much,” she wisecracks to the bewildered American after he arrives three hours late. “I was going to stick my head in the oven, but it takes so long to heat, I changed my mind.”

It’s a shrewdly emblematic introduction to two characters divided by far more than generations and cultures. Maria is a mordantly sardonic but lonely widow pining for the family brutally taken from her a lifetime ago by the Nazis; David (Seamus Mulcahy), her young American second cousin, a struggling novelist attempting to break his writer’s block and finish his stalled book by escaping the distractions of New York for the solitude of Maria’s guest room.

“I never wanted to die so much,” she wisecracks to the bewildered American after he arrives three hours late. “I was going to stick my head in the oven, but it takes so long to heat, I changed my mind.”

As a writer, Eisenberg has an actor’s instinct for sharp, incisive dialogue along with show-stopping, revelatory images. A later scene wonderfully played by Dunagan and the fine Ilia Volok, in which David is revolted by the sight of Maria having her legs shaved by a middle-aged cab driver—in David’s eyes, an act of seemingly unseemly familiarity; in Maria’s, a tenderly familial act of helping a bereaved friend cope with the loss of his mother—cuts to the quick of the novelist’s crippling lack of empathy.

It is finely observed moments like these that underscore the play’s thematic ironies about the importance of family and the wounding blindness of American millennial entitlement. But they also come with a nagging sense that Eisenberg is ultimately dealing from a stacked deck. Sentimental dramas about the emotionally hidebound being redeemed—or not quite redeemed in this case—by the humanity of another are hardly new. And David is so one-sidedly opaque, Maria so luminously human, that the play’s pathos ultimately feels manufactured rather than earned.

Such quibbling concerns may be irrelevant when it comes to the box-office calculus of the movie star/playwright, but they do mark The Revisionist as a journeyman effort from a writer of promise who may nevertheless want to hold on to his day job.

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**MELISSA MCCARTHY: GENIUS**

Too bad *The Boss* isn’t up to her level

BY MELISSA ANDERSON

A she-wolf of Wall Street with a spiky ginger Suze Orman shag, Michelle Darnell, the anti-heroine of fit-fully funny *The Boss*, is the latest of the Rabelaisian wonders played by Melissa McCarthy. The actress specializes in characters with indestructible bravado, no matter where they stand on the socioeconomic ladder; Michelle, “the 47th-wealthiest woman in the world,” joins the swaggering sorority formed by Megan in *Bridesmaids* (2011), Mullins in *The Heat* (2013) and even Tammy in, uh, *Tammy* (2014). That last film, a muddle of half-thought-out ideas, was ineptly directed by Ben Falcone, McCarthy’s husband. That the spouses teamed for *The Boss* made me worry that go-it-alone Michelle’s definition of family — “an anchor that will make you sink” — would prove all too accurate. *The Boss* is a better film than *Tammy*, but it still founders, almost capsising in its sloppy final third.

Yet *The Boss’* opening moments showcase McCarthy’s brilliance at basking byzantine or bizarre, is out of her price line at Eileen Fisher, Michelle is a paragon of tailored too-much-ness.)

After a prologue shows the future magnate being repeatedly returned to a Catholic orphanage by cowed foster families, rejections that forge her steely resolve, the adult tycoon makes her entrance to the stage of an arena packed with frenzied acolytes on the back of an ablaze phoenix (“my totem animal”).

In her seminar — part TED Talk, part Ozzfest, part Hot 97 Summer Jam — Michelle lets the screaming hordes know that no indulgence, no matter how byzantine or bizarre, is out of her price range: “I had Destiny’s Child reunite and come to my personal living room just so I could watch them break up again.”

That’s just one of many hilarious scenarios we are left to imagine another is Michelle telling an enemy that his sainted dead wife is “fuckin’ IT guys in hell” — and McCarthy’s delivery and timing are, as ever, flawless. “My tongue has always been my sword,” Michelle boasts, words that also apply to the woman who plays her. McCarthy created the bumptious mogul roughly 15 years ago while a member of the Groundlings; as she did with Tammy, the actress co-wrote the script of *The Boss* with Falcone. (Steve Mallory, who met both McCarthy and Falcone as a fellow Groundling, also has a screenplay credit.) McCarthy’s long history with the character likely accounts for the fact that *The Boss*, at least initially, has a tighter plot than *Tammy* and is less reliant on dumb throwaway gags.

But like the earlier movie, *The Boss* gives its star few, if any, hitting partners. It’s a baffling decision, considering that McCarthy is not only a terrifi c ensemble performer, as her breakthrough turn in *Bridesmaids* demonstrated, but also a generous lead when working with a scene-stealing supporting cast, as evidenced in last year’s riotous *Spy*. McCarthy’s castmates this time out include Kristen Bell, playing Claire, the one-time assistant Michelle turns to after serving a four-month jail sentence for insider trading. The disgraced 1-per-center moves into the Chicago walkup office, a plot thread that too prominently raises her tween daughter, Rachel (Ella Anderson).

Claire proves a dullest foil: She may upbraid her former overseer, but her chas- tisement is always softened by Bell’s inveterate sunny blandness. (I wish Bell’s part had gone to Cecily Strong, the SNL star who here plays Claire’s supervisor at a miserable office job; as is the case with her bit role in *The Bronze*, a patchy comedy released a few weeks back, Strong’s talents are completely underutilized in *The Boss*.) McCarthy must also share the screen with Peter Dinklage, an actor with no demonstrable gift for comedy, who plays Michelle’s vengeful ex-lover Renault. Complications arising from the scorned swain’s payback scheme, plus Michelle’s invariable redemptive quest to be incorporated into the nuclear unit of Claire and her daughter, set off the disastrous last act. These closing scenes include a wearying caper to retrieve documents from Renault’s office, a plot thread that too prominently features the acharismatic Tyler Labine (as Claire’s boyfriend) and feeble dick-sucking jokes. Better are the lesbo jabs that Michelle makes during Rachel’s scout-group meeting (here called the Dandelions) — a gathering that provides McCarthy with two equals: the indignant matron played by Annie Mu- molo (who co-wrote *Bridesmaids* with Kristen Wiig) and, in her screen debut, Eva Peterson as Chrystal, a terrifying classmate of Rachel’s who becomes Mi- chelle’s top lieutenant in her Dandelion takeover.

The rapport between the veteran comic genius and the neophyte, even in the few scenes they share, suggests that McCarthy may next want to buddy up not with a peer (like Sandra Bullock in *The Heat*) or with some one generation older (Susan Sarandon in *Tammy*) but with a kid at least 30 years her junior.

*THE BOSS* | Directed by Ben Falcone | Written by Falcone, Steve Mallory and Melissa McCarthy | Universal Pictures | Citywide

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**THE WAR COMES HOME**

With wide-ranging sympathy, *Louder Than Bombs* surveys strife on the home front. A fractured family about a fractured family, *Louder Than Bombs* takes a potentially tired premise and reshapes it before our eyes. The tale isn’t new, nor are the characters, but director Joachim Trier’s stylistic and narrative dexterity demands attention. He possesses that rare ability to deconstruct his material without denying us the simple beauties of a well-told story.

A good thing, too, because the bare bones of the premise aren’t inher- ently compelling. Gene Reed (Gabriel Byrne) is a high school teacher whose famed war-photographer wife, Isabelle (Isabelle Huppert), took her own life in a car crash several years ago. His older son, Jonah (Jesse Eisenberg), is a college professor who has just had his own baby with wife Amy (Megan Ketch), while Gene’s younger son, Conrad (Devon Druil) — a moody, anxious teen fond of computer games and viral video clips — is still under the impression that mom’s death was an accident.

When Gene is asked to help gather materials for an exhibit of Isabelle’s work and an accompanying *New York Times* article, he realizes he has to break the news to his son of how the boy’s mother really died. Meanwhile, Jonah comes to stay with them, ostensibly to help out but also because he secretly yearns for a break from his own new parental responsibilities.

None of that, however, prepares us for the unusual complexity of Trier’s narrative pirouettes and emotional tangents. He rarely follows one clear story idea. Instead, he indulges the characters’ fixations, passions and even their visions. The film unhinges us from the present and lets us lose ourselves a little in the characters’ reveries. The resulting fragmentation feels apropos. — Bilge Ebiri

*LOUDER THAN BOMBS* | Directed by Joachim Trier | The Orchard | Royal, Sundance Sunset
**Film**

**We're All Animals**

**THE INVITATION DIRECTOR**

**KARYN KUSAMA TALKS WOMEN AND VIOLENCE**

**BY APRIL WOLFE**

In Karyn Kusama’s newest feature film, *The Invitation*, a group of old friends gathers in a secluded house in the Hollywood Hills, reuniting after two years of radio silence from their hosts. What follows is slow-burning suspense, testing belief systems and social niceties, under the guise of a dinner party. Kusama also explores the horror of grief through her main character, Will (played by Logan Marshall-Green), a man who has lost his son and cannot shake his sadness.

“I feel tremendously sympathetic and empathetic with Will,” Kusama says. “I’ve lost people too early. I understand this mistrust he has about social decorum and courtesy as a meaningful part of discourse. He doesn’t just want to be relaxed and have fun. He wants meaning. It also alienates him from the group.”

Kusama’s directorial debut, *Girlfight*, launched the career of Michelle Rodriguez with a tough-edged coming-of-age drama, where a girl kicks and punches her way into the trappings of love and adulthood. From there, she was handed a Hollywood budget for *Aeon Flux*, enduring what was essentially a studio sabotage of the film, before taking on Diablo Cody’s succubus horror flick *Juno’s Body*. These four features share some tenuous through-lines, but when I sat down to talk with Kusama, it was clear there is one thing she has been singularly obsessed with: violence.

“People always ask what makes you different as a woman director — which is almost absolutely nothing,” Kusama says. “But with the perspective of women’s consciousness, I realize it must be violence. So frequently violence is depicted against us. We’re the first to go, the Holy Grail of war crimes, the starting line of how to exact revenge. It’s hard not to be, in my mind, a woman and not be kind of obsessed with violence.”

But now that Kusama has a 9-year-old son, she sees violence differently. “We’re at a point where more and more we need to make violence have an impact and consequence and meaning and not just be this horrible texture to the world. With *The Invitation*, I needed to see it through a lens where all of that violence had a palpable effect on the audience, and they couldn’t just walk away from it feeling like they had forgotten it had happened.”

Through most of *The Invitation*, we endure a feeling that something is very wrong, and that there will be consequences, so when the violence does hit, your nerves are already wracked. The opening throws audiences right into it when Will, en route to the party, hits a coyote with his car. With no one around, and a half-dead animal whimpering in pain, Will must put it out of its misery. The scene’s almost devoid of dialogue. There’s nothing to say. It was while we were ramping up toward getting the money for this movie. And I thought this is such a weird horrible sign, or a good sign, but either way this animal is limping away from our car. The scene was already in when we hit it.”

She says she doesn’t believe in omens but does find meaning in “energies and event clusters.” This belief informs her films, especially *The Invitation*, whose story ultimately turns on an intimate understanding of how people can go a little too far with their cosmic beliefs.

“I know some people who’ve probably lost their way a little bit over the years,” she says. “But, really, I think my experience with cults is the same as everybody else’s. I watch television. I look at billboards. I bank at a multinational corporation. There’s a lot of belief systems out there, beyond spiritual ones, that are attempting a form of social control, whether we know it or not.”

Coyotes have a pack mentality, and Kusama says she’s wary when people in groups fall into their own strict social codes. She’s been trapped by them herself, once endearing a party in Beverly Hills where the only other women invited had been paid to be there. She didn’t leave, even though she wanted to, because someone important was throwing the party, and that’s not what you do if you want to work in Hollywood. In *The Invitation*, Kusama turns that feeling of needing to stay, even though every nerve is telling you to leave, into a situation where horrific consequences face those who politely adhere to social norms and demands.

“The movie is meant to be a meditation on loss and grief and sorrow and the dangers of not letting those things into your life,” she says. “It’s an extreme example, but it’s what feels real to me somehow.”
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JAKE GYLLENHAAL NAOMI WATTS CHRIS COOPER

DEMOLITION

JORDAN THURSTON LUCKINBILL, ELLEN R. SCHWARTZ, CARLA HACEN, BRUCE TOLL, NATHAN ROSS, JOHN MALCOVICH, JASON REEDMAN, HELEN ESTEBAN, NIRA DIAMOND, JAYNE HALE, ROSS SMITH, MOLLY SMITH, TRENT LUCKINBILL, SIEGEL KAMEN, JEAN-MARC VALLÉE. DIR BY BRYAN SIPE. CO-DIR BY JEAN-MARC VALLÉE.

Q&A WITH DIRECTOR JEAN-MARC VALLÉE, SCREENWRITER BRYAN SIPE AND ACTOR JUDAH LEWIS FRIDAY, APRIL 8 AT THE LANDMARK FOLLOWING THE 7:25PM SHOW!
OPENING THIS WEEK

CAMPO DE JOGO (SUNDAY BALL) Last year’s World Cup ended in devastation for Brazil, whose dream of winning soccer’s most coveted prize on home soil was doused by a historic 7-1 defeat at the hands of eventual winner Germany. The stakes aren’t as high in the street-soccer documentary Sunday Ball, but it would be a shame if you missed it. The four-hour film, shot in close proximity to Rio de Janeiro’s Maracana stadium, where the World Cup final took place, but couldn’t be further from the purview of FIFA’s crooked-highers. Trash talk among competitors and spectators alike is a constant background hum, the informal banter taking the place of traditional talking-head documentary interviews. You couldn’t even watch a full match in the 70 minutes it takes for Sunday Ball to run its course, and it would have been even shorter were it not for the slo-mo — Rocha favors the kind of bright, high-intensity photography capable of showing individual drops of water emanating from a sprinkler. At no point prior to the game-deciding penalty shootout do we know the exact score, and rarely do we have an unobstructed view of the actual ball. The filmmakers make the matches feel small and isolated, taking you on a journey along the players and outlookers. Since there are no Germans around, even the losers aren’t too tear-stained. (Michael Nordine)

DARLING Mickey Keating’s fourth horror feature, Darling, screams Roman Polanski. Like Repulsion, it centers around a woman (Lauren Ashley Carter) and ever referred to the film as “Darling” — who’s haunted by an unspoken sexual trauma and gradually goes insane as she stays indoors by herself and cares for a large New York City house. There’s an added supernatural layer to the psychological horror — it’s strongly suggested that the hallucinations and strange things happening are the result of a haunting, a Gothic angle that recalls the other two films in Polanski’s “apartment” trilogy, Rosemary’s Baby and The Tenant. Darling’s derivative feeling isn’t helped by Keating’s decision to shoot the film in B&W and include anachronistic period details. Still, there are distinctive touches to give this passing interest. Most technical: Cinematographer Mac Fiset’s omniously atmospheric use of the house’s yawning, wide-open spaces, Giona Ostinelli’s brooding electronic score and editor Shaun Duffy and mixer M. Parker Kozak’s expressionistic sound design all invite us into Darling’s damaged headspace. There’s also Carter’s impressive lead performance, with the actress conveying much of her fear and anger simply through her body language (her trembling hands as she washes the blood off a knife is a remarkable bit of physical acting). Keating’s most notable variation on the Polanski-esque elements, however, comes in the form of an ambiguous reveal: What lies behind a forbidden white door suggests Darling’s horrified reckoning with her inner evil. (Kenji Fujishima)

DEMOLITION Jean-Marc Vallée’s Demolition presents an interesting experiment: What if you told a story of tragedy but withheld all the tenderness and emotion from it, so that you were left — at least until the very end — with just literal and figurative wreckage, disconnected fragments seeking to be put back together? Believe it or not, that idea might be what saves Demolition, which is otherwise a facile story of a man alienated from his life. But it can be hard to watch, too, and not always in a good way. “Repairing the past, he feels, is like buying an automobile,” investment banker Davis (Jake Gyllenhaal) is told after the death of his wife. And so he starts to take apart the things in his life that aren’t working properly: a leaking fridge, a creaky bathroom door. Pretty soon, he’s graduated to bigger projects: Seeing a work crew demolishing a house, he asks to join in, and he relishes taking giant hammers to walls. “It’s not random; it mirrors Davis’ own journey. He has to break down his life and rebuild it in order to feel something, and it’s hard not to sense that Vallée and screenwriter Bryan Sipe are doing the same thing with their film, presenting pieces in search of a whole. There’s somehow always a single mother involved in these stories of mothers being lost in the faces of the players and outlookers. Since there are no Germans around, even the losers aren’t too tear-stained.

HARD LABOR (TRABALHAR CANSA) Satire so poised and straight-faced some audiences might not pick it up, Juliana Rojas and Marco Dutra’s how-we-work-now comedy of horrors pits one Brazilian family against even worse ones. The world’s Western economies — and, being pitiful, less, has them commit some of those wrongs themselves. Helena (Helena Albergaria) strikes a deal to open a small grocery store on the spot where a previous grocer failed just as her white-collar husband, Otavio (Marat Descartes), is axed from his office. The early scenes suggest the humiliations and gross outs to come: Otavio suffers through job interviews and self-help seminars; meanwhile, mopping up the grocery, Helena finds dead cockroaches beyond what is reasonable — and what’s the stinking black fluid bubbling up from the floor? In a low-key scene, Helena turns heel on us, telling the live-in nanny (Naloana Lima) she’s hiring that, no, of course the family can’t offer benefits. Later, as something foul molds behind or beneath her struggling store, she accuses her employees of theft. The film is brittle and quiet, on occasion touched with the techniques of horror, especially as Helena stalks her store after hours. It’s also trenchant, stingingly and acted with great frumpiness subtly. None of these characters would appreciate us watching them, except for that nanny — eager to gain the experience to get better jobs — and neither husband nor wife understands what the film lets us know from the start: The economy in which they live no longer has use for the kinds of things they grew up doing. The myth is just how that hard truth relates to the revelation Rojas and Dutra have waiting behind the walls of that grocery. (Alan Scherstuhl)

HAVANA MOTOR CLUB Havana Motor Club isn’t a groundbreaking documentary about Cuba. It’s full of classic cars, proud men chomping on cigars and more shots of “Viva Cuba” than you’d hear in a day on Calle Ocho. Yet it is one of the few recent films addressing the unpleasant realities facing most Cubans. How do you foster an interest such as car culture when most of your supplies are hand-carried on charter flights from Florida and stringent speeding laws could land you in jail? Director Bent Jorgen Permutt follows a group of avid racecar fanatics eager for another lap around Cuba’s forbidden tracks. After racing was banned by the Castro’s communist government, which considered it a sport for the rich, these gearheads tinkered in backyards and threadbare

Q&A FRIDAY 4/8 AT THE ARCLIGHT SANTA MONICA WITH ACTRESS EMAYATZI CORINEALDI & FRANCIS DAVIS, WIFE OF MILES DAVIS, AFTER THE 7:15 SHOW

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garages to keep their hidden hobby alive for over 50 years. With recent economic reform, a racing federation looks to make the street sport respectable again, if only it can control its enthusiastic fans—and souped-up vehicles older than the Revolution itself. Havana Motor Club offers a snapshot of a Cuba that is slipping away. Already, some of these men fear the money and competition coming in from abroad. From resourceful mechanics scraping for every last nut and bolt on the island to the racer who lost everything trying to escape to the States five times, the movie reveals a Cuba that doesn’t neatly fit into tourists’ postcards. The camera looks lovingly at the ’50s American muscle cars while also capturing the enthusiasm and hope in these men’s stories. They’re not just looking to bring legitimacy to their racing club but also to help build a new Cuba that won’t persecute their passion. (Monica Castillo)

HIGH STRUNG A studious, tightly wound square. The stubborn, posty-lipped rebel. Where would the dance film be without these opposing archetypes coming together to ace the climactic performance that will meld their disparate styles and clashing hearts? Fortunately for energetic (if unsuitable) music-romance High Strung, co-writer/director Michael Damian dispenses with the will-they-or-won’t-they early on, allowing his cast’s powerful artistry to take the spotlight. Professional ballerina Keenan Kampa—as limber as a fully arcing Crenshaw—proves both a fascinating character and, behind the camera, Kusama as a rare pleasure, both vindicating and horrifying. (Abby Garnett)

LOOK AT US NOW, MOTHER! There may be no greater love than that of a mother, but little in Gayle Kirschenbaum’s new documentary will convince viewers that this actually stands as a truism. From the moment the audience meets her soppourseity, Mildred, it’s nonstop verbal put-downs and ruthless jabs about Gayle’s appearance and singlehood. What the faded photos and jump 16mm home movies don’t show, Gayle explains, is that her picture-perfect middle-class childhood withered under the harsh light of Mildred’s expect-ations. The director was the awkward artistic black sheep in the family, while her mother was a crown short of the Miss America title and never forgave herself for coming up short. Despite surviving decades of devastation to her self-esteem, Gayle doesn’t want all of her maternal memories to center around fights about nose jobs. Look at Us Now, Mother! places Gayle’s accomplishments and her mother’s lukewarm reception of them. Some of these career stories feel like tangents, but they add to the portrait of Mildred as the least-proud parent on the block. At times the mother-daughter saga is stretched to meet more universal themes, but it’s easier to understand Mildred as a one-of-a-kind piece of work. Gayle’s good-natured fight to reconcile with a person who sees nothing wrong with her own behavior proves both a fascinating character study and an intimate portrayal of a mother’s love turned hostile. Blood is (sometimes) thicker than water, and perhaps is still worth fighting for after all these years. (Monica Castillo)

MR. RIGHT Clowning, bullet-riddled rom-com Mr. Right is awfully charming in the best and worse sense of the phrase. It’s often kind of awful but also weirdly effervescent, a movie that salves, with its stars’ radiance and charisma, even as it grates. What hurts: lots of vaguely comic hitman drama, with New Orleans crime-mo kes intentionally plotting and attempting to co-opt and/or kill a dashing rogue assassin played by Sam Rockwell. What soothes, even thrilling: that rogue assassin’s budding romance with a spurned local train- wreck, a role that Anna Kendrick kills. Kendrick’s Martha has made some-thing of a troubled, terrifying monster. The character’s conception and performance suggest a serious critical argument: At

Her latest is a foray into isolation horror that follows a grieving father, Will (Logan Marshall-Green), to an ill-fated dinner party where the doors are locked and there’s no cellphone service. That get-together is at the remotely located house used to inhabit with his ex-wife, Eden (Tannya Blanchard)—who still lives there—and their young son, who does not. Kusama starts the night off rotten: On the way over, Will and new friend Kira (Emilyatzy Corinealdi) strike a coyote with their car, forcing Will to finish it off with blunt force. From that we know that he’s decisive, but not whether he can trust his judgment about the gathering that follows. Eden and her partner (Michael Huisman) introduce increasingly dishquieting activities, among them a home-video viewing of a woman dying. Only Will seems to suspect something awful might be brewing—or is he letting his paranoia ruin the evening? Alongside Theodore Shapiro’s angsty score, The Invitation’s greatest asset is Blanchard, who plays Eden with such expert melodramatic instincts that even her most menacing behaviors seem sympathetic. The buildup stretches longer than it should, but the payoff comes with a satisfying bang. Will ultimately isn’t the one who puts this party out of its misery, but watching as the atmosphere of decorum explodes into carnage is a rare pleasure, both vindicating and horrifying. (Abby Garnett)

Q&A WITH FILMMAKERS FRIDAY, APR 8TH AFTER THE 8:00PM SHOW! OPENING WEEKEND Q&A’S WITH CAST/CREW INCLUDING DIRECTOR KARYN KUSAMA AND STAR MARSHALL LOGAN-GREEN THU 4/7: after 8P (Karyn only) FRI 4/8 & SAT 4/9: after 8P SUN 4/10: after 5P

“INSPIRING, THRILLING AND VISUALLY STUNNING.” - DONNA KELLY, SCREEN RELISH

HAVANA MOTOR CLUB

A FILM BY

DIRECTOR KARYN KUSAMA

STARRING

MARCUS PCAIC

JOHNWAYNE BUCKLEY

EMAYATZY CORINEALDI

MICHAEL MARSHALL

LOGAN MARSHALL-GREEN

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“You won’t see a more shocking thriller all year.” – Village Voice
Neistat’s A Space Program runs viewers through the beauty of a homespun, handmade science-fiction theater piece/gallery event. In 2012, artist Tom Sachs staged and played aude of a The Right Stuff—Flavored performance/installation piece at New York’s Park Avenue Armory. The idea: To track a Martian voyage from inception to find an answer to the question of whether there’s life out there. The show was a roccoco bicolage, with Sachs and crew building space suits, capsules, mission-control consoles and even a Martian rover buggy from plywood, steel, Tyvek and found objects. The result is something like the best science-fair project ever, an inviting performance piece that tasks viewers with the pleasurable, imaginative engagement that more seamless special effects deny. As a model rocket blasts into space, we see some slack let loose on a rope from which a globe is hanging. Cut to a camera above that globe and, look, the Earth is receding below us. Such ingenuity rules the performance and the film, in which men and women who worked on the project get to explain, with amusing NASA-level seriousness, what materials they’ve used and why. Nobody once breaks character: These are all scientists, they insist, seeking out an answer to the greatest question humanity has ever faced. That conviction gives the narrative power: It’s legitimately tense when the astronauts attempt to land on Mars by building an Atari 2600. (Alan Scherstuhl)

SWEET BEAN
Warm and unusually crowd-pleasing, Naomi Kawase’s old-ways-are-the-best-ways foodie drama is a celebration not just of homemade cooking but of taking your time and doing it right—precisely what the celebrated director does herself. The film’s Japanese title, An, refers to the sweet bean paste that sephuganeriok the film’s star, Miki Kojima,dorayaki, the perfectly golden pancake-dolls that are the specialty of his counter-service establishment. Sentaro has placed an ad for kitchen help, and Takou guns for the job, despite Sentaro’s fears that she is not up to it physically. But soon the old charmer is teaching him “an is the soul of a dorayaki” and getting him to rise before dawn to cook her food. (“Do buses run this early?” he asks her, in a wobby, green-lit landscape.) At first the stakes are as light yet rich as Sentaro’s pancakes; then come marvelous cine-essays on bean-soaking and paste-prepping, plus—in the film’s tragedy-tinged final third—a change-of-seasons montage for the ages. “It takes so much time,” Sentaro sighs, early on, watching Tokou wash beans. But then, a moment later, he’s marveling: “But they’re beautiful!” That probably what patient audiences will feel, too. Drama arrives with a revelation from Tokumitsu’s past and an examination of Japan’s historical treatment of citizens with infectious diseases, but this material doesn’t feel as if it’s been solved and worried over with the high patience of the rest of the film. (Alan Scherstuhl)

**YOUR WEEKLY MOVIE TO-DO LIST**

**Metropolis and Linklater’s Before Trilogy, Complete**

**Friday, April 8**

Richard Linklater has made so many casualty films throughout his career that it’s hard to keep track of them all. Even so, the cumulative effect of Before Sunrise, Before Sunset and Before Midnight is like nothing else in his or anyone else’s body of work. Ethan Hawke and Julie Delpy’s characters meet, fall in love, drift apart, come back together again and always end on a perfectly ambiguous note that makes us wonder if the phrase they’re in will last. The trilogy has only become more moving and insightful as both it and its leads age. Few other filmmakers would have dared to continue the series after the first installment felt so perfect and self-contained; fewer still could have managed to keep improving on it. "Aero Theatre, 1228 Montana Ave., Santa Monica; Fri., April 8, 7:30 p.m.; (323) 466-3456, americinametinathecquealteme.com."

It makes a certain kind of sense that Paul Thomas Anderson, one of our most overpraised filmmakers, would have his best film in years go undetected. It also makes sense to put said film in the midnight move slot. The Nut does just that with a 35mm print of Inherent Vice, a hazy descent into the Thomas Pynchon novel about a beachside private detective (Joaquin Phoenix) investigating who-knows-what as forces unseen conspire against him. It’s borderline incoherent and pleasantly inconsequential, a sort of Big Lebowski noir with much to offer beyond the vagaries of its surface. "Pacific Theatre, 11272 Santa Monica Blvd., West L.A.; Fri., April 8, 11:59 p.m.; (310) 473-8530, landmarktheatres.com."

**Saturday, April 9**

Metropolis has been presented in so many different versions that, nearly a century after it premiered in Weimar Germany, there remains confusion over which iteration is definitive. (For a more recent analog, think Blade Runner.) Cinemafé’s Silent Treatment series seeks to allay our confusion with a DCP restoration of the (almost) complete version that Fritz Lang originally intended to be seen. A lavish, hugely ambitious undertaking, the sci-fi silent’s production design is still being emulated today. "Cinemafé/Silent Movie Theatre, 611 N. Fairfax Ave., Fairfax, Sat., April 9, 1 p.m.; (323) 655-2510, cinemafé.org."

A robots-with-guns triple feature at the Egyptian: RoboCop, The Terminator and T.R.O.G.R. The first two, both on 35mm, need no introduction, but their contemporary (whose title stands for Robotic Officer Tactical Operation 35mm, need no introduction, but their contemporary is definitively. Based on the novel by Kwong and Jeffrey Brown (who also directed The Secret of Nells), once again brings Irish folklore to vivid life, this time telling a story involving a lighthouse, fairies and a selkie (read: seal in the water, looking for work — and, after meeting a prospector, gold — south of the border. The fabled treasure, if it exists at all, is an end unlikely to justify the means these two desperate pilgrims go in order to find it; the prospect of unimaginable wealth rarely brings out the best in people. "LACMA, 5905 Wiltshire Blvd., Mid-Wilshire; Tue., April 12, 1 p.m.; $5; (323) 875-6000, lacma.org."

**Wednesday, April 14**

CSUN’s semester-long Andrea Tarkovsky: His Films and His Legacy retrospective has completed the "Films portion of its program and moved into the "Legacy" phase. After screening Terrence Malick’s The Tree of Life last Thursday, Lars von Trier’s drastically different Antichrist is on the docket this week. The Danish provocateur’s last few films have been misfires, but this dissection of two stricten-priesten (Willem Dafoe as He, Charlotte Gainsbourg as She) finds the endlessly neurotic film-maker at his best. Gainsbourg rightfully won Best Actress for her performance, but a certain CG should have been honored as well. Chaos reigns! "CSUN, 18111 Nordhoff St., Northridge; Thu., April 14, 7 p.m.; free. (818) 677-1200, csun.edu. —Michael Nordine

**Antichrist**

Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood; Sat., April 9, 7:30 p.m.; $11; (323) 466-3456, americinametinathecquealteme.com.

**Sunday, April 10**

One of the best, most understated animated films of the last few years, Song of the Sea plays at UCLA, Tom Moore, who also directed The Secret of Nells, once again brings Irish folklore to vivid life, this time telling a story involving a lighthouse, fairies and a selkie (read: seal in the water, human on land). As with most worthwhile animated fare, you needn’t be a kid to appreciate this one’s joy. "UCLA’s Billy Wilder Theatre, 10899 Wilshire Blvd., Westwood; Sun., April 10, 11 a.m. free. (310) 206-8013, cinema.ucla.edu."

**Tuesday, April 12**

1948’s The Treasure of the Sierra Madre may just be the most expectation-defying film of classic Hollywood. A dispiriting anti-adventure, John Huston’s take on the B. Traven novel stars Humphrey Bogart and Walter Huston (the director’s father) as two itinerant Americans looking for work and, after meeting a prospector, gold — south of the border. The fabled treasure, if it exists at all, is an end unlikely to justify the means these two desperate pilgrims go in order to find it; the prospect of unimaginable wealth rarely brings out the best in people. "LACMA, 5905 Wiltshire Blvd., Mid-Wilshire; Tue., April 12, 1 p.m.; $5; (323) 875-6000, lacma.org."

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before it became the epicenter for $12 watermelon juices infused with moon-dust, Venice was a locus of left-coast culture. In the ’90s, it rivaled Melrose for the city’s most eclectic vortex, a grimy warren overrun by skate rats and graffiti writers, bohemian artists, bootleg-mixtape hawkers, homeless prophets and fake Rastas selling faker weed.

It was where overprotective parents forbade their teenagers to take the bus to — where the Shoreline Crips warred against the Latino V13s, where Muscle Beach bodybuilders bought whey protein for punch-you-in-the-face rap. That’s the type of DJ Premier. Few can cook up winter samples and reimagining the blueprint for punch-you-in-the-face rap. That’s the lawless energy he’s trying to replicate in the summer with such ease.

“Shit … have you looked closely at the beach anytime recently?” quips the Ann Arbor, Michigan, native, born Sam Baker. “I could get some inspiration to make the sounds even grimmer if I walk around there long enough.”

Even though his sounds create cognitive dissonance with the mild climate, he’s dressed fittingly: orange Polo hat, a tropical shirt covered in boats, blue slippers. Exceedingly comfy.

He’s lived west of the 405 for the last few years. Before that, he lived in Northridge, where he shared a house with Flying Lotus, the Brainfeeder boss who released the first few Samiyam records. Another appeared on Hyperdub, the vaunted imprint of bass music visionary Kode9. Animals Have Feelings has a Stones Throw barcode, giving Samiyam the stamp of approval from three of the best labels of the last decade.

“When I first started making beats, I couldn’t get out the exact ideas that I had,” Baker says between spliff hits. “Lately, I’ve been loading up sounds off old zip discs and making new beats out of stuff that I’d previously saved and didn’t know how to approach. Now I know how to make those original ideas actually happen.”

Baker is a product of the beat scene, though he blanches slightly at the label. He’d rather mention Dr. Dre and Alchemist, who started long before the Airliner became the go-to hangar to hear the hardest beats.

“It’s all been proven,” Baker says, alluding to the influence he and his cohorts have had on contemporary beat production.

If there is a closest local comparison to Baker, it might be his frequent collaborator Alchemist, whose Santa Monica studio sits just a couple miles east. The pair shares a predilection for esoteric samples and reimagining the blueprint of DJ Premier. Few can cook up winter in the summer with such ease.

Baker cites M.O.P. as his Platonic ideal for punch-you-in-the-face rap. That’s the lawless energy he’s trying to replicate in an apartment now adjacent to the domain of the roller-skating electric guitarist in the turban. Stranger things have happened.

“I’ve always loved gritty, sample-based music.”
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**Coming Soon:**

- April 4: The Gatsby Affair
- April 15: Klub La
- April 16: Club 90s Presents: Seena Ball
- April 16: Xcellerated & Heavy Dub - Ft. DJ Profile & Mc Fatman D
- April 19: Whitney
- April 20: Problem
- April 22: Killahurtz
- April 22: Colors LA
- April 23: Xcellerated #035 Free Event: Ft. Crissy Criss & Youngman
- April 24: Comeback Kid
- April 24: Freo Santana
- April 25: Industry Professionals

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** Proudly Supporting These Charity Organizations **
Ellie Goulding can’t help showing her joy on her third album, Delirium. Whether she’s gushing sensually about a romantic lover (“Devotion”) or paying tribute to a longtime friend (“Army”), the English songbird imbues each track with an air of exuberance. Even when she plunges into relatively dark material, such as the mildly S&M-themed “Love Me Like You Do” (which also appeared on the Fifty Shades of Grey soundtrack), Goulding inevitably comes off as yearning and hopeful instead of moody or tortured. For all the gauzy euphoria of dance-floor workouts “Aftertaste” (produced by The Bird and the Bee’s Greg Kurstin) and “Keep on Dancin’,” she reveals more of her own personality when the synth-heavy arrangements subside long enough for her to breathe, as on the intimately acoustic first half of “Lost and Found.” —Falling James

RJD2
@ TERAGRAM BALLROOM
Ohio hip-hop producer/artist/visionary RJD2 recorded his new Dame Fortune set in Philly, which might explain the tracks’ classic tart-sweet soul sound, wherein fleet, funky beats prop simple but urgent melodies by guest vocalists Son Little, Phonte and Jordan Brown. The invertebrate gear junkie dove into his pile of vintage instruments and mics for inspiration, and when he blends their old-world charms with modern recording and processing equipment, the results reveal an artist with the broadest of palettes. For an example, check provocative single “Peace of What,” which pays tribute to ‘90s rappers Main Source’s “Peace Is Not the Word to Play”; it asks the musical question, “We all talk a lot, but what are we actually doing to get us a little peace?” —John Payne

Luther Dickinson, Jim Lauderdale
@ THE MINT
Luther Dickinson is rock royalty. His father, Jim, was a Memphis sideman who appeared on records by Dylan and the Stones and produced Big Star, The Replacements and Willy DeVille. Luther has carried on the family blues-rock tradition, playing guitar with John Hiatt, Mavis Staples and The Black Crowes, as well as leading North Mississippi Allstars with his brother Cody. On his third solo album, Blues & Ballads: A Folksinger’s Songbook, Vol. I & II, Luther turns down the volume if not the intensity for a series of intimately homespun acoustic workouts. He adds new warmth to these traditional-style tunes, smearing his slide guitar across the night sky and twining his vocals with those of drummer Sharde Thomas. Veteran bard Jim Lauderdale finds himself in Nashville with the Memphians blues again on his latest record, Soul Searching. —Falling James

The Residents @ THE REGENT THEATER
For more than 40 years, The Residents have gone to great lengths to hide their identities. They don’t give interviews, and they rarely perform live. And when they do tour, “Randy,” “Chuck” and “Bob” cover themselves up in elaborately disturbing costumes, such as their iconic tuxedos accessorized with gigantic, eyeball-like headpieces. Not only does the mysterious collective create a uniquely theatrical spectacle onstage but it also dispenses with the idea of individual rock-star ego and the cult of personality in order to return the focus to the work itself. Somewhat atypically, The Residents are looking backward on their latest live album, Shadowland, a survey of arty anti-hits that fuses together laconic vocals, eerie electronics, rhythmic sound collages and psychedelic guitar. Tonight’s show includes a screening of a new documentary about the band, Theory of Obscurity: A Film About The Residents. —Falling James

Chris Smither @ MCCABE’S GUITAR SHOP
New Orleans singer-guitarist Chris Smither’s music usually is labeled blues or folk, but his songwriting transcends both those tags, mixing emotional depth and keen intellect in a way that’s rare in any genre. He’s also one of the great living masters of fingerpicked acoustic guitar, with a cascading, rhythmic style that enlivens wittily haunting songs such as “No Love Today” and “Can’t Shake These Blues.” At 71, he’s achieved elder-statesman status in Americana circles but remains one of the more criminally underrated artists of his generation. A recent tribute album, Link of Chain, features Smither covers by the likes of Dave Alvin, Patty Larkin and his most famous fan, Bonnie Raitt, who turned his 1970 song “Love You Like a Man” (with a changed pronoun) into one of her signature numbers. Also Sunday, April 10. —Andy Hermann

Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil @ MICROSOFT THEATER
Just the word “Brazil” invokes sun-kissed hips swaying to breezy bossa nova on the beach. But Brazil is also a country of intense poverty, futuristic skyscrapers, the Amazon rainforest, endless urban sprawl, centuries-old African and indigenous cultures, and revolutionary art, literature and music. In the 1960s, Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil embraced these contradictions and created tropicalia, a cultural movement whose soundtrack mixed Brazilian bossa nova and traditional music with American and English psychedelic rock to rage against the authoritarian Brazilian government of the time. Fifty years later, Gil and Veloso have cooled down a little bit, but they haven’t stopped making joyful, revolutionary music. —Sam Ribakoff

2Cellos @ DOLBY THEATRE
Nice Croatian lads Luka Šulić and Stjepan Hauser got to thinking one day and decided that the repertoire of the venerable old instrument of their classical training, the cello, could use a swift kick in the keester. A huge load of blue-hairs
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and stuffy pop fans got their knickers in a twist when they heard the duo’s 2011 version of Michael Jackson’s “Smooth Criminal” or their baroque-inspired, hair-swinging assault on AC/DC’s “Thunderstruck,” which got something like 57 million YouTube views. While they are adept at playing “serious music,” the critically hailed 2Cellos specialize in somewhat improbable covers of rock and pop songs. The duo’s recently released album, Celloverse, features cello-fed versions of Muse, Radiohead and Paul McCartney. —John Payne

Fully Fullwood’s Live Reggae Sundays @ DON THE BEACHCOMBER

Fully Fullwood is one of Jamaican reggae’s deepest-reaching players, a creative force whose slinky, shadowy bass lines have achieved riddim immortality a hundred times over. Along with guitarist Tony Chin, a regular at this weekly Sunday afternoon shindig and Fullwood’s co-founder in legendary 1970s Kingston studio ensemble Soul Syndicate, he helped chart insanely fertile territory, creating a foundation upon which the likes of Augustus Pablo, Peter Tosh, Big Youth, Burning Spear — you name ‘em — made even more musical history. This is a dream residency by some of the cats who collectively elevated ‘70s reggae into its highest flowering. Other greats such as Syndicate guitarist Earl “Chinna” Smith and drummer Santa Davis have been known to pop in, but there’s one thing which is certain: Whoever is playing with Fullwood, the music will be superb. —Jonny Whiteside

mon 4/11

Diarrhea Planet @ THE ECHOPLEX

Diarrhea Planet — a band name that sadly came too late for Beavis and Butt-head to appreciate — are Nashville dudes with four guitars and a limitless dedication to rock & roll, which at its best manifests as “An Illustration of Loneliness (Sleepless in New York),” she’s even more endearing, revealing hints of romantic vulnerability as she recites a stream-of-consciousness litany that links together in a dreamily weird fashion her lovesick yearning, death, a room’s ceiling, palmistry, baguettes and Irish wolfhounds. —Falling James

The Darkness @ THE BELASCO

It says much for both the musical brilliance of The Darkness and the underestimated sense of humor pervading their genre that what initially appeared to be a heavy-metal spoof band has since been recognized, even honored, as an entirely serious endeavor. Metal’s barefaced (and bare-chested) melodrama, lyrical pomposity and ludicrously histrionic guitar and vocal gymnastics are always ripe for turning up beyond 11, and this Brit quartet does exactly that to epically entertaining effect. Yet no amount of Spinal Tap–worthy lyrical mischief or flamboyant glam-rock showmanship would justify The Darkness were it not for their earworm hooks, colorful twin-guitar interplay and eccentric frontman Justin Hawkins’ six-string fireworks and fearsome falsetto. Latest album Last of Our Kind says little that The Darkness haven’t said already, but they remain one of the world’s greatest guilty-pleasure live acts. —Paul Rogers

wed 4/13

Underworld @ FOX THEATRE POMONA

Underworld are dance music’s answer to Dorian Gray, with a 30-year career making influential and credible electronic music that outshines today’s EDM superstar infants. On their seventh studio album, Barbara Barbara, we face a shining future. Karl Hyde and Rick Smith maintain their signature hypnotic bass lines, colorful synths and fractured lyricism, albeit in a style more subdued than previously heard from the group. “Low Burn” is a combination of heady and understated, while “If Rah” starts minimal and escalates into complex rhythms and Hyde’s mind-melting vocal repetitions. By contrast, the organic Spanish/Middle Eastern strings of “Santiago Cuatro” are vocal-free. “Ova Nova” serves as a digital lullaby, “Motorhome” as a digital ballad and “Nylon Strung” as a slow, shuffling seducer. —Lily Moayeri

thu 4/14

Courtney Barnett @ THE GLASS HOUSE

“Put me on a pedestal and I’ll only disappoint you,” Courtney Barnett declares on her recent full-length debut album, Sometimes I Sit and Think, and Sometimes I Just Sit. Her fans probably will keep the Australian singer-guitarist on a pedestal anyway, since her rapid-fire lyrical ambivalence and refreshingly down-to-earth sarcasm are part of her musical charm. She chants her lyrics over confidently stomping rhythms and surges of mind-clearing power chords. When Barnett downsides slightly into a midtempo pop tune such as “An Illustration of Loneliness (Sleepless in New York),” she’s even more endearing, revealing hints of romantic vulnerability as she recites a stream-of-consciousness litany that links together in a dreamily weird fashion her lovesick yearning, death, a room’s ceiling, palmistry, baguettes and Irish wolfhounds. —Falling James

Classic instrumental hip-hop, mixed with a handful of rap tracks he did with the few MC collaborators he chooses to work with: Earl Sweatshirt (“Mirror”), Action Bronson (“Mr. Wonderful”), Jeremiah Jae and Oliver the 2nd (“Lord of the Rings”).
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TILOTA, Thu., April 14, 8:30 p.m., $5.

$7. Sorry State, Sickness in Motion, Herbert, Sun., April 9, 8:30 p.m., $5. Mad Parade, Infirmities, Social Aldridge, Sat., April 9, 10 p.m., TBA.

Jason Charles Miller, Heathen Apostles, Hannah Angele. The Best Thing Since . . ., with hip-hop DJ Control, Sun., April 10, 8 p.m., $10.

8, 9 p.m., $5. Peelander-Z, Skapeche Mode, Tartar 7:30 p.m., $12.

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MCCABE’S GUITAR SHOP: 3101 Pico Blvd., Santa Monica. Chau & Jeremy, Andrew Sandoval, Fri., April 8, 8 & 10 p.m., $25. Chris Smithier, April 9-10, 8 & 10 p.m., $24.50 (see Music Pick).

THE MINT: 6010 W. Pico Blvd, Luther Dickinson & the Cooperators, Jim Lauderdale, Ray Goren, Roses & Cigarettes, Fri., April 8, 8 & 10 p.m., $15 (see Music Pick). Khela, Just Reggie, Sat., April 9, 8 & 10 p.m., $20;
Johnny Love, best known for popularizing the HealthGoth hashtag-turned-lifestyle, has been out of L.A. doing Soft Leather events for a while, so this party marks his return. Heav3n’s angels, led by gender-bending glamazon Lulo Logan, continue to bring out crowds to party with them. The faces may be angelic at Heav3n, but the moves are anything but on the dance floor and in the club’s crevices, especially when the DJs pull out their dirtiest trap, house and electronic jams. With Soft Leather joining, they promise eight DJs and special surprise guests TBA, plus a more expansive mix including underground rave vibes, hip-hop and everything in between.

THE LASH | 117 Winston St., downtown Sat., April 9, 10 p.m.-2 a.m. | 21+/facebook.com/heav3nparty
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Jazz & Blues

ALVAS SHOWROOM: 1417 W. Eighth St., San Pedro. Frank Unzueta, with vocalist Lauren Koval, Sat., April 9, 8 p.m., $25. The Akiko Touyama Organ Trio, with Jeff Hamilton & Graham Dechter, Sun., April 10, 4 p.m., $30.

AU LAC: 710 W. First St., Los Angeles. Nolan Shahadeh, Sat., April 9, 7-9 p.m., $10-$25.


BLUE WHALE: 123 Anton St. E. Onizuka St., Los Angeles. Billy Childs, Fri., April 9, 9 p.m., $15. Catina DeLuna, Sat., April 9, 9 p.m., TBA. Yonatan, Sun., April 10, 9 p.m., TBA. Dhaara World Music, Mon., April 11, 9 p.m., TBA. Ted Falcon & Eduardo Souza, Tue., April 12, 9 p.m., TBA. Greguhjuma Group, Wed., April 13, 9 p.m., TBA. Calisto Oveido & Cuban Jazz Train, Thu., April 14, 9 p.m., TBA.


Catalina Bar & Grill: 6725 W. Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles. Strunz & Farah, April 9-9, 8:30 p.m., TBA. Jazz for the Cure, with performers TBA, Sun., April 10, 11:30 a.m.-3 p.m., TBA. The Jazz A Journal of Jazz, Monday Night: The Jazz Orchestra Unlimited, Kenny Burrell, Mon., April 11, 8:30 p.m., TBA. Kevin O’Neal, Patrice Quinn, Tue., April 12, 8:30 p.m., TBA. Iris Williams, Wed., April 13, 8:30 p.m., TBA. Sweet Baby Joe, Thu., April 14, 9 p.m., TBA.

COLOMBO’S: 1833 Colorado Blvd., Eagle Rock. Steve Thompson, Fridays, 5:30 p.m., free. The Elliot Caine Quartet, Sat., April 9, 9:30 p.m., free. The Eric Exaltrd Trio, Mondays, 4:30 p.m., free. Tom Armbuster, Tuesdays, 7 p.m., free. Karen Hernandez & Jimmy Spencer, Wednesdays, 7 p.m., free. Trillectra, Thursdays, 7 p.m., free.

DESERT ROSE: 1601 Mission Ave., Los Angeles. The Mark Z. Stevens Trio, Saturdays, 7-11 p.m., free.

THE DRESDEN RESTAURANT: 1760 N. Vermont Ave., Los Angeles. Marty & Elyae, Tuesdays-Saturdays, 9 p.m., free. The Ready Boys, Sundays, 5 p.m.-midnight, free. Underground Superstars, Mondays, 8:30 p.m., free.

EDYE SECOND SPACE: 1310 11th St., Santa Monica. The Dave Tull Quartet, Fri., April 8, 7 p.m., TBA.

HARVEY’S SANTA MONICA: 1334 Fourth St., Santa Monica. Blown’ Smoke & The Fabulous Smokeytes, Sat., April 9, 9 p.m., TBA.

IL PICCOLO VERDE: 140 S. Barrington Pl., Los Angeles. David Marcus & Associates, Thursdays, 8 p.m., free.

Jax Bar & Grill: 339 N. Brand Blvd., Glendale. Lenny Stack, Sundays, 6-10 p.m., free. J.C. Spires, Tuesdays, 7-11 p.m., free.

THE LIGHTHOUSE: 204 Pier Ave., Hermosa Beach. The Chuck Johnson Quartet, Sat., April 9, 11 a.m.-2:30 p.m., free. The Frank Potenza Quintet, Sat., April 10, 11 a.m.-3 p.m., TBA. The Riner Scivally Quartet, Wed., April 13, 6-9 p.m., free.

Rockwell Table & Stage: 1714 N. Vermont Ave., Los Angeles. Tami Tappan Damiano, Robin De Lano, Justine Aronson, Frosty, Andrea Miller & the Josh Nelson Trio, Tue., April 12, 7-9 p.m., $15.

South Pasadena Library Community Room: 1175 El Cente Dr., South Pasadena. The Elliott Caine Quintet, Sun., April 10, 4 p.m., free.

Sparagetti Seal Beach: 3005 Old Ranch Parkway, Seal Beach. Dean Kutz, Fri., April 8, 8 p.m., $25. Brian Simpson, Sat., April 9, 8 p.m., $40. Poncho Sanchez, Sun., April 10, 7 & 9:30 p.m., $40. Rick Marcel, Wednesdays, 7:30 p.m., $10. DW3, Thursdays, 8 p.m., $15.

Vibrato Grill & Jazz: 2930 Beverly Glen Circle, Bel-Air. The Josh Nelson Quartet, Fri., April 8, 9 p.m., free. Bob Sheppard, The Pat Senatore Trio, Sat., April 9, 9 p.m., free. Tabitha Ellina, Sun., April 10, 7:30 p.m., $20. Katharine McPhee, Tue., April 12, 8:30 p.m., $25. Scott Martin’s Latin Soul Band, Wed., April 13, 6:30 p.m., free. The Doug Webb Quartet, Thu., April 14, 6:30 p.m., free.

Vitello’s Italian Restaurant: 3439 Tujunga Ave., Studio City. Ann Kelly, Fri., April 8, 8 p.m., TBA. Poncho Sanchez, Sat., April 9, 7 & 9 p.m., TBA. Kiki Ebsen, Sun., April 10, 8 p.m., TBA. Shelly Peikcn, Tue., April 12, 9 p.m., TBA. Shelly Peikcn, Wed., April 13, 8 p.m., $10. Kelly’s Lot, Thu., April 14, 8 p.m., TBA.

Country & Folk

The Cinema Bar: 3967 Sepulveda Blvd., Culver City. Bruce Ray White, Jed’s Dead, Fri., April 8, 8 p.m., free. Bliss Bowen, Nicole Gordon, Sun., April 10, 6:30 p.m., free. The Saturday Night Show, Sat., April 9, 7-11 p.m., TBA. Mikel Ritter, Mon., April 11, 8 p.m., $15. Tall Men Group, Sat., April 9, 9 p.m., $20. Jimmy Angel, Cody Bryant, Sun., April 10, 7 p.m., $18. Jim “Kimo” West, Konalee Pryor, C.J. Helakshi, Sun., April 10, 7 p.m., TBA. The Arohi Trio, Wed., April 13, 8 p.m., $15. Bluz D’Lux, Thu., April 14, 11 p.m., TBA.

The Cowboy Palace Saloon: 21635 Devonshire St., Chatsworth. The Mary White Band, Fri., April 14, 8 p.m., TBA. L.A. Girls, Sun., April 10, 8 p.m., TBA. The Jimi Nelson Band, Fri., April 13, 8-14 p.m., free.


Ireland’s 32: 17231 Burbank Blvd., Van Nuys. Acoustic Jam, Tuesdays, 8 p.m., free.

Joe’s Great American Bar & Grill: 4311 W. Magnolia Blvd., Burbank. The Desperate Measures, Fri., April 8, 9 p.m., free. Decadent Decades, Sat., April 9, 9 p.m., TBA. The Deep Cuts, Sun., April 10, 8 p.m., free. The Mountaineer Cowboys, Mon., April 11, 9 p.m., free. The French Connection, Tue., April 12, 9 p.m., TBA. Stitara Son, Wed., April 13, 9 p.m., free. Perry Pastine & the Crime Scene, Thu., April 14, 9 p.m., free.

Mother’s Tavern: 16701 Pacific Coast Highway, Huntington Beach. Groovy Rednecks, Sat., April 9, 3-4 p.m., free.

The Sunken Gardens: 423 Shoreline Village Drive, Long Beach. Whiteboy James & the Blues Express, Saturday of every month, 8 p.m. June 11, The Whiteboy & Jenny Combo, Second Thursday of every month, 8 p.m. Thru June 9, free.

Sheraton Gateway Hotel: 6101 W. Century Blvd., Los Angeles. Doug MacDermott & Small Band, Andrea Miller & the Josh Nelson Trio, Tue., April 12, 7:30 p.m., $15.

South Pasadena Library Community Room: 1175 El Cente Dr., South Pasadena. The Elliott Caine Quintet, Sun., April 10, 4 p.m., free.
CONCERTS
FRIDAY, APRIL 8

CROSSBASEMENT: With Turnstile, Defeater, Colten Green, 8 p.m., $15. The Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana.

DOWNTOWN SOUL: With Sir Joconian, Iman Omar, 9 p.m., $20. The Regent Theater, 448 S. Main St.

ELI SILFING: With Broods, Bebe Rechxa, 7:30 p.m., $29.50-$55, Staples Center, 111 S. Figueroa St., Los Angeles. See Music Pick.

FLOYDI: With DJ Tidal, 8 p.m., $25. The Wiltern, 3790 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles.


KEITH SWEET: 8 p.m, $50-$70. City National Grove of Anaheim, 2200 E. Katella Ave., Anaheim.

KILLSWITCH ENGAGE: With Memphis May Fire, 3 p.m., $35. Key2K, 34th Street Mission, Los Angeles.

RID: With Turnstile, 8 p.m., $25. The Teragram Ballroom, 1301 W. 7th St., Los Angeles. See Music Pick.

VILLEGE PEOPLE: With The Trenches, 11 p.m, $15. The Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana.

XYLO: With Transient, 8 p.m., $15. The Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana.

SATURDAY, APRIL 9

BARLOW BLACK & WHITE: A fundraiser with Steve Tyrell, 6:30 p.m., $50. Vibiana, 214 S. Main St.

BAYEPOGON, SWIMM, POM POMS: 11 a.m, free, USC, University of Southern California, 665 Exposition Blvd., Los Angeles.

DAVID BENOFF, SARA GAZAREK: 8 p.m., $55-$195. The Belasco Theater, 1150 Hill St., Los Angeles.

THURSDAY, APRIL 14

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LA WEEKLY

Church, 4390 Cofax Ave., Studio City.

EINAY YARDEN: The Israeli pianist bookends Robert Schumann’s Kinderszenen with bagatelles and a sonata by Beethoven, Sun., April 10, 2 p.m., free. Rolling Hills United Methodist Church, 26438 Crenshaw Blvd., Palos Verdes Peninsula.

EINAY YARDEN: Pianist Gloria Cheng and members of the Varied Trio examine music from such Black Mountain College composers as John Cage, Stefan Wolpe, Lou Harrison and Erik Satie, Tue., April 12, 7:30 p.m., TBA. Hammer Museum, 10899 Wilshire Blvd., Westwood.

JOHN WALZ & STEVEN VANDAHAWEERT: L.A. Opera cellist Walz and pianist Vanhauwaert unravel sonatas by Ludwig van Beethoven and Gabriel Fauré, as well as the national premiere of Henriette Bosmans’ Sonata for Cello & Piano, in a presentation by Le Salon de Musiques, Sun., April 10, 4 p.m., $75. The Music Center, Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, 135 N. Grand Ave.

JOSEPH O’ERRY: Fri., April 8, 7:30 p.m., $25. The British organist pumps out J.S. Bach, Buxtehude, Howells, Phillips and Reubeke, Sat., April 9, 5 p.m., $25. All Saints Episcopal Church, 504 N. Camden Drive, Beverly Hills.

KALEIDOSCOPE: The "conductor-less orchestra" goes for a spin with John Adams’ Short Ride in a Fast Machine and Beethoven’s Third Symphony, Sat., April 9, 8 p.m., $30. First Presbyterian Church, 1220 Second St., Santa Monica. Sun., April 10, 3 p.m., $30. Glendale City Seventh-Day Adventist Church, 610 E. California Ave., Los Angeles.

THE L.A. BALALAIKA ORCHESTRA: Sun., April 10, 2 p.m., $35-$45. The Colburn School of Music, Zipper Concert Hall, 200 S. Grand Ave., Los Angeles.

THE L.A. OPERA CHORUS: Grant Gershon conducts the group in selections from the Figaro trilogy, Sun., April 10, 3 p.m., free. Valley Performing Arts Center, 18111 Nordhoff St., Northridge.

LA PHILHARMONIC: James Gaffigan conducts music by Brahms and Liszt, April 8-9, 8 p.m.; Sun., April 10, 2 p.m., $20-$186. Composer-conductor John Adams welcomes violinist Leila Josefowicz for a performance of his orchestral work Scheherazade.2, April 14-16, 8 p.m., $20-$178. Walt Disney Concert Hall, 111 S. Grand Ave., Los Angeles.

LA VOIX HUMAINE: Charismatic soprano Suzan Hanson takes charge in a one-woman performance of Francis Poulenc’s operatic monologue, which is based on the story by Jean Cocteau about a woman named Elle who’s wrapped up in a desperate phone call with a distant lover. Presented by Long Beach Opera with accompaniment by pianist Kristof Van Gysperre, April 8-9, 7 p.m.; Sun., April 10, 3 p.m.; April 14-16, 7 p.m.; Sun., April 17, 3 p.m., $67-$137. The Federal Bar, 102 Pine Ave., Long Beach.

LES VIOLONS DU ROY: Bernard Lobadie conducts J.S. Bach, Wed., April 13, 8 p.m., $20-$105. Walt Disney Concert Hall, 111 S. Grand Ave.

LONG BEACH SYMPHONY: Sun., April 10, 3 p.m., free. California Heights Methodist Church, 3759 Orange Ave., Long Beach.

SANTA CECILIA ORCHESTRA: Conductor Sonia Marie De León de Vega proffers music by Mascagni, De Falla, Respighi and Beethoven, Sun., April 10, 4 p.m., $24 & $26. Thorne Hall, Occidental College, 1600 Campus Road, Eagle Rock.

THE WEST L.A. SYMPHONY: Benjamin Wallfisch conducts works by Mascagni, Tchaikovsky and Mozart, Sun., April 10, 7 p.m., free. UCLA, Royce Hall, 340 Royce Drive, Westwood.

For more listings, please go to laweekly.com.

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